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PASTORAL SKETCHES

by Rev. Mr. Beverly Carradine

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BY

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PREFACE

This book was undertaken with a view to mental rest and relaxation. The author had not the time nor means to go to the mountains or seashore for a season of recuperation, and so wrote this volume. Three of the chapters — 8., 18., and 19. — were penned some years ago. The remainder of the book was written during a part of the spring and summer of the present year.

As the author wrote, his eyes were often wet with tears, and just as frequently the smiles would play about the mouth over the facts and fancies that flowed from his pen. But it was not simply to elicit smiles and tears from himself or others that the volume was written. These are only means to an end or, more truly speaking, the gilt on the sword or the paint and trimmings of the chariot.

The reader cannot but see that, under the pathos and humor of the book, follies are punctured, formality assailed, sin exposed, truth exalted, and deep spiritual lessons inculcated.

The book is a transcript of human character, a description of a part of the life procession that is seen moving in the ecclesiastical world or that is beheld from the Church by the ministerial eye.

So the volume was composed for a purpose; not simply that it might prove a mental recreation and refreshment to the worker, but that it might accomplish good for others. The author feels that the book has a mission, so he opens the window and sends it forth over the waves of the world. Whether it returns with the olive branch or never comes back, it is attended with the prayer of the writer that it may cheer and brighten the hearts of thousands of readers, and be a blessing wherever it goes.

THE AUTHOR.
October, 1896

CHAPTER 1

REMINISCENCES OF CERTAIN PREACHERS

One of the earliest memories in the life of the author is that of sitting by the side of his mother in church, as a little boy of five or six years, with his feet dangling halfway down to the floor, and his eyes fixed on the face of the preacher, poised high above him and before him in the pulpit.

Sometimes the day was hot, the sermon lengthy, and the little dangling legs became cramped and the neck wearied in looking upward so long at the speaker. But the reverent, listening face of the mother, and the boy's own awful sense of the dignity of the preacher, were sufficient to bring the curly-haired, white-jacketed lad through the service without rebuke to himself, and mortification to the mother.

As the boy grew, the faces and forms in the pulpit changed, according to the policy of the Methodist Church. All were good men, but they variously impressed the lad, as piety, eloquence, dress, personal characteristics, or other things too numerous to mention, prevailed.

For instance, one is remembered more by a bald head than anything else. The child wondered over the fact of an unending forehead, that went away up, and clear over, and was lost in the collar behind.

Another had a very red face and a very loud voice, and this, coupled with the fact that he was an unusually large man, with a hand of corresponding proportions, caused a riveted attention to be given to all that he said and did. When that large hand struck the Bible a resounding blow, and the loud voice ascended at the same time, it meant something, and a certain small child in the audience never dreamed of going to sleep.

Another is remembered mainly by a broad, white shirt bosom, in the center of which reposed a large gold stud; and by the way he pronounced the word "realizing." He divided the syllables in a slow, high-sounding way, thus: "re-al-i-zing." While the word was thus drawn out; India rubber fashion, yet it was pronounced with such a musical roll of the voice that

one person at least in the audience was fascinated. The child had no idea what “realizing” meant, but he was enamored with the sound and bigness of the word, and yearned to live and grow up, that he might use the same word in conversation. He determined to employ it on all occasions, and knock down platoons of listeners even as he himself had been overrun and prostrated.

A fourth greatly impressed him with the way he took out and put up his spectacles. The preacher was an aged man with white hair and heavy gray eyebrows. Everything he did was deliberate. As he stood up in the pulpit before the great Bible the child watched him with bated breath. He first glanced gravely over the audience; then, holding the left lapel of his coat with his left hand, he solemnly put his right hand into the inner side pocket and drew out a black tin box five inches long. He looked at it as if he had never seen it before. The child scarcely breathed as the preacher slowly opened the case and with finger and thumb drew out a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles.

In the most deliberate manner they were opened and carefully placed upon the nose; and then the tin case was closed with a snap that could be heard all over the church, and replaced in the side pocket as solemnly as a body is lowered in the grave.

Then came the opening of the Bible. It was done reverently, and made the boy feel that the Book was different from all other books. Distinct to this day is the memory how tenderly the leaves were turned, and how the eyes lingered as if the preacher saw many precious things while he was passing on to the selection of his text. We recall the gravity with which that text was read, and then reread. Then in the same deliberate way the tin box was taken out of the side pocket, the spectacles were removed with the right hand, and deposited in the case now open for their reception. For a moment the preacher looked down on them as one would at the face of a friend in a coffin, then came the snap, the screws were shot in, the casket was closed, the box lowered the second time into the grave, and the sermon began. Fully four minutes had elapsed since the preacher stood up, but somehow the soul felt that there had been no loss of time, and every second of time and every motion of the man had counted. However, not all can do as did this man.

A fifth preacher is recalled by his habit of drinking a glass of water just in the middle of his sermon.

The author was raised in Yazoo City, Miss. Just ten miles from that town was another smaller place called Benton. Exactly halfway between the two towns on the main plank road was a watering place called "The Ponds." Having stopped there frequently in his mother's carriage in passing from one place to another, the writer of this sketch, as a child, had a vivid memory of the locality and the watering. So when the preacher we now speak of would stop suddenly in his sermon and pour out a glass of water and drink it all down; by a natural association of ideas the child in the audience felt in a vague way that the minister had reached "The Ponds" and was just halfway through his sermon.

If the sermon were uninteresting, and the day warm, the sight of the preacher arriving at "The Ponds" and drinking, while the rest of the team, just as dry as he and even dryer, but not allowed by custom to share the refreshing draught, this sight was far from being calculated to promote religious feelings in a parch-mouthed, neck-cricked, and leg-aching little boy.

The very vision of the glass pitcher, the cut-glass goblet, the crystal water, the way the preacher poured it out, and the way he drank it all down, wiped his mouth, and cleared his throat with a loud "Ahem!" were all exceedingly trying features in the transaction. This, coupled with the fact that we had just reached "The Ponds" — five miles still to go, and only one horse allowed to drink! The thirst of the colts utterly ignored! All this made life bitter for a while to a certain small spectator in the audience.

If the whole congregation could have been watered at the same time with the preacher, as we have sometimes seen in country churches, then it would have been "well with the child." But doubtless the preacher thought he was doing all the pulling and the congregation was riding, and so we could afford to wait until we reached — Yazoo City.

It all depends upon where we are going to land, whether in the larger town, Yazoo City, or the small village of Benton. If the preacher is giving what might be called a cumulative sermon, one that grows richer, sweeter, better every minute, and ends in a climax of blessedness, we certainly could

afford to wait. But what if the discourse “peters out.” What if we begin with a big, grand text, and end in puerility. What if the speaker is carrying us to Benton all the time instead of Yazoo City. Then “The Ponds” business becomes simply intolerable.

One thing is certain, that after the writer became a preacher, he remembered the pulpit watering incident, or “The Ponds” scene, and determined that in consideration of dry and thirsty people in the audience, and the tantalizing effect of one man drinking cool water in the presence of scores and hundreds who are also dry but are not allowed to drink — he resolved, for humanity’s sake alone, that he would under no circumstance stop at “The Ponds” in the pulpit.

This vow he has rigidly adhered to for twenty years. Later on after he had made the resolution, he discovered that what he had done in pity and consideration for others was really founded in wisdom. That God had so arranged the gland of the throat that if a man should speak in public for hours, he needs no other moisture than that which nature supplies, or more truly the Creator furnishes, through his marvelous provisions and laws.

A sixth preacher is remembered by his remarkable handling of his handkerchief while preaching. It was simply astonishing to see what the man did with that piece of white linen. In the course of the sermon he put it in and took it out of every pocket in his coat and pantaloons. He would open it like a sail, pull it through his fingers like a string, roll it up like a ball, and then hide it under the Bible.

The constant manipulation of the handkerchief soon affected its color, and the spectators in the pews saw the steady loss of immaculateness as the sermon proceeded.

Half the time the brother did not know where the handkerchief was. So that part of the hour he was “hiding the handkerchief” and the other part trying to find it. One time he would raise the lid of the Bible, thinking it was there, when he had the minute before removed it to his hip pocket. Again, he made a dig for his coat-tail pocket for the now limp piece of goods; but he had thrust it inside his coat or under the Bible. Great sympathy and interest were excited in a number of the spectators, not to

say auditors, as the preacher would begin a rapid investigating tour, slapping one pocket, then another, digging deep into another, lifting up the Bible in the fruitless quest for the missing goods, while a puzzled, anxious look was on his face and the perspiration was streaming.

But for the proprieties, a number who kept up with the sleight-of-hand performance, rather than the sermon, would gladly have helped the bewildered man at specially trying and difficult times; calling out for instance,

“It is in the right-hand coat-tail pocket” — or “It is stuffed in your vest” — or “It is under the Bible” — or “It is on the floor.”

This, of course, could not have been allowed.

A seventh preacher we recall as owning a large, red, silk handkerchief with brown figured work. Before he began preaching as he sat in the pulpit he would take the handkerchief and give a dry, prolonged blow through his nostrils that was astonishing in its trumpet-like clearness and loudness. It seemed to be a signal for the battle. Then after taking the text came two or three short, dry blows, in which we felt that the troops were all in line and the conflict would now begin.

Still later on in the discourse he would raise the red flag and give another blast so loud, so long, and so rallying in its effect that the lines of Scott rush to the mind,

*One blast upon his bugle horn
Was worth a thousand men.*

It was not the blow of a bad cold, but a dry blast with a trumpet twang. Whether it was done from habit formed during a bad cold, or from a sense that his mental forces were scattered and needed to be recalled, rallied and reformed we do not know. We only remember that he always seemed refreshed after one of these blasts, and would charge the congregation anew as if he had just received reinforcements and nothing could withstand him.

An eighth preacher we remember as small, slender, pale and scholarly. He was only with us two years, and the gifted, Christly man was sent to a large city where he soon afterward died.

How proud of him was the mother of this writer. She stood by him in a great trial that he had to endure occasioned by denominational jealousy. By her high regard for him she taught her family circle to reverence the man of God. One of her great pleasures was to have him take tea or dinner with us, and on parting to slip a ten or twenty dollar bill in his hand.

A ninth preacher was one of the holiest men that ever filled the pulpit of our church. As he preached his face fairly shone. At every sermon he looked like Stephen the day he stood up for his defense in Jerusalem. He carried this facial glory with him in the street, and wherever he went. The countenance preached while the tongue was silent.

Clear and bright is the memory of this man "leading the class." He stood in the altar confronting the small week-day assembly, and as he listened to the experiences of those before him, a look of holy love was in his eyes, and a tender sympathy in his voice, while the Moses-like shine was beaming in his face. Turning that transfigured countenance upon the writer who was then a lad of ten years, and the only child present, he said

"Would you like to speak, my dear little boy?"

And the little boy said,

"I am a great sinner," and burst into tears.

He remembers to this day, after the flight of thirty-eight years, that everybody in the room wept. He did not altogether understand then the secret of the general weeping, but does now in the words —

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength."

The people did not support the preacher as they should, but he never complained. One day the writer, not yet twelve years of age, on looking out of the school window saw him chopping wood in the parsonage yard. A great pain filled the boy's heart at seeing a minister of the gospel going through such manual labor. Accustomed as the lad was to being waited on by colored people, and to seeing only day laborers chop wood, he felt a great heartache on observing this good man at such toil. The boy suffered so he could scarcely study. He made up his mind in a moment on a plan of action, and after school succeeded in quickening another lad into a like

state of sympathy, and got him to fall into his plan. Two hours afterwards a sharp rap on the parsonage door brought the wife of the preacher to the front galley to see standing there two boys with axes on their shoulders, and requesting that they might be allowed to chop some wood for the preacher.

There was a blended look on the woman's face as she looked at the lads. Surprise first, then amusement, and then a touched look, followed each other in quick succession. The last expression abided as she silently pointed to the wood yard.

We hacked away on the hard timber with blunt axes until our hands were blistered, but held on manfully until we saw a pile before us that was creditable to individuals of our time of life. Our hands, unused to such work, were sore, but our hearts were very light and happy as we left the yard for the gate. The preacher's wife was at the door to thank us and say good-bye. She had a plate of tea cakes in her hand, and begged us to help ourselves. Our schoolboy friend waited for no other invitation, but helped himself bountifully. The writer, however, refused with thanks. The feeling in his heart was that if a preacher had to cut his own wood, he must be on the border of starvation, and to take even a cake from such a household would be to increase the misery, and so could not be thought of a moment.

