



## THE SINGING SCHOOL TEACHER

It must be admitted that Daniel Halsey, the singing school teacher, had his shortcomings. Some critical folks, including the austere village parson, thought tuneful Daniel was too easy going. He was full of knowledge—a fine reader and speller and could add up a column of figures without making a single mistake. He helped storekeeper Samuel Downer with his bookkeeping and inventories and Mr. Downer said he could do everything well except keep his mouth shut. Storekeeper Downer was a prejudiced party. It made him hot under the collar to hear Dan singing the Long Meter Doxology while he was making out bills that were a year past due. Besides, Sam was no authority on voice culture. He thought singing was the result of an internal disturbance which might bring on distemper. He told Deacon Cory that when they introduced Watt's Hymns into the church at Mendham two members of the congregation were taken with spasms. And when the ebullient Halsey, at the invitation of the Parson, sang a hymn after the morning discourse, the indignant Mr. Downer picked up his high-crowned hat and his hickory walking stick and strode down the center aisle and out of the church.

Mr. Downer's behavior made some talk which wasn't altogether in his favor. He was respected as a business man and stood high in the councils of the Presbytery, but business is business and psalm singing is a kind of music, and that tenore robusto voice so captivated the congregation that

they defied Mr. Downer and chose Daniel Halsey as church chorister by a near-unanimous vote. After that, no matter what hymn he sang, his performance was considered superlative, and Mr. Downer, being a good politician, kept his mouth shut.

Chorister Halsey's high notes could be heard as far as Lover's Lane on Sabbath mornings, and David Baker said he was often tempted to stay home from service because he could get the spirit of it just sitting on his porch and listening to Dan sing. "I could even catch his low notes when the wind was right," he said. The chorister's fame soon spread throughout the county. To oblige his admirers, he opened a singing school. The rates were one shilling a lesson (each pupil to find his own candle light) or eight shillings for thirteen lessons. So many wanted to take the full course that he was obliged to divide his classes into high, medium and low voice. He insisted that his pupils practice at least one hour a day and there was a season when the whole village was tuning up with do-ray-mes from morning to night; even farmer folks went to market singing. To the surprise of everyone, Storekeeper Downer thought this was an idea with some sense to it. "If a farmer comes into my store," said he, "and asks for a barrel of sugar and a keg of molasses in low voice, I know he's short of brood sows and has plenty of potatoes and other things I don't need."

Halsey taught in the log school