The preacher we helped that day was too spiritual for his people. And so on the plea of having too much excitement in his meetings he was sent away. He died a few years afterwards, as he had lived, full of the Holy Ghost. His wife never knew what a treasure she had until he was gone.

Fifteen years after he left our Church, the writer, then a young preacher, stood at the foot of his grave in a lonely country churchyard. The mound was almost even with the ground. A simple wooden slab bore his name, with time of birth and death. He was scarcely forty when he died.

As we lingered by the little hillock we recalled the time he spoke to us in the class meeting, the hour we saw him cutting wood in his yard, and above all how his face used to shine in the pulpit. We felt convinced as we meditated alone that afternoon in the graveyard that the man himself was in heaven. We prayed some earnest prayers on our knees by the grave and came away a better man.

A tenth personal memory of the apostolical line of ministers who blessed our Church centers upon one of the gentlest preachers we ever knew.

No longer a child then, but a youth, we have a clearer recollection of him than of others. The man's modesty and humility was not assumed but genuine. He would give way to others who met him on the pavement. We saw him wait half an hour for his mail at the post office. Others were crowding about the general delivery window, but he stood aside for each newcomer, and was silent and patient until he could be waited on. The writer was then nineteen years of age, and as he took in the patient figure standing in the edge of the crowd, he felt, unconverted as he was, that Christ was projected before him and was visible in a reflected sense in the man of God before him.

This preacher in the divine providence was called on to minister to our family in times of sickness, trouble, and death. He was so gentle and Christlike that the entire household became deeply attached to him. A sister of the author died at the age of sixteen. She was buried in the midst of a large concourse of friends. The memory of a hymn sung by a band of youths and young girls still lingers in the memory:

*Sister, thou wast mild and lovely,
Gentle as the summer breeze,
Pleasant as the air of evening
As it floats among the trees.*

How softly the words and strain of music arose among the cedars and marble pillars, and was lost in the quiet abodes of the dead. But still more vivid is the memory of the preacher who, having finished reading the solemn burial service, and while the clods were falling upon the coffin lid, stood looking into the far-away sky. It impressed us as though one of God's servants had come down from the other world to render this service, but did not belong to our planet in which he was laboring, and was looking up into the land he came from and to which he belonged. The complete weanedness from this life shown by the man's attitude and look deeply impressed the writer at the time, and has never indeed left him.

So the preachers came and went from our church. All were good men, some were better, and two or three were best. All had a message, all were

commissioned and honored of God, and all brought a blessing. Most of them are now in the skies; and all of them, we firmly believe, will be there.

It is a glad thought that if faithful we shall see them again. Men of God who preached to our fathers and mothers and were their personal friends. Servants and followers of Christ who baptized us as children, led us to Jesus, took us into the Church, married us, baptized our children, knelt by our bedsides, prayed for us in times of sickness, buried our dead, and came with gentle tread and voice into the silent and darkened home in the time of bereavement, and kept our hearts from breaking. Thank God for them all.

May God reward the apostolical line that blessed the writer's childhood and youth. And may he bless all other true ministers of the gospel who, engaged in the "poorest of trades but noblest of callings," are seeking to project and perpetuate the life of the Son of God everywhere, and at all times, among the sorrowing and suffering children of men.

CHAPTER 2

BAPTISMAL INCIDENTS

One of the most beautiful services of the Church is the rite of baptism. It is not only beautiful but impressive as well. We have often marked the tender, serious attention given by the audience, when on the bowed head of the kneeling man or woman we have poured the water, accompanying the act with the solemn words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Also numbers of times in the baptism of infants we have seen many eyes grow wet, and felt that many prayers were going up in behalf of the child thus dedicated to God.

Sometimes, however, all things do not work smoothly, nor to edification; and it requires both a cool judgment and considerable knowledge of human nature to get along in a desirable way, especially when the candidates are children.

To this day we remember a remark made about me by a "two-year-old" as he sat on his father's doorsteps with his nurse and saw me crossing the street not far from him. I had a few weeks before baptized him, and thought it had been done well, both to the satisfaction of the parents and the child himself. But we recognized at once that there had been a woeful failure, as we caught his words,

"There goes the man that put a drink of water on my head."

It would be hard to describe the tone of injured innocence, the sense of outrage that was in those words. And so what we had so impressively done that day was to that boy nothing but the putting of a "drink of water" on his head.

On another occasion the child to be baptized was just four years of age. The ceremony took place at the house of the parents. The boy insisted that he did not want to be baptized, and had to be dragged into the parlor

by main force where the rest of the family, from grandfather down, were gathered.

The little fellow was red in the face and defiant, and had to be pinioned with a firm hand as the service proceeded, to be kept from running away.

When we came to the prayer and all knelt down, he had to be forced down by the maternal hand. Of course, during the prayer all in the room bowed their heads and closed their eyes; whereupon Young America, taking advantage of this and the loosened grasp of his mother's hand, "made a break" for the door. Aroused by the noise I raised my eyes from the ritual to see the boy on the threshold suddenly overtaken by that dexterous and faithful hand of the mother and unceremoniously dragged back to the point of original departure. All the family opened their eyes at the same instant to take in the scene, so that it was with considerable working of facial muscles and a tremulous character of speech that they responded "Amen" to the last petition.

This happened ten years ago, and we do not know how the lad turned out. We have thought of him and wish him well.

We were once called upon to baptize seven infants that were the children of the sons and daughters of a very lovely family. It was sprung rather unexpectedly upon us after a morning service. We well recollect the human line made up of the grandfather, grandmother, sons, sons-in-law, daughters, daughters-in-law, the white-capped and white-aproned nurses, and the seven babies cooing and crowing and kicking in their arms. The line completely encircled the large church altar and made a most unusual and attractive scene.

According to my custom after baptizing an infant, and before relinquishing it from my arms, I kiss the little innocent, with some appropriate words.

That day it took seven kisses, and the brain had to be fertile to say something different over each child, and yet see to it that it would measure up to what had been said previously. The eyes of the young mothers watched me narrowly; and one told me afterwards —

“You went through it all right, and said something nice about them all, and kissed them all! — If you had not, you would have heard from us.”

Alas! what perils confront and surround the ministry.

A ministerial friend of the writer was placed in a still greater predicament at a protracted meeting in the country. After the sermon was over one day, a comfortable-looking country matron passed two buxom children up to the pulpit for baptism. The children were twins, and about a year old.

Our friend the Doctor read the service from the ritual, and took one of the babies in his arms while a fellow-preacher held the other. “Name this child,” said the Doctor solemnly, with the water dripping through his fingers and looking at the mother.

To his great surprise the mother spoke in a loud voice that could be heard all over the congregation,

“O, Brother W_____, they have no names! You name them.”

For a few moments Dr. W_____ was taken aback, but quickly rallying, he determined to give his own name to one, and the name of his fellow-preacher to the other; so dipping his hand the second time into the water and approaching the head of the unconscious babe he cried out,

“Thomas, I baptize” — when suddenly the mother ejaculated,

“O, Brother W_____, they aren’t boys! They are girls!”

This time the Doctor was undoubtedly upset. But with a curiously working mouth and twinkling eyes he rallied once more, and so for the third time the water was scooped up in his hand and came down abundantly upon the Bible names of Mary and Martha, or Sarah and Rebecca, we forget which.

Our greatest embarrassment was realized once in administering baptism by immersion for the first time. There were many things against us that day. First, the candidates were of goodly size. Second, the rite took place in a Baptist church whose corridors, rooms, inclined planes, and steps under the water, and baptismal suits we knew nothing of. Third, an immersionist preacher stood in the audience before the pool evidently noticing our great

ignorance and awkwardness in the whole matter from beginning to end. And, fourth, we were completely in the dark as to the best method of dipping and raising the subject.

A Baptist or Christian minister thoroughly understanding the business will take his position somewhat back of the candidate, and letting him sink gradually and gently into the water will create no shock or strangling; and from that same place in the rear he will have leverage power to raise the immersed person quickly and with little trouble from the water.

Ignorant of these facts we took our position in front of the lady, and thinking that the main thing was to get her under the water, that she might be “buried,” we gave her an unmistakable “chug” or “douse” in the fluid and then pushed her down deep.

To lift her now was the duty of the hour, and the trouble; for we were in front of her and had no leverage. Besides this a great deal of water was resting upon her, adding thereby to the weight of her body, and forming a resisting medium when it came to lifting. The result was a protracted stay under the water by the lady, the thorough immersion of the candidate as well as nineteen-twentieths of the preacher, and a lively effort upon the part of the lady to come to our help and rise to the air again. When she did appear above to the surface it was amazing to see how much water she had swallowed, and now returned to the pool. She was immersed both outside and inside.

We gave a deprecating glance at the immersionist preacher, who tried to look solemn, while there appeared in his eyes and lines of his mouth another look as if he wanted to get off somewhere and roll for ten minutes.

When we recovered our breath, we said in a voice that had a decided quaver of anxiety about it,

“Next.”

We have always wondered at the faith of those who came to us in the water after witnessing the above-narrated performance.

Well, we are an expert now, and can immerse with the grace, ease, and confidence of one raised in the Church where the rite is practiced all the time. But the memory of that baptismal incident has never faded and will never fade from our mind. We have a suspicion that the lady herself retains a recollection of the hour that is equally vivid and lasting.

CHAPTER 3

THE INTERRUPTED MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The marriage ceremony is always an interesting event. It will draw a crowd when nothing else will. Explanations kind and unkind are made concerning this drawing influence, some saying that it is an unselfish pleasure in seeing two lives made happy; others affirming that the spectacle of mutual delusion upon the part of two people otherwise sensible is the secret of attraction; and still others that people having been fooled themselves go to see others walk into the open trap of matrimony, This last imaginary opinion we rule out on various good grounds.

Still, no matter what may be the comment on the rite and hour, it remains that the marriage ceremony is strangely attractive to all. A bright, expectant look, a pleased smile, an openness of manner, an unusual heartiness, seems to come over all. The bride is invisible, but is doubtless in a pleased state. The bridesmaids flutter with their white dresses in and out of the rooms with a look as if they did not know but that at any time some bold knight might dash down upon them and bear them away to a distant castle of connubial happiness. The bridegroom, whether he walks or rides to the place of marriage, feels full of kindness to the world, and is in a mood to pat on the head every dog that he meets, and give small coins to all the beggars on the street corners.

The preacher himself is pleased; partly because he is himself a center of observation until the bride enters, and because it is pleasant to make two hearts happy by the pronounciation of a few words, and because according to custom immemorial there is always expected from the happy bridegroom a remuneration that helps out the slim clerical income.

There is an endless variety of weddings, of which the limits of this chapter will not allow a description. There are home and church weddings, simple and compound, unadorned and ornate, in a big hurry and protracted to a great length. Some are all smile, while we have known a few where everybody wept.

Yet the majority are bright and sunshiny: Hope gilds the future, congratulations abound, hand-shakings are numerous, kisses cannot be counted, rice is cast on the young couple as they pass down the steps and an old shoe is thrown after the carriage that whirls away with the newly-married pair, and the crowd at the gate slowly disperses; some laughing, and others feeling strangely disposed to cry.

As a rule the bride during the ceremony is the most self-possessed. Men nearly always are awkward, or look like they were going to be hung. Few of them but stammer and stumble over the ritualistic responses; not doing, however, as badly as an individual we read of who had by mistake memorized the answers in the baptismal service. So when the preacher asked

“Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?” his amazing reply was

“I renounce them all.”

It is said that the preacher looked at him through his spectacles and said,

“My friend, you must be a fool.”

To which came the ringing response,

“All this I steadfastly believe.”

One explanation of the superior self-possession of woman in this trying hour is that the celebration of the marital rite often occurs in the church, and women are more at home there than the men. But over against this is the fact that females seem to have an endowment of calmness at such times, no matter where the marriage takes place, to which the stronger sex are strangers. Men frequently feel the need of some kind of nerve stimulant for the occasion, which, instead of giving the dignity and self-possession they wanted, actually makes them silly and hysterical.

We were much struck with the self-assurance of the bride and the timorous condition of the bridegroom in a marriage we performed in a certain Southern city.

The ceremony took place in the church at the request of the lady. A goodly company had gathered and sat waiting for the approaching

nuptials. Prompt to the very moment, a thing quite unusual on such occasions, the carriage dashed up, and the happy pair preceded by several friends were seen coming up the aisle while the organ rumbled forth a welcome. The friends fell away to the right and left, and the pair to be joined in matrimony stood before the preacher. The bride was herself in every sense of the word, while the groom seemed to be under a great awe and dread of something. When the time for the prayer arrived, and they knelt on the crimson-cushioned panel that ran around the altar, the bride was straight a arrow, while the groom, overcome, doubtless, by the thoughts and associations of the altar, went down like a mourner until his head was not only near the carpet but jammed in between two of the altar rails. The contrast in the two positions was very striking and afforded much amusement to the audience in the rear. The bride did not at first notice the lowly position of the bridegroom, but glancing out of the corner of her eye to see how her beloved was bearing himself, she beheld his dejected attitude; when without a moment's delay she reached her hand from under the bridal veil and gave her sinking companion a grasp by the arm, and a lift as well, and so literally fished him up from the depths and landed him on his feet just in the nick of time to receive the last words of the preacher in the beautiful and solemn ceremony.

The compensation feature connected with the marriage rite, and generally known only to two people, the bridegroom and the minister, is also not without interest, and could be written upon most voluminously.

We heard of a preacher who was asked by a very wealthy man to marry him to a certain beautiful lady. The preacher reflecting upon the prominence and wealth of the parties could not keep from expecting a large fee. The preparations were great at the wedding mansion. Every window was ablaze with light, servants were running in every direction, and carriages rolled up in numbers at the gate and discharged their richly dressed occupants. The preacher as he took note of all this and other things, again felt the remuneration would be large. The moment came when the service was over and the rich man called the minister aide and dipped a coin in his hand. The preacher promptly dropped the coin in his pocket, and with his hand upon it wondered whether it was a five or ten dollar gold piece. The front and side yards were illumined with great bonfires, and so gradually edging up to one of them he surreptitiously and with

uneasy glances around to see if he was observed drew the coin up to the top of his pocket and I let the light of the fire fall upon it.

It was twenty-five cents!

On another occasion a wealthy bridegroom gave the officiating minister a pair of gloves. The surprise and pain of the preacher could hardly be expressed. He was a poor man and expected a good fee, and lo! the man presented him with something he never wore and for which he had no earthly use.

On returning home, and in answer to the questioning look of his wife's eyes, he replied by handing her the pair of kid gloves and sinking into a chair, with a half laugh, half groan. The wife with an unutterable expression placed the gloves in one of the bureau drawers and resumed her work with a sigh.

Some months afterward the preacher was called to officiate at a marriage in high life and was prevailed on by the wife to put on the gloves which had lain untouched in the bureau for so long a time. With considerable reluctance he took them up and began to slip his fingers in them when he found an obstruction that felt like paper in each finger of the glove. Removing the fancied paper wadding from one, to his astonishment he discovered that it was a five-dollar bill, and so in the second, the third, the fourth, and on to the tenth; every finger held a five-dollar bill!

But one of the most interesting marriage ceremonies at which the author ever officiated took place in his early ministry.

One Saturday morning while busily engaged in pulpit preparation for the Sabbath, a visitor was announced as desirous of seeing me on very important business. I found on going down to the front gate an elderly looking farmer standing by a light spring wagon. He was a man of about seventy years of age. I knew him as a member of the Methodist Church in the country, and also that he was a widower of a few months' standing.

He was a red-faced, gray-whiskered man with a slight cock in one of his eyes which made you uncertain whether he was looking at you or not. It gave a meditative and far-away expression to his face, so that when he began speaking to me about the loneliness of his life and that his four sons

now grown all felt the need of the presence of a woman in the house to regulate and control household affairs, I agreed sympathetically, thinking that his slanting eye was even then on his wife's grave where his heart, I supposed, was deeply buried. I felt somehow that marriage was in the air, but thought that one of the four sons had in his bashfulness secured the venerable father to approach me on the subject. I was confirmed in this opinion when the patriarchal father said that his oldest boy said he could not stand the loneliness of the house, and that there must be a woman brought in to direct and manage.

The father seemed to be pleading so for his son's happiness and content, that I cordially agreed with all the statements he made. Whereupon the father grew bolder and said that he had come expressly to get me to perform a marriage ceremony that very morning. I remarked that it was very inconvenient for me to do so, as I was busily engaged in preparation for the Sabbath, but that I would make a sacrifice of my time and come.

Suddenly turning to him, I said:

“Which one of your boys is it that is going to marry?”

In reply the old gentleman reached over in the spring wagon and selecting a large turnip from a pile in the corner, and opening a large pocket-knife, he cut off the green top and slowly commenced peeling the round white vegetable. It required a full minute to do this, after which he cut off a large slice, put it in his mouth, chewed and swallowed it. Then turning to me, he said:

“It is none of my boys that wants to get married; it is me, I am the one.”

“You!” I exclaimed, for I was so surprised that I could not keep back the exclamatory accent. He looked so patriarchal with his long, white beard, and was a widower of such a few months' standing, that I thought he was pleading for his boys, when he was arguing his own case.

If the venerable gentleman felt embarrassment or compunction through my exclamation, he buried them both under the rest of the turnip, which he sent down by sections, or rather mouthfuls, to cover up his feelings. He finished the turnip, wiped his knife blade, shut it up with a click, put it in

his pocket, cleared his throat, wiped his mouth with a red handkerchief, and said: "Yes, sir, — I am the man to be married; the boys won't marry, and some one has to, and so I have concluded to do so."

Here a new light was thrown on the occurrence. The man before me was a lamb being led to the slaughter, even if he was eating turnips, a most remarkable food for lambs. He was not caring particularly for the joys of married life, but was willing to become a victim for the sake of his boys.

With difficulty I concealed my amusement, and asked:

"Who is the lady whom you are to wed?"

The venerable brother took his knife out of his pocket, reached over in the wagon and drew out another turnip. There was more peeling and swallowing, in the midst of which I was informed that it was a young lady twenty-seven years of age, the sister of the city undertaker, and that said undertaker was bitterly opposed to the marriage.

"Are all the rest of the family opposed?" I asked.

"No," replied Brother Venerable, "her mother is in favor of it. Besides, the girl herself is treated badly by her brother, and she wants to get away. And then she loves me."

All these facts were brought up and out, by sending turnips down. I felt that if the interview lasted much longer, our aged brother would die of cramp, and I would have a corpse on my hands instead of a bridegroom; so we hurried the conversation to a close.

I found out that the marriage was to take place at the residence of a Mrs. P —, a mile out of town. That the young lady was already there awaiting us, that the license must be obtained up town as we drove through, and that if the brother found it out there would be trouble if not bloodshed.

I reflected that the parties were old enough to know what they were doing, that the mother was willing, that the brother was unkind, that the girl wanted to marry, and so feeling justified in performing the service, told Brother Venerable that I would go with him. So I got into the wagon with what turnips there were left and rode up into the public square with the white-haired bridegroom who was marrying to please his boys.

The prospect of an interrupted marriage, ending in fisticuffs or pistol balls, was not altogether pleasing, and knowing as I did the desperate character of the brother, and that he was accustomed by his profession or trade to handling corpses, there was no small amount of misgiving in my mind in regard to a coming storm.

I sat in the buggy while Brother Venerable went into the courthouse for the license. While sitting there I saw the brother whose interference we apprehended, go into a store. As he did so Brother Venerable reappeared from the court-house, deliberately putting the license in his pocket. With equal deliberation he got into the buggy and drove off at a jog trot across the square and down the street that led in the direction of the residence of Mrs. P _____. As we moved out of the square the undertaker came out of the store and saw us driving off together. I saw him glare at us, and then walk quietly down one of the streets. As yet his suspicions were not aroused. But in ten minutes some one told him about the license having been taken out. He recalled our driving off together, and saw the whole thing at a glance. Rushing to the livery stable he hired and mounted a horse and galloped out of town after us.

We had fully fifteen minutes the start of him. Brother Venerable jogged on quietly, stopped once to fix one of the traces, and after awhile we rolled up to the house of destination where the blushing bride was awaiting us.

Brother Venerable left me in the parlor with Mrs. P. — , and walking into a back room where the expectant damsel was tarrying, he saluted her with a resounding kiss and an equally echoing slap on the back. For a victim marrying for his sons' sake this did well.

In another minute they stood before me, and I began the beautiful marriage service with one other individual in the person of Mrs. P — as a witness.

While reading the opening sentences I became conscious of a great hallooing some distance up the road. At first I thought it was a person driving cattle in the field, and remember wishing that they would not cry so vociferously. The calls, however, became louder and louder, and I found myself recognizing the word, "Stop" — "Stop" and something else that I could not distinguish.

Just at that moment I saw a man on a white horse dashing down the road toward the gate, flourishing a pistol in his hand, and yelling: "Stop that marriage! stop that marriage."

In a flash I saw that trouble was ahead, and that the ceremony could not be finished before the frenzied man would be in upon us; and so I rushed quickly through the words, "Will you have this man to be your wedded husband; to which the lady cried out:

"I will! I will! I will!"

Skipping then to the end of the service, I began reading: "I pronounce you" — and before I could utter another word the infuriated undertaker was in the room prancing around like a madman, flourishing his pistol, cursing like a trooper, and crying out: "O that I had gotten here five minutes sooner!"

I saw at once that he was under the impression that the ceremony was over; and quietly determined to let him abide in the mistake. And so he raved on in his ignorance. He cursed Brother Venerable, and told him that he had better pay for the coffin of his first wife before he married another woman. He also informed him that he had better be getting ready for the grave himself instead of making himself ridiculous by getting married again. The idea, he said, of a man getting married who had one leg in the grave, and was old enough to be the grandfather of his bride.

Thus he screamed, raged, shook his fist and tore around the room, continuing to compliment in most fervent and picturesque language Brother Venerable, who stood in a corner combing his whiskers with trembling fingers while he fixed his cocked eye on vacancy, and kept saying: "That's all right!" "that's all right!"

After a few more volleys the furious undertaker flung himself out of the room, jumped on his horse and galloped back to town.

The instant he departed I motioned the couple to stand up, and commenced again in the middle of the service, and in three minutes more December and May were one.

As we have remarked before in this chapter that it is the custom of gentlemen to remunerate the preacher for a service which brings so much happiness to the marrying parties. Now, when in addition to the service

itself a minister has to go through what I did that day; when blood, vapor, smoke, galloping horses, yelling interrupters, cures, pistols, etc., crowd the hour — such a preacher has a right to expect something on the handsome and liberal order in the way of compensation.

Thus naturally and reasonably expectant I stood to receive what Brother Venerable in his intensified happiness felt disposed to give. This was what he gave,

Approaching me, and slapping me on the back he said,

“God bless you!”

This was his pay.

He thought doubtless that the blessing of Heaven surpassed in value all of earth’s treasure, which was true. But the preacher felt he had this blessing already direct from the skies, and questioned whether the “God bless you” would be honored above as a draft from such an economical individual. He the bridegroom wanted a material wife, but desired to pay for her in spiritual currency.

Some weeks afterward the preacher told a friend in a laughing way what he had received from Brother Venerable for the marriage service. The friend told another friend, and this one another, and some one told the sexton and the sexton tolled the bell, and soon everybody was whispering and laughing over the circumstance.

It was twelve months before the whisper reached Brother Venerable. It moved him. He felt that he could and would be generous. So driving up to the parsonage he called the preacher to come forth to the gate where he had masticated turnips over a year before. From the same spring wagon he took out a large gunny sack that was tied with a twine string. Passing the sack over to the preacher he said,

“I have been wanting to give you something for what you did for me last year. Here it is in the sack. I tell you, sir, it is a beauty.”

The preacher took the sack, untied the string, and looked in.

It was a watermelon!

CHAPTER 4

THE INDEFINITELY POSTPONED MARRIAGE

Among my visitors one morning was a handsome, dark-eyed, black-moustached gentleman of apparently thirty years of age. He had quite a pleasing address, and I at once recalled him as the son-in-law of a wealthy merchant in the city, but who had been absent for several years in a distant state. The marriage as I remembered had not been a happy one; the son-in-law being dissipated and extravagant. So a divorce was secured by the father-in-law, the daughter returned to the parental mansion and the son-in-law emigrated.

The man had passed out of my memory when suddenly on this morning he appeared as a visitor in my study. The announcement of his business was even more surprising. He told me that he had reformed and was back now in the city to remarry his wife; that in looking over the preachers he had selected me to perform the rite and wanted me to go with him at eight o'clock that evening for that purpose. He said also that he would call by for me and that we would walk together the trifling distance of fifteen or twenty blocks to the paternal homestead on such and such a street.

Of course I consented, and had the additional pleasure of thinking that I was to reunite two sundered lives and so felt that an unusual grace and blessing would attend such a ceremony.

At the appointed hour, the candidate for re-matrimony arrived and we walked through the gas-lighted streets to the home of the bride. As we went on together I could not but observe the nervousness of the bridegroom at my side. Some agitation is naturally expected, but in this case it actually looked like trepidation. I charitably attributed it to the recollection of the follies of the past, of how he had distressed the entire family he was now seeking to re-enter, and that these things very properly bore heavily upon his mind.

As we approached the house I was surprised not to see it brilliantly lighted. Instead of this the whole front was in darkness. This I soon readily explained to myself as natural, the sad history of the past very properly suggesting a private wedding.

Just as we had entered the front gate and were ascending the broad flight of steps that led up to the hall door, the bridegroom amazed me by saying,

“I am far from certain what kind of reception I am going to have here tonight.”

“What do you mean?”

“Just what I say,” he replied; “this is the first time I have been here in five years.”

“Have you not been here to call on the family?” I asked.

“I haven’t seen the family,” was his agitated response; “none,” he added, “except my wife.”

“Where did you see her?”

“We had a clandestine carriage ride yesterday.”

By this time we stood at the head of the gallery steps. I had wondered that the front door was not open, and that not even the hall light was burning. The whole house seemed dark. I began to understand now in some measure.

“Do you mean to tell me,” I said, turning upon him, “that the family know nothing of our coming here tonight?”

“Well, Doctor, that is just so. Only my wife and one other person know our mission this evening. I got you to come in order for you to persuade Mr. Rich to consent to our remarriage. I did not tell you of this before because I was afraid you would not come. But we know you have influence with Mr. Rich, and you are now our only hope. Doctor, don’t forsake us, but do the best you can, and God will bless you.”

To say that this cool announcement knocked me almost breathless is not to speak extravagantly. Here I had come expecting a brilliantly lighted mansion, smiling servants, flower-adorned hall, a cordial family welcome and a blushing bride in the background, and lo! I am unexpectedly thrust forward as a mediator and intercessor in a most delicate matter, where the father was known to be a man of his own will, and where the family had every right to feel that they had been deeply wronged in the past by the individual by my side.

The house was dark, but not darker than my mind at this moment. The feeling that I had been deceived rose up in my heart, and there was an inner debate for a moment as to whether I would go in and explain the matter to the family if necessity compelled it, or whether I should beat a hasty retreat.

But the divorced man came nearer and said with a pleading voice,

“Doctor, please stand by me tonight. We want to marry again. My wife is unhappy in our present parted relation, and I am a changed man, and we cannot but hope that her father will relent and allow us to marry. One other member of the family is in the secret with us, and we all think that you can get the consent of Mr. Rich. Won’t you help us this time and stand by us?”

What could I say, and what could I do? Of course in the interests of humanity and to make two hearts happy, I consented.

I told him to pull the doorbell. He did so, and we stood listening to the heavy clang in a distant part of the house. The “clang” had a mournful sound and seemed drearily unlike a marriage bell, but more like a funeral knell, to one of the two on the gallery.

After a full minute or so, we saw a light struck in the parlor, and then the hall door opened and we were ushered in by a servant. In a few minutes more after taking our seats the bride and a lady member of the family came in. There was a hurried conversation, and it was agreed that I should go at once to the private office of Mr. Rich on the basement floor, where in company with his son he was busy with his business books and papers. The bridegroom in the parlor and the other two elsewhere were to await

developments. This last word can be divided legitimately into the following syllables, Dev-il-up-meant.

I was conducted by a servant through a long hall, down a staircase, along a narrow corridor to the office. As I was ushered in, the father arose with a pleasant smile and cordial greeting and asked with a warm shake of the hand what good wind had blown me there.

The cordial greeting made my heart sick, feeling as I did that my welcome would not be so glad when he heard the nature of my errand.

After a few polite commonplace remarks, and noticing the interrogative expression on the eye-brows of Mr. Rich, that he was still puzzled to know the object of my night visit, I said,

“Mr. Rich, I hope you will hear me patiently for a few minutes in behalf of some who are closely related to you.”

Mr. Rich said nothing but looked steadily at me.

I continued,

“You remember doubtless your son-in-law who left this city several year ago.”

“I have every reason to remember him,” was the ominous reply.

“I want to say a word about him.”

At this juncture the son, Mr. Rich, Jr., who was sitting near by engaged in writing, arose and went into a small side room, feeling doubtless that the interview was to be of a private nature.

“I am glad to tell you,” I said, “that your son-in-law has become a changed man, and is trying to redeem the past.”

“I have not the slightest confidence in his change,” replied the father-in-law. “I know him too well.”

I felt that I was making poor progress, but pushed on bravely to the end, and told Mr. Rich that the son-in-law wanted him to know that he had reformed, that he wanted to rectify the wrongs of the past; that he still

loved his daughter, and he would be happy to have his consent to and blessing upon their marriage.

The effect of this speech upon Mr. Rich was remarkable. He became at first crimson, and then purple. He sat for a moment in speechless astonishment, and then blurted out —

“Marry my daughter again! Marry her after he spent her money, broke her heart, and sent my own wife to a premature grave never, never, never — while I live!”

“But consider his youth at the time,” I said. “You know how men are changed under grace.”

“He has got no grace,” was the retort. “You don’t know him; you don’t know what you are asking for.”

Then followed in rapid sentences a brief recital of the wrong and insults heaped upon him and his family by the man whose cause I was advocating until my heart sank, at the history.

“But,” I urged, “his wife still loves him and is willing to be remarried.”

“I don’t believe a word of it,” exclaimed Mr. Rich; “who said so?”

“He said so,” I replied.

“When and where?” was the quick question.

“He told me with his own lips today in my study.”

“Do you mean to tell me that he is in the city?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Where is he now?”

“Upstairs in your parlor.”

If a bomb had fallen before the father and exploded it could not have startled and shocked him more than the simple sentence I uttered.

“What!” he thundered. “In my house! In the house where he brought misery, insult, wrong, and we can say death, too. In my house!”

The infuriated man was on his feet and starting toward the door, when he was interrupted by his son, Winwood Rich, Jr., rushing in, as full of fury as his father, crying out,

“Where is my pistol! The villain! To think of his coming into our house! I’ll kill him as soon as I can get at him.”

In another moment he had secured the pistol and made a dash for a side door. His father thundered at him in vain, he broke through the door and to my surprise and his he found himself in the detaining grasp of several females of the family, whom, it seems, had been silent auditors if not spectators of what had transpired in the office. The door was banged behind the angry young man, and I heard the excited outcry of the women,

“Winwood, don’t do it! don’t do it!”

And his reply: “Let me go! let me go, I tell you! I will kill him.”

Then came the sound of struggling, and I could tell that he had loosed himself and was running toward the back steps to ascend to the parlor where sat, unconscious of his danger, the waiting groom.

Two of the ladies pursued Winwood, screaming, while the third flew up a small stairway that led more directly to the parlor, and, suddenly rushing into the room, cried to the man, who was already excited by the loud cries downstairs,

“Run for your life! Winwood is coming to kill you! You have not a single moment to spare! Run!”

The divorced man needed no other bidding. Stopping not for his hat, he flew out of the parlor, across the hall, out on the gallery, down the step, along the front walk, and out at the front gate with a swiftness that was as amazing as it was well-timed. As he dashed panic-struck out of the gate he ran up against a Methodist preacher who was returning from a pastoral round at this late hour. Recognizing him, the fugitive said in gasps,

“Dr. Blank, run in there quickly and save Dr. C___, they are about to kill him.”

The preacher with a cool nod and dignified wave of his hand said, “Dr. C___ is well able to take care of himself.”

But the fugitive stopped not to be reassured of this fact, but sped on through the darkness leaving to his fate the man whom he had made a scape-goat of, led into the wilderness, and left there to die.

Meantime as I stood in Mr. Rich’s office down-stairs I heard the screaming and running, the receding voice and footsteps and looked every second to hear the crack of a pistol and the heavy fall of a human form on the floor. Mr. Rich, Sr., had disappeared through distant galleries and halls in pursuit of Mr. Rich, Jr., and I had been left alone.

After a few moments I ascended to the upper hall where the center of agitation now seemed to be, and where all the actors of the night were gathered saved the divorced, who by this time was far away up the city.

The hall presented a scene that for excitement, loud talking and natural groupings would have done honor to some dramas. The females were frightened and fluttered. Winwood, pistol in hand, after lamenting aloud that he got upstairs a minute too late, and, vowing fearful vengeance upon the man on the early morning, disappeared down-stairs. Meantime the father paraded up and down the hall going through what is known as “raving.” He called on things above and below to witness to things on the right and left. He spoke of gray hairs, broken hearts, and dead people. He threw up his hands toward the ceiling and brought them down again. He refused chairs that were offered him by the females. He was “raving,” and could not afford to sit down.

The whole scene would have been impressive if the father had been properly costumed for a “raver,” but he happened to have on a little white sack coat that descended only two inches below the waistband of his black pantaloons, and being a man of broad dimensions, the attire and figure were not melodramatic. If he had only had on a dressing gown or anything that scraped the floor, it would have been well. But that unfortunate bobtail garment detracted much from the power of the ravings. So the more

he raved, the more the women exchanged glances, and the more I shook with amusement in a chair in a distant corner.

Maybe the shaking was misunderstood and regarded as heart emotion and so produced additional inspiration for more dramatics. Just as once in a church a lady took a violent chill and shook throughout the entire sermon. The preacher observed it and construing it to be the effect of his sermon upon her conscience felt great liberty and surpassed himself.

How we left the house we do not remember; only that when the parental caldron ceased to boil so furiously, and the dramatist could descend from heroics to such common speeches as "Good night," we withdrew. It must have taken an effort on his part to say, "Come again," in view of the circumstances of the evening.

At ten o'clock we reached home and were preparing to retire, when a thundering rap came on the front door. Redressing and going forth we found the divorced standing on the gallery in the starlight. With considerable dignity of manner I said,

"Good evening; what can I do for you?"

"I came to see if you had gotten home."

"I am here," I replied.

"Did they hurt you?" asked the divorced.

"I am alive and well, I thank you," was the dry response.

"I was afraid from all the noise in the house that they were killing you."

"I am surprised," I said, "that you did not stop to help me, or see if I was dead, if that was the case."

"O," responded my visitor, "I hurried off down town to arm myself."

I did not tell him that while he was arming himself I could have been killed a thousand times.

After a pause he spoke again.

“Where is young Rich?”

“At home.”

“Well, Doctor, I am on the warpath, and will never stop until I have that man’s blood.”

The memory of this man’s rapid retreat from the house, and his calling it a “warpath” was almost too much for me, but I replied,

“You need not waste time looking for Mr. Rich, Jr., for he will be out early looking for you.”

“Did he say so?” quickly asked the man on the warpath.

“Yes, that was the last thing I heard him say tonight before I left; that he would find you and kill you on sight in the morning. So my advice to you is that if you do not want to be killed you had best take the first train west in the morning.”

The divorced man was deeply thoughtful for a minute, and evidently determined to give up the warpath and try a towpath instead. He uttered a hasty farewell, and not waiting for the day with all its unknown possibilities, boarded a train that very night and departed for regions distant and unknown.

And so this was how the wedding was indefinitely postponed.

CHAPTER 5

SOME FUNERAL SCENES

The funeral we trust is peculiar to this world. For solemnity and sadness it stands preeminent among many other sad and solemn things. Whether it is the burial of a child or aged person, whether the company gathered at the grave be small or great, composed of the upper or lower classes, yet silence, awe, and melancholy like spiritual statuary are felt to be there, and in an influential way preside over and control the scene.

The writer has buried hundreds of his fellow-creatures. Some in the village in the midst of the flowery scenes of spring. Some in the country graveyard in full view of the autumn fields with haze-covered hills in the distance, and crows flying over the golden cornfields or cawing high up in the air. Some have been in the large city cemeteries in the midst of a wilderness of marble tombs and pillars, with lines and groups of cedars and waving magnolias.

But all were impressive, and the voice of prayer and the word of God never failed to come with peculiar power upon the silent funeral throng.

The scene is familiar, is often repeated, and yet never loses its power. The life that was ushered into our world and welcomed with smile and other expressions of joy, has now gone out into a new and unknown world, to return no more. And as men gather for the last look at the pale, still face, and think of what its owner now knows, and how far he is in distant spheres and how fixed in character forever, there cannot but be solemnity.

What a scene it is, the silent throng, the uncovered heads, the voice of the preacher breaking the silence with the memorable and ever solemnizing words,

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

Then comes the falling of the first clod on the coffin lid, the patting of the earth with the spades, the laying of a few flowers at the headboard, the

pause, the mental good-bye, the noiseless dispersing of the crowd lest we waken the sleeper, and the sight from the carriage window of the fresh-made grave in the distance, left in loneliness and to the darkness of the coming night.

Out of many of these funeral scenes a few detach themselves and call for peculiar recognition because of some scene or history connected with them.

We were burying a poor man in one of the New Orleans cemeteries. He had died, said the doctor, from general debility, but the face even in death was suggestive of hard living and poor or insufficient food.

At the door of the tomb stood the wife and two children, the youngest being a little boy of about three years. The sexton with trowel, brick, and mortar was rapidly closing up the opening of the vault into which the coffin had been deposited. Nothing but the click of the trowel was heard, while forty or fifty red-shirted firemen stood motionless or quietly whispered in groups. The eye went from the black-robed figure of the wife to the little boy who stood by her with his face turned toward his father's tomb. From them our attention wandered for a moment to the outspreading boughs of some neighboring magnolia trees, as the workman was concluding his melancholy labor. Just as he laid the last brick in place, completely closing up the vault, such a heart-broken cry or wail went up from the little boy as melted every heart and drew every eye upon him.

It seems that the child had kept his eye riveted on the workman and the whole proceeding. Devoted to his father he was anxiously watching to see what was being done with him, thinking doubtless he would be released by and by. But when he saw the last brick put into place, and his father shut out from sight, the complete loss and final separation seemed to break upon him for the first time, and uttering that peculiar cry of distress that moved us all, he turned to his mother, buried his face in her black dress, weeping bitterly and saying,

“I want my papa.”

The writer could not rest that night until he visited again that poor little dwelling in the great city. It eased him some to bring some sweetmeats to the little fellow, and to kneel down with them all in prayer and commit

them to the keeping of One who said that he would be a husband to the widow and a father to the orphan.

Another funeral memory is connected with our pastorate in Vicksburg.

The subject was a lovely young woman of not over twenty-four. She was both wife and mother, losing her husband, however, several years before. She faded away from the world rather than died. We visited her a number of times and saw her ripen for the fields of light. Yet it was impossible to look at the face so young and beautiful, and the little girl, her only child, prattling about the room, and think of death taking her and parting the two, without a great pang of the heart.

One morning she closed her eyes, and the gentle spirit winged its flight to the bosom of God.

The body was taken by rail twelve miles west across the Mississippi river into the State of Louisiana, and we buried her in the afternoon at the home of her childhood on an old Southern plantation. The grave was in full view of the house at the edge of the grove of trees that surround the home and that had sung their leafy song over her when she was a child, and now sighed a requiem over the young wife and mother who had come back, and lain down to sleep forever at the feet of the grand, shadowy, friendly old wood.

After the simple funeral the neighbors scattered, the colored people went back to the quarters and the family returned to the house.

It was a still summer afternoon, and with my heart filled with pensive reflections, I sat at the window of my bedroom from which I could see the newly made grave. A few locusts were singing their drowsy song from the tops of the trees, a broad, cultivated country of cotton and corn stretched away in the distance, and on the horizon rested a beautiful pink cloud.

Hearing voices I withdrew my attention from wood, fields, and crimson cloud, and afar off saw playing around the grave of the young mother her little girl of four years of age. As her prattling voice came floating to me on the breeze through the window, all unconscious of her great loss, while at the same time knowing that her "mamma" was underneath the sod, a sudden mist veiled my sight and the heart swelled until it literally ached.

We have seen many tenderly beautiful pictures in nature and on canvas, but a more pathetically lovely one we never saw than the view from the window on that still summer evening.

The quiet fields, the crimson cloud in the south, the sighing grove about the house, the locusts' song, the fresh grave under the trees containing the silent form of the lovely young mother, while about the simple mound played, laughed and prattled in the sunset the motherless child, who was happy in the fancy that the mother was close by.

Yes; just a few feet away under the grass. Maybe, for all we know, the mother was still nearer. Anyhow we felt that the angels were walking about unseen under the trees guarding the prattling innocent.

A third memory we give to the reader.

We were sitting in the parlor at Vicksburg when a lady of our acquaintance called to say good-bye to my mother and myself, as she was about to take a trip down the Mississippi River to the Crescent City. She had engaged passage on the magnificent but ill-fated steamer, Robert E. Lee. While she spoke some parting words to us her child about eighteen months old played on the carpet at our feet. It was a child of striking beauty and several of the family commented on his appearance.

These two, mother and child, took passage on the steamer that afternoon at five o'clock. The husband, a young merchant, had a vague foreboding of ill, and in a few last anxious words to the captain said,

“Take good care of my wife and baby.”

The captain with a hearty, reassuring laugh told the young husband he had made many a trip, and landed many a passenger, and all would be well.

The mother that night sat up until midnight engaged in conversation with a lady while the child slept peacefully near by in a stateroom.

A little after twelve the child awoke and began to fret. The mother begging to be excused and saying good-night retired to her stateroom, disrobed and lay down by the baby. In a few moments the little fellow fell asleep.

At one o'clock the mother was aroused by the stifling fumes of smoke coming through the transom into the room. Springing to the door and

looking down the long saloon of the cabin she saw that the boat was on fire and the flames already were halfway down the cabin. Smoke and fire were everywhere, and it was impossible to go forward. As she stood for a moment paralyzed at the dreadful sight, she saw the young lady with whom she had conversed so lately running along through the cabin, turn and give a wild look at her and then disappear in the smoke. Her body was found several days afterwards.

The mother saw that she had no time to dress, the fire was coming in such frightful rapidity. So taking a life preserver she fastened it about her body, and next placed the baby between her body and the preserver. In a minute more she stood on the back guards. The night was dark. The boat was out in the stream. The Mississippi, at this point nearly a mile wide, flowed a dark, cold tide fully forty feet beneath her.

There was but one thing to do. The fire had cut her off from the forward part of the boat, and was rapidly approaching. She had to burn up or leap that forty feet down into the dark river beneath her. She had but a few seconds to decide. Standing on the guards, she steadied herself a moment, and then sprang out into the night, and came down with an arrowy rush into the river. The shock of course was great, and so great that unconsciously she loosened her hold on the baby, and so the little one slipped out from under the preserver and floated away in the darkness unknown to the mother, who battled with the waves with one hand and thought that she embraced child and life preserver with the other.

Some one heard her cries, and several men in a skiff picked her up out of the dark flood as he was drifting downstream.

When they drew her into the skiff and she saw at a glance that the child was gone, no mother need to be told of the agony of that moment, and the wild cry of anguish that rang along the banks.

The telegraph clicked the news next morning to Vicksburg and the world of the burning of the boat, the loss of life, and the history of the drowning of the child as already narrated, with the additional fact that the body had not yet been found.

It would be hard to describe the horror that was felt all over the city as the news was told with troubled faces and low, grieved voices.

We doubt not that thousands prayed that the body of the little one might be found.

Day followed day. The young mother was brought back to the city and was prostrated in her room with a grief so deep that all felt that the effort to console would be a mockery.

O if the body could be found!

So felt and wished and prayed thousands. Papers were scanned eagerly, and people asked one another continually

“Has the body of the child been found?”

Mothers all over the city pressed their little darlings closer to them at night, as they thought of the sweet little dead child floating about somewhere in the yellow current or driftwood of the Mississippi.

The writer among others prayed many times,

“O Lord, if thou wilt, let the little one be found.”

One morning fully ten days after the accident, the telegraph flashed the news,

“The child’s body has been found!”

Many eyes were wet that day as the short dispatch was read; and many lips thanked God for the recovery of the body though the little spirit had long ago taken its flight to heaven.

Later intelligence revealed that the body was discovered forty miles below the scene of the accident, and was slowly floating downstream. A colored man was standing on the bank when he thought he saw the flutter of a white garment far out in the river. Rowing out he found the dead baby. That which had attracted his attention was a portion of the night dress that still clung to it.

It was the burial of this child that made one of the funerals which the author has said he could never forget.

We recall today the sunny parlor; the lace curtains stirred gently by the morning breeze; the song of the birds outside and the odor of the flowers

from the front garden. The parlors were thronged with ladies and gentlemen who sat perfectly still, or if moving did so noiselessly. Not a single whisper could be heard. The mother was invisible. The father, white and haggard, sat in another room.

On the white marble-topped center table rested a little white coffin, satin-lined and silver-plated. The child was within the white casket, that was of itself half buried under fragrant white flowers. The baby had come home, but so different from the way it had departed. It was asleep and would never awaken in this world again.

Thought was busy with all about that fearful night; the burning boat, the awful leap in the flood, the lonely struggle in the waves by the little innocent, and then the ten days' drifting on the broad bosom of the Mississippi. All were glad to get the child back even though the soul had fled and the body had to be buried.

The preacher's voice was low and tremulous as he read the service for the dead and prayed. He remembers to this day that as he recited the beautiful and solemn words of the ritual there was not a dry eye in the room.

CHAPTER 6

THE CHOIR

The choir is an institution. As such it demands recognition, and requires skillful and delicate handling. As it is desired that it should be composed of the finest voices in the congregation, it is not always a spiritual collection of individuals, but instead musical art and taste tower frequently above piety.

Intended at first to be a help, and kind of musical servant to the preacher and congregation, it some years ago became inflated with the abundance of wind in the organ loft, “threw the tea overboard,” declared its independence, and in many city churches today rules both congregation and preacher.

The Bible says that it has pleased God to save the world through preaching. God relies on the word preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to convict, subdue and save men. Hence preaching is the feature of religious worship that should ever be kept prominent, and relied on under Christ as the instrument above all others that God is using for the salvation of men.

So whenever the church is truly scriptural, spiritual and powerful, it is noticeable that great emphasis and prominence are given to the preaching hour. Whereas, on the other hand, it is a mark of decadence, decay, formality and spiritual death when the sermon becomes an essay of fifteen minutes, and the choir monopolizes the better part of the hour.

We would not underestimate the value of singing. Its recognition in all ages in religious worship shows it to be a desirable, powerful and blessed adjunct of the gospel. Nor does the author desire this chapter to be construed into an indiscriminate attack upon choirs, as if all were worldly and hurtful.

On the contrary we know many beautiful and devout souls who help in that part of divine service, and whose voices God delights to honor, and

who sing the gospel to our souls with a tender power that makes the hearer a better man or woman. We all have reason to thank God for such men as Sankey, Bliss, Phillips, Sweney, Kirkpatrick and a host of others who have set the gospel to music and sung it around the world. We likewise bless the Holy One for the Christian singers of the Church who have banded themselves together to add the charm and power of religious song to prayer and sermon.

Still it is well to remember that no revival of religion was ever secured by days of protracted singing. No one dreams of such a thing. While we all know that days of faithful preaching has always, and will ever bring down the divine power and secure the revival.

This is significant and teaches us at once the relative importance of the two, and that the choir should never be given preeminence, but used simply as a help and kept subservient to the pulpit.

It is to such places and instances where the choir has swept out of its true orbit, where it has ceased to be a subject and taken the throne, so to speak, that we call attention. Being formed often of a number of unconverted people, they have taken the greater part of the hour that should be devoted to the exposition of the Word of God and have introduced a style of music that so far from being spiritual is operatic and worldly.

We once sat in the pulpit with a suffering fellow-preacher in just such a church, and heard the organ quaver, rumble, squeak, and roar out a series of nothings from five to ten minutes; while the pastor and his flock sat motionless until the “nothing” was ended. It was called the

“Organ Voluntary.”

It seemed to the writer to be the “Organ Involuntary,” as it was made up of sounds that we never heard before and that we are confident were entirely unpremeditated on the part of the performer. We feel absolutely certain that we could make as much music, yes more, by striking at random all over the keyboard of an organ with outspread hands and fingers.

Then followed the

“Choir Voluntary.”

In this for fully ten minutes the singers shrieked and bellowed, called to each other and answered back, and then fought with invisible antagonist, and all shrieked at once together three times, and died, moaning in a low voice, except one who lived to tell in guttural tones something that no one understood, and then he died also. I for one was glad, and listened to the organ that was “mourning to itself apart,” with a sense of relief to ear and heart, when suddenly the organ gave a start as if something had jumped out of the bushes and scared it, and all the dead came to life, and sent forth an instantaneous and contemporaneous yell that fairly lifted me from my chair and raised my hair!

Then ensued a kind of musical squabble in which the whole quartet took part, all very red in the face, while the rooster-tail feathers in the hat of the lady soprano fairly stood on end, and her eyebrows disappeared in her bangs, as she ran screeching up and down the leger lines above the staff.

Meanwhile the female alto swooped in hovering owl circles around the soprano, crying “hoo-hoo-hoo” — “hoo-hoo-hoo.” The tenor ascended to the comb of the house and called on the skies for help in terms that sounded like, “Mare-see!” The bass was lost in the cellar and kept grunting about something we could not understand.

Finally after ten minutes of running up and down stairs, and bawling and screeching to each other, they all met in the garret and yelled “Ah-men” — “Ah-men” four times. The last “Ah-men” was four times longer than the others and was pulled out thus, Ah-h-h-h-h-h — men-n-n-n-n-n-n.” To which I mentally responded “Yes,” and thought why not Ah-women too?

One could not but feel that the masculine sex was being cruelly struck at under cover of the hymn.

After all this the preacher said, “Let us pray;” and we never went down on our knees with greater thankfulness, We felt that it was time to pray. That our only hope was in prayer. So with a stunned and almost despairing feeling we went down on our knees. The choir and most of the congregation sat upright.

While we prayed the choir behind us were turning over the leaves of their song books and getting ready for another musical parade or escapade. They, as we have said, sat up, for it is not expected of choirs to kneel.

They do the singing for some churches at so much a month, and could hardly be expected to take part in other parts of divine worship, like kneeling and listening to the sermon, without a corresponding rise in their salaries.

As the prayer lasted only three minutes, the singing thus far was seventeen minutes ahead.

After this came a hymn with a familiar name, but with such a new arrangement of quarter and half notes that the choir had the whole thing to itself for five minutes more.

Then there was a four-minute Scripture lesson to which no one seemed to pay any attention. Then another five-minute hymn, that had a faint resemblance to "Arlington." After which followed seven minutes of announcements.

Just before the fifteen-minute essay, complimentarily and magnanimously called the sermon, came the

"Vocal Solo."

This lasts generally from twelve to fifteen minutes, and is sung either by a gentleman whose voice sounds as if his mouth were full of mush; or by a small-sized lady who sings soprano. She is usually quite homely and has been selected for the position on account of her marvelous musical powers.

She begins with a little, thin, quavering voice almost nasal, which she keeps up for two pages of the piece which she holds in her hand. Just as she seems settled for the hour in the quavering business and the uninitiated begin to expect nothing else, she suddenly springs aloft with a "Whoop-eeee!" an octave and a half higher.

This of course has a fine effect. It is in fact to the musical nerve and world what a bucket of cold water suddenly dashed on the body is to the physical man, quite startling and exhilarating. We recommend it to preachers who find difficulty in arousing their audiences. Simply go along through commonplaces for awhile and then without giving the crowd a moment's warning screech out,

“Whoop-eeee!”

Why not? Will it not produce an effect? If “Whoop-eeee’s” and yells are allowable in music why not in sermons? If in the choir why not in the pulpit? If the soprano can give a sudden yell why cannot the preacher?

Brethren of the pulpit, stand up for your rights. Act on the suggestion, and astonish your congregation; and then turn round and astonish the choir.

Why not? They have made you jump many a time; why not make them leap and squirm?

After the female soloist had given the sudden war whoop, she returned to walks of peace again, and meandered around without any tune at all as far as we could judge. She seemed to be in trouble about something, at least we feared so from the notes, for the words we could not distinguish. So she quavered and whip-poor-willed and William-a-trimble-toed, and sobbed

“Pee-tee-mee,”

Which I did from my very heart. So did others in the audience, for I saw two young ladies about the age of the soloist wiping their eyes.

After the service one of them embraced her and said

“Clarinda, you must not strain that heavenly voice of yours. O child, as I heard you today I thought I was floating above the earth and listening to the angels.”

Upon which Clarinda cooed, showed her teeth and tapping her on the arm with her fan said,

“Flatterer!”

A little later she said,

“My voice was in wretched trim today.”

The remarks of the young lady and Clarinda brought light to me. We, it seems, had been listening to a classic piece, and it was “not of earth.” The

singer also had “strained her voice;” and she herself had admitted her voice was in poor trim. We had thought so from the start.

Now all was clear; we knew we had never heard anything on “earth” like it before. And all that quavering was her effort with an untrimmed voice and with “straining” to rise up to the “whooop-eeeeee” notes. She had succeeded in doing this only once. Her friends, then, must have been weeping over her failure.

With this thought we spoke to a female relative that very day who understood music and owned an upright piano. But she said very warmly that the piece had been perfectly rendered, and divinely sung, that Miss Clarinda had never done better, and so we were all in the dark again.

After the sermon came the

“Collection Voluntary” or Offertory.

The organ was alone this time again, and the collectors kept involuntary time, and dipped their plates at the people with a regular, rhythmic, harmonious movement,

Keeping time, time, time, With a sort of Runic rhyme.

This they were well able to do, as the organist in this piece did nothing but practice his notes and run the scales. We had heard our little girls do it many times at home and so instantly recognized it. But when we mentioned this fact at home to the ladies of the family, all of whom are musical, they cried out at once that we did not know what we were talking about, that what we thought was the scales was Prof. Shimmermoon’s “Symphony of the Spheres!”

Upon this we collapsed again.

In addition to all the voluntaries and the two hymns and the Gloria at the end of the prayer, there was a third hymn after the collection. As we read the familiar name of “Hebron” we puckered our mouth to begin; but somebody had been fooling with the notes again, and while we were persuaded it must be “Hebron,” yet we saw it afar off, only now and then, from the hill-tops of a few musical notes we remembered. The rest of the country was so changed that we were afraid to risk the journey, and so sat

down in despair this side of Hebron and let the choir go up and take the land.

Up to this time the organist and quartet had taken up fifty minutes of the hour and a quarter allowed for morning service.

Then came the doxology. We never would have known "Old Hundred" if some one had not told us. It was three times as long as usual with any number of semiquavers and hemi-demi-semiquavers patched on to the original garment in which we first made its acquaintance.

After this came the benediction, and then we had what we suppose is called the

"Farewell Voluntary."

It was a parting shot from the organist into the confused and retreating ranks of the audience. It was a medley made up of fragments of a horn-pipe, jig, a Virginia reel, and a regular Negro cabin "break-down." Under its influence the congregation was literally skipped, waltzed, and flung out of doors.

Divine morning service was over! And the feeling now was, To your tents, O Israel!

We have kept to the last the description of an "Organ Voluntary" we heard some months since.

Wearied from having held a number of meetings, and being free one Sabbath morning to attend service where we would, we went to the church of a sister denomination.

We sat down in a pew in a meditative and prayerful mood. Our heart was melted and the windows of the soul were open toward Jerusalem.

The church was large, the isles were thickly carpeted, the seats were cushioned, the windows were stained, the pulpit was carved, the great organ towered up behind the pulpit toward the ceiling and the people were noiselessly slipping in and filling the building.

Suddenly a side door opened in the choir gallery and the organist followed by the quartet composed of two males and two females entered in single

file and took their respective seats. The organist, who was a pale, thin-faced man with moustache, goatee and eye-glasses, got upon his stool, carefully spread out some sheets of music, began pulling out stops, refixed his eyeglasses, straightened his coat tails as though he meant business, laid his fingers lightly on the keyboard and proceeded to give us the “Opening Organ Voluntary.”

This is what we heard. We took it down on the spot. It can be relied on as being perfectly correct.

“Tweedle!”

This was a fine little note, away up in the treble; so fine it was, and faint, that one could just hear it. Judging from the dimensions of the organ, and the preparation of the organist, the size of the first sound was a little disappointing. We had expected to hear a lion roar at least.

“Tweedle!” Long pause.

“Tweedle! tweedle!” Long pause.

“Tweedle! tweedle! tweedle!”

Now, we said, we will have it, when suddenly the organist backslided and fell back to first principles.

“Tweedle!”

We then began looking for another tweedle, when lo! he left the treble and went down into the bass and the organ said,

“Doodle!”

“Doodle! doodle!”

“Doodle! doodle! doodle!”

What next? Would the Doodles be increased to four or fall back to one?

We thought of the time when we had put straw down queer little holes we had found in the ground, and placing our mouth close to the earth had sung mournfully as taught by the colored people,

“Doodle-bug! doodle-bug! doodle! doodle doodle!”

Sometimes we caught them and sometimes we did not. We were getting affected over these memories. The heart was stirred. The organist with skillful hand had swept us back to childhood's happy hours when in our mother's back yard we had mourned over the doodle-bug holes. We confess to being moved. When with that peculiar suddenness of the musical world we were lifted from the "Doodles" and set down in a nest of "Tweedles."

How they squirmed, twisted, got tangled and fell over each other. In and out, up and down, here they went, fifty Tweedles in a minute, ending in one long Tweedle, thus —

"Twe-e-e-e-e-e — del-l-l-l-l-l!"

Then came a line of Doodles, all tangled up together, and ending with the patriarch of the family, one long

"Doo-o-o-o-o — dul-l-l-l-l-l."

It was difficult to keep back the tears here. The doodle call was so mournful. It was like the call of a woman for lost cows in the evening, when, softened by distance, the cry is lost in the echoing hills,

"Doo-o-o-o-o — dul-l-l-l-l-l."

After this there was a pause; when the organist turned a page of his music, reset his eye-glasses, restraightened his coat tails and brought the "Tweedles" and the "Doodles" together in a regular Kilkenny cat fight.

No pen, pencil or brush could justly describe what followed in the next five minutes.

Here and there a "Tweedle" and "Doodle" were paired off; but yonder a dozen "Doodles" had one "Tweedle" down; and yonder a dozen "Tweedles" were chasing a single "Doodle" who was flying for his life. Here and there, up up and down the keyboard, round and round they went. The sun was darkened, the moon turned to blood, the earth trembled and shook, the stars were falling, the sea and waves were roaring, a cyclone met an earthquake and cloudburst at Niagara Falls — when suddenly! in the midst of it all the organ which had seemed to be reeling, staggering, moaning, groaning, — went,

“Clang” — “Bang” — “Crash-h-h-h!” and everything was still.

The cold chills went over me; my blood turned to ice. My heart almost ceased to beat! I felt that all was lost.

The silence which followed was more dreadful than the noise. Could we have courage to look up and see what was left? It must be done. We owed it to the organist and to humanity. If anybody was left alive in the choir we must get them out at every hazard. And so lifting our anxious eyes we stood bewildered and amazed to see — that no one was hurt!

The preacher was sitting calmly in his chair; the quartet were in a row as quiet as if nothing had happened, and the organist was slowly turning the leaves of the music before him in his search after the next piece.

And so it came to pass that some of us on “Tweedles” and some of us on “Doodles,” some on planks of remembered strains, and others on broken pieces of the “Voluntary,” — lo! we had all escaped safe to land.

CHAPTER 7

STREET PREACHING

When churches get filled with the Holy the Ghost, and have uncontainable blessings, it is certain to manifest itself in field and street preaching. The river overflows its banks; the steam sends the locomotive flying; the fire-filled man cannot keep still, and so sweeps over the land.

So flamed the apostles in the first century, Luther and his adherents in the sixteenth, and Wesley and his followers in the eighteenth century. When Christians obtain the uncontainable blessing that Malachi speaks of, then it is they go forth to seek for souls and cannot be restrained. Wherever man is found they go, whether in highways, hedges, or market places; the burden is on them, the message of fire is to be delivered, and how they are straitened until the work is done. The ways adopted may be unusual, the methods irregular, and not such as all will approve, but people are reached, the warning and invitation delivered and salvation flows.

Nevertheless, the sailing is not smooth. Going forth with a loving heart, and with invitations to pardon and purity, yet many mock, and hindrances and difficulties of every kind arise from the very people we are desirous of saving. Organ grinders are hired and made to play against our singing, praying and preaching, the popular, catchy songs of the day. Dogs are provoked to fight in the outskirts of the crowd; and vehicles and horses are ridden furiously past to exasperate the leaders of the movement. More than once we have seen a person who had been sitting on the edge of the speaker's platform quietly listening to the sermon, suddenly spring to his feet and throw up his hands with a howl that could be heard a block away. At first one would have supposed that conviction had struck the party, but as we observed that he rubbed his leg instead of beating his breast, and used fervent and most improper language, we were led to inquire the secret of the excitement and discovered that a small boy hidden under the platform had thrust a pin almost up to the head in the calf of the exclamatory individual.

These are only a few of the pranks played, and but a brief glance at the difficulties that beset open-air preaching. Yet all is cheerfully endured by the man who loves souls better than his own personal ease and comfort.

A revival spirit had broken out in a certain city district, and the churches, animated with a soul-saving desire, at once inaugurated a series of street services. Each church sent a chosen delegation of workers, and so moving from point to point, it was trusted that in a few months the entire city would feel the effects of the work.

It happened on one occasion that the meeting was moved to one of the most difficult parts of the city. It was quite populous, but a hoodlum element predominated and it was notorious. It also happened that the writer was the preacher appointed to open the meeting in this peculiarly hard field.

If ever there was a time when we needed choice and numerous workers, it was that first night in this spiritually benighted quarter. When we came on the ground we found that the "help" (?) had arrived before us. This "help" consisted of a thin young man dying of consumption, two lads of about seventeen years of age and a timid young lady to operate the organ.

As we took our places upon the platform, and observed the thousand or fifteen hundred dark, unsympathetic faces that were gathered about us, and then looked at the "help" there was considerable misgiving of heart.

The platform was illuminated by a lantern swung to a post that shot up from one of the corners; the crowd itself that surged like great billows all around us was revealed more clearly by an electric light in the middle of the square some rods away.

There was a feeling upon our little company that we were going to have a difficult time, but mustering up faith and courage we began. The little, asthmatic organ quavered under the opening hymn, while the consumptive brother with a very weak and scarcely audible bass, and the two boys with gosling sopranos assisted in the feeble beginning.

While the Consumptive was doing his best, he observed that his umbrella lying on the floor by his side was slowly but surely disappearing. Without losing a note the Consumptive quietly reached down and stopped further

progress of his property by a grasp that was firmer than that of the unseen individual who was trying to abstract it.

The prayer that followed the hymn was utterly lost in the general conversation that went on all around the platform by the great throng. Then followed another quavering hymn by the goslings, while the young lady bent to her task on the wheezy, little organ, like a galley slave to the oar.

Many remarks of a most uncomplimentary nature were passed upon our appearance as we went on in the service.

It would have been better that night if the preacher had selected a tender gospel subject, but instead we took a dark topic and made Mt. Sinai rock and groan for nearly an hour. We had not preached more than five minutes when we saw an egg thrown at us. It missed our head a few inches. We stopped in our subject a few seconds to remonstrate against this peculiar attack, and then resumed the Mt. Sinai rumblings. After this came more eggs. Some flew wide of the mark, some came very near, one raising the hair on the back of the head, while another broke and splattered on the post that held the lantern. A great shout of laughter greeted this decided hit, but we went on.

The eggs came from different directions. Either there was more than one throwing them, or the man doing the pelting was moving about from place to place to keep from being recognized.

The flying egg made a curious missile. It could be plainly seen the instant it arose above the heads of the people, and appeared in the electric light like a white ball making its way toward one, and being light in substance it came with less velocity than a stone, giving one an opportunity to dodge if one felt so inclined. We determined, however, not to dodge, but to trust the Lord to keep us safe from every missile. So we preached on with much mental anxiety as to the final outcome.

At the same time we noticed that our "help," the Consumptive and the two Goslings, were all most affectionately hugging their seats and so keeping out of the range of the eggs. As we were in the meteoric belt or zone of flying eggs we felt a growing desire for private life, or at least the end of our sermon and a seat lower down with the Goslings.

While all this was going on, we had a great deal of bantering interjected from various individuals in the crowd who differed with us sermonically, theologically, and always facetiously, with every point we made. Among these gainsayers was a tall, gangling fellow who tried to entangle us in our talk in various ways and so put us to confusion. At one time he desired to know “whether we took the crowd out there to be a set of monkeys,” to which we gave the sudden retort —

“No, but if you do not keep quiet and lay low I will take you to be the father of that entire breed of animals.”

At this there was a big guffaw in the crowd, and our joker was decidedly discomfited. But while he stood before the platform evidently meditating another verbal attack, one of the eggs came from the rear, described an arc and struck the joker right between the eyes. The egg promptly burst and its contents filled the eyes and streamed over the face of the man. His amazement and fright were amusing. He was in doubt at first whether he had been shot or struck by a stone. For a minute he did not doubt that it was his own blood and brains streaming over his countenance. And when we mention the fact that the eggs thrown that night were exceedingly mature, the apprehension of the man was heightened by that very fact for he mistook the odor for gunpowder or his own corruption. At this moment a friend approached and took him by one of his outstretched hands and led him away looking like a small-sized Saul of Tarsus. The loud laugh and jeer that followed this ridiculous sight gave us a breathing moment and we then resumed the much-broken thread of our discourse.

But the eggs continued to fly, one of the last striking the music rack of the organ and splashing its contents over the fair player.

It seemed, however, that unknown to us we had friends in the audience; and among them was a colored woman who set herself to the task of discovering the egg thrower. So she watched while we prayed and preached. Suddenly as an egg was hurled a great cry was raised,

“Here he is — here he is!”

Then followed a great surge of the crowd, and a roar of voices saying

“We’ve got him.”

After this the multitude like mighty sea billows rolled toward a certain quarter, and on looking in that direction we saw that the colored woman had spotted the individual, had pointed him out to a policeman who had caught him in the act, and now in spite of the surging throng was not only holding on to him but bearing him away to one of the city lockups. Two-thirds of our congregation promptly forsook us, to see the culprit borne away and lodged in the station. So in much confusion the first service ended with the vociferated announcement that we would hold forth again the next evening at the same hour.

We went down to the Police Court next morning to intercede for the egg thrower, but the Chief of Police asked us plainly how he could protect us in the future from similar disturbances if we would not allow culprits to be punished after being arrested.

The young man was finally released after several hours' imprisonment and the payment of twenty-five dollars. His eggs proved to be costly.

A week after that time, we went down again to the identical spot to hold another service. Just before we opened one of the Goslings was approached by a man who told him that the man that had thrown the eggs and been punished for it, was around the corner in the dark and wanted to see him a moment. This was a trying request, but the Gosling summoned up his fortitude and went around the corner and found the egg thrower awaiting him. His request was that

“If we wanted order kept, to call on him, and he was the man that was able and willing to help us out on that line!”

A few weeks after this one of the disturbers of that night slipped and fell from a roof and broke one of his limbs. A few days after that a wind storm knocked a corner off of a building that had furnished a number of the peace violators of that first evening service. The old colored woman who had been our friend through the whole affair heard of the accident to the man, and saw the end of the building go down under the wind. She placed her arms akimbo and cried —

“What I tole you! Didn't I tole you de Lawd was gwine to cuss dis whole nay-borhood, and kill out dis poor white trash for dey own owdaciousness!”

Here was Jonah again on the edge of the city looking for Nineveh to be destroyed.

All this was an apparently unfavorable beginning of a gospel work. But out of it all came a Mission that has never gone down, but has gathered scores of children from the street, led many souls to God, and has steadily resting upon it the smile, favor, and protection of Heaven.

CHAPTER 8

A REMARKABLE MISSIONARY

There are a number of missionaries in the city of New Orleans. They are from Germany, France, Italy, and other far-away lands. Most of these workers are males, but a few are of the gentler sex. Some are sent out and supported by powerful Churches, others are kept in the field by individuals, and still others go out to labor looking for support to Him who feeds the sparrows and clothes the lily, and who says we are of much more value than many sparrows. Without any concerted plan or agreement, strange to say they have distributed the work among themselves in such a manner as to suggest at once to the mind the thought of the great presiding, directing Head of the Church. Some of these missionaries labor in prisons and hospitals, others visit the houses of spiritual death where they pray and plead with their inmates; others are given to street corner preaching; still others distribute Bibles and tracts; and a few frequent the wharves, watch the incoming vessels and strive in various ways for the spiritual good of the bronzed sons of the ocean.

Our own Methodist missionary from the front of a large “gospel wagon” which was drawn from point to point in the city, used to discourse nightly to hundreds concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

Yet there was still another in this missionary field who attracted my attention, and grew upon me constantly. So impressed was the writer that he called him according to the caption of this chapter a remarkable missionary.

Everything necessary to be said about him in explanation and description would be counted as so many elements of weakness. He was a Negro to begin with, then he was self-appointed in his work, no Church commissioning him or supporting him. Moreover he was poor, and without any extraordinary gift or talent. This certainly seems slender material out of which to fashion a remarkable missionary; and yet he was one for all that. It is the firm belief of this writer that he achieved more

good than a half-dozen others who are ordained and sent forth to the work of saving men, backed up by great ecclesiastical power.

Our remarkable missionary was a tin peddler. He went around with a little hand cart containing his stock in trade, and while disposing of his wares in different parts of the city would feel moved to sing and speak for Christ. The singing and talking were the main thing — the business feature coming in parenthetically and indeed often omitted or forgotten.

It is not easy to say how many exhortations he had on hand — perhaps not more than a General Conference officer has sermons on an annual trip. His song was one, but true and tried; like the sword presented to David “there is none like it.” However he was not alone here on the song solo.

The hymn he sung is called “A Poor Sinner Like Me.” The first stanza being

*I was once far away from my Savior,
And as vile as a sinner could be,
I wondered if Christ, the Redeemer,
Could save a poor sinner like me.*

The hymn has six or seven stanzas, the words full of gospel truth, strangely move the heart, while the melody is plaintive and soul melting.

Our missionary, like many of his race, was blessed with a musical voice. Clear and sweet it could be heard for squares, and always assembled a crowd. Trundling his hand cart up to some corner where streets of populous character meet, he would stop and commence singing his hymn. Before he had finished he would have about him a mixed gathering of men, women and children, and with quite a variety of national, social and individual complexion. Nor was this all; the observant eye took in the slight opening of window blinds, setting ajar of doors and the convenient arrangement of slats and shades and lo! the invisible audience was greater than the assembly on the pavement.

After the hymn came the exhortation. It was the writer’s privilege to hear him one summer afternoon. The speaker was striking that time at hypocrisy; “Gwine around,” as he sarcastically said, “wid two faces under one hat.” His sentences were like hot shot at times; his points had points. Again and again there would be a decided sensation among his auditors as

he struck home and conscience responded. The expression “two faces under one hat” served the purpose of a text, and he would return to it, quote it, and make verbal rally from it as though it had inspired him with new thought and strength and courage. The speaker after a number of telling hits, and after speaking with great fervor for fifteen minutes concluded with an exhortation to all to confess their sins and pray to God for forgiveness. He then resumed his song, laying special emphasis on the last stanza, which he repeated several times:

*And when life's journey is over
And I the dear Savior shall see,
I'll praise him forever and ever,
For saving a sinner like me.*

As he finished the last line, this obscure servant of God suddenly grasped the handles of his cart and turned off, forgetting to cry his wares and sell his goods. The crowd dispersed, while we, turning up another street, had the feeling that we had been to church, and that God was in both service and sermon. Truly, I said, this is not the first cart that has carried about the ark and blessing of God.

As for the effect of our missionary's song on the hearts of thousands who heard him daily, I suppose we could form no just estimate. In some instances I have known of ladies sitting in their rooms who would on hearing the hymn be deeply affected. One whom I know and who is not easily affected, bowed her face on the little work table before her and wept like a child.

Let the reader of this chapter secure a book containing the hymn, read the words and hear the melody and he will be ready to admit that such a hymn sung up and down the streets of a great city is compelled to exercise a profound influence on the hearts and consciences of all who hear.

On a certain occasion our missionary stopped at a corner and saw six white men and a Negro gambling on the pavement. They were deeply engaged in their game, and bent over their dice oblivious of his presence and scrutiny. After contemplating them a few moments, our friend of the hand cart commenced his song:

I was once far away from my Savior, etc.

The first stanza was a center shot, producing unmistakable signs of discomfiture. The second and third stanzas were bombshells, breaking up the game effectually; the fourth increased their confusion, while the fifth stanza beheld the gamblers beating a hasty retreat. They could not continue in sin while the gospel was being sung in their hearing. The Negro gambler was the only one left. To him our missionary addressed himself as follows:

“As for you, you yaller nigger, I have just one word to say. I’ve nothin’ at all to say to them white men no more’n what I said in my song. But as for you, you yaller nigger, if you don’t repent and quit your gamblin’, you sho’ gwine to hell.”

Here the “yaller nigger” beat a precipitate retreat, and our missionary was left alone the undisputed victor of the field!

~~xxx~~ John 8:9:

“And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last.”

By and by we heard him farther down the street. The rich mellow voice, the moving words of the hymn, the plaintive melody and the still summer afternoon air blended peculiarly and agreeably together.

*I wandered on in the darkness
Not a ray of light could I see;
And the thought filled my heart with sadness
There’s no hope for a sinner like me.*

*But then in that dark lonely hour
A voice whispered sweetly to me,
Saying, “Christ the Redeemer hath power
To save a poor sinner like thee.”*

We resumed our walk up the street, but stopped at the next block to obtain a last look of the man, and a last note of his song. Far in the distance was his figure, and we could just catch the words,

*No longer in darkness I'm walking
 For the light is now shining on me,
 And now unto others I'm telling
 How He saved a poor sinner like me.*

We turned down another street, and soon were in the midst of the rush and roar of cabs and cars, with hum of voices and tread of multitudinous feet. But over all and through all the strain seemed to be sounding in the ear and lingering in the heart. Especially the last verse would come back which the singer was so fond of repeating,

And when life's journey is over And I the dear Savior shall see; I'll praise him forever and ever For saving a sinner like me.

Somehow, while the strain and words of that hymn kept ringing in my ears that afternoon, the world looked very little, and heaven felt very near and precious.

We drew several lessons from the whole history. One was suggested along the line of Christian sacrifice. Our missionary often forgot to sell his goods. If we, as the people of God, were so devoted to soul saving that we would forget our little hand cart and tinware commodities now and then, it would exert a most healthful effect on ourselves and convincing influence on a skeptical world. Christ absorbed in his work forgets to eat. Paul, I doubt not, often laid aside the tentmaking to tell the people of enduring tabernacles in the skies. And here is another, away down in the social scale, but away up in the spiritual grade, who can teach us lessons in the line of Christian sacrifice. The trouble with many is that they do not care to risk or lose anything for Christ. O, those precious little hand carts of ours, full of tinware merchandise retailing at ten to fifteen cents an article. O, that tobacco-stained store, that dingy office, how hard it is to leave them in order to come to the house of God or to do work for the Master.

Another lesson that we drew from our missionary was one of Christian courage. Here was a poor unsupported Negro, able to break up a wicked conclave with a single hymn; while oftentimes the Church with all its prayers and hymns, and all the history of past achievements, and all the promises of divine support — stands aghast and silent, while permitting iniquity of all kinds to possess not only the streets but the entire land. And yet the Scripture teaches us that such is the power of a consecrated

life, and such the inwardly defeated state of a wicked heart, that one man of God could chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight.

Our missionary went down into the camp of the Midianites and revealed the state of things — they are already whipped! Now then for Gideon and his three hundred! Let but lanterns of truth flash in their eyes, let trumpeted proclamations of God's word be sounded in their ears, and let a few human vessels be broken in the charge against wickedness and the world will see the flight and downfall. Mr. Wesley used to say he wanted only one hundred devoted men in order to pull down the ramparts of sin and set up the kingdom of God on earth.

A final lesson we gathered from our missionary was concerning human accessibility. How we pray for it: "Lord, give us access to the hearts of the people!" and while we continue to do this, fancying that the prayer is not answered and that the time to favor Zion is not yet — behold! a poor wandering Negro missionary sings a simple little hymn full of gospel truth; and consciences are stirred and hearts melted in every direction. Business men passing along, unable to stop, yet gather enough to make the eyes become dim, and the heart swell with desires for a better life on earth, and an eternal rest hereafter. And ladies sitting behind doors and window blinds, suddenly soul-swept by an influence that we know to be the Spirit of God vehicled in a human voice — bow down their heads and weep in secret.

Every Sabbath we continue to pray, "Lord, give us access to the hearts of the people!" and many days God sent the answer in this daily recurring circumstance, and the answer was always the same, "Lo, I have done so!" What can we say of ourselves after this but "O fools and slow of heart to believe."

CHAPTER 9

CERTAIN EXPRESSIONS AND PRONUNCIATIONS IN PULPIT AND PEW

Some pulpit expressions once popular, are now traditional: others are still flourishing and will never pass away.

Among the former we recall the announcement — “There will be preaching here tonight at early candlelight.” Sometimes it was pronounced “yerly candlelight.”

There was considerable ambiguity about this notice, as people lighted their candles at different hours. We judge however, that “early or yerly candlelight” referred to the twilight hour.

Somehow the heart grows tender and the eyes moist as we recall this expression. It brings back to memory a class of faithful men who have departed. They were the preachers of our fathers and mothers, and of people farther back still, who have passed away to the silent country. Their flocks used to listen gravely and reverently to all their announcements. They were good men, and after devoted lives have gone to the city that needs no candle, neither light of the sun.

Another expression we recall was an earnest request of the preacher directed to some invisible brother in the audience who pretended to some musical knowledge to

“Please raise the tune.”

At once there was the clearing of somebody’s throat, a moment’s pause, and then somehow it seemed as if something else was raised beside the tune as evidenced by sounds worthy of a cracked trumpet with nasal accompaniments reaching out in the direction of “Arlington” or toward “Hebron.”

Once we knew of a preacher who in utter distrust of himself, and of the audience being able to acquit themselves creditably in a musical way, asked a brother to "Please raise the tune and then tote it."

Without a tuning fork to regulate the "raisings" of the singer, sometimes the tune was elevated to exceedingly high regions, which brought forth a perfect screech together with sympathetic uplifting of eyebrows and great redness of countenance from the faithful ones who held on to the skyward song. Invariably when this was the case, the next hymn in being started was hardly raised at all, but was begun so low that it seemed to come from the very boots of the brother.

Not less remarkable and memorable was the effort to lower the tune when it was felt to be too high. First the singer would try to come down, but the throat seemed to be set to that one note, and so after three or four vain efforts, he would leave the deliverance to be effected by some brother or sister who in trying, fully intended to lower the vocal pitch, but whose very anxiety keyed them up to such a degree, and so constricted the throat and elevated the voice, that they not only perpetuated the shriek but actually added to its volume. The whole proceeding reminded me of the interesting history of the "Twist-Mouth Family." It required much grace for a preacher to take his text after one of these performances in the pew.

A Methodist preacher once told the author that when in the absence of the musical lay brother, and where the burden of raising the tune devolved upon him, that he had the most unfortunate way, after announcing a common meter hymn, of trying to sing it to a long meter tune. He said that by repeating the last two syllables or saying "tum-tum," he got through but not without great embarrassment and considerable perspiration.

Another expression dropping from some pulpits is "Gos-pill."

More than once we have heard some of our ministerial brethren say, "I am not ashamed of the gospill," or lining the hymn would accent after the same manner,

How sweet the gospill's charming sound.

It was wonderful to note how their voices bore down on the word "pill," and with such a clear, ringing accent, as left no doubt in the minds of the

hearers that it was the word “pill” that was used and not “pel.” As a rule we have noticed that the brother who thus mispronounces, makes salvation more like a pill than like the clear water, the dripping honey, the heavenly manna, the sparkling wine, and other striking and agreeable figures with which the prophets and apostles clothed the gospel truth and life. For many years owing to the way it was presented and lived, the Christian religion was to the writer like a “pill.” Finally he discovered that it was the way certain people rolled the bread of life, causing it to look unappetizing, medicine like and forbidding; that the same bread of life could be offered by another hand, and it would be so fresh and warm, with such a dainty lump of the honeycomb that David speaks of upon it, together with some of the butter that another prophet alluded to, that the struggle was not to get away from it, but to get away with it, in other words, to partake of the nutritious and delightful spiritual food.

Still another word comes to mind that we have heard incorrectly accented, and often by ministers. It is the word “pulpit.”

Not infrequently we have heard a preacher say to the congregation that he next Sabbath would occupy the pulpit as usual. With that remarkable accenting of the second instead of the first syllable the “pit” appeared. No allusion is here made to hell; but not the less does the platform and Bible stand seem to be a “pit” to some people.

We have heard the word drawn out even more remarkably into “p-u-l-l-pit,” a strong accent being placed on both syllables. Thus the agony seems to be intensified, and where ought to be the brightest, happiest and most sunshiny spot in the church is a “pull-pit.”

Some men walk into it as men used to enter the arena with swords, looking for gore, conflict and death. A preacher told the writer that whenever he entered the pulpit he became sick with nervous dread. It was a “pull” to him from beginning to end, and a “pit” from top to bottom. Now then for the text: “I am not ashamed of the ‘gos-pill.’” A gos-pill and a pull-pit go well together. We have seen intelligent laymen looking on the scene sometimes, and could discover from their countenances that they felt they had taken the “pill” and were now in the “pit.”

Turning to the pew we find expressions and pronunciations there that seem to belong peculiarly to that part of the church.

Of course the sayings are not heard in all places, and are accentuated according to locality. Still there are few preachers but have listened to the expressions we now mention,

“Feelingly and sensibly near.”

This was once an utterance of fire, but the fire has receded in most cases, and it is now like an extinct crater. It has done great service in its time, but the brother who now uses it most in his prayer is not most remarkable for spiritual warmth himself; and under the mechanical words there is no more heat than is felt in a moonbeam. It is only one of a number of other prayer phrases which in the course of time he has picked up and strung together. They all have their place and they never vary. And all of them make one prayer. “Feelingly and sensibly” is repeated once, twice or thrice in the prayer according to the mental furnishing of the one who is supplicating.

Another expression from the pew is

“The bended knee of a perishing humanity.”

This quite awed me when I first heard it in my youthful days; but in addition it possessed a musical roll which made one feel like repeating it after the first hearing.

It is rarely heard these days. The colleges have pushed it into remote regions, and like the Indian it will soon be gone forever.

Still another is

“Enjoying religion.”

As men give up experimental piety, and Churches become formal, this utterance of course becomes rare. Yet it is a strong one, and one we love to speak and hear spoken. We have listened to godly men and women as they uttered it with shining faces and moistened eyes until our soul burned within us, and the spiritual palate streamed moisture.

Sometimes in remote neighborhoods we have heard it pronounced

“En-jaw-ing religion.”

And we confess to liking the term, as thus accented, still better. The brother looked like he was chewing on something good when he said he was “En-jaw-ing religion.” The author believes in a religion that affects the “jaw.” O how that member works when the fire is burning in the soul, and the honey of the gospel is dripping all over and through the spirit.

Recently in a Southern State we heard the expression —

“In-tire sanctification.”

The brother who thus pronounced the word entire, did so with a beaming face. All could see that his cup was running over when he said “I am enjoying the blessing of ‘in-tire’ sanctification.” Somehow that little syllable “in” suited the writer better than “en.” It went to the heart, and while a smile sprang to the lip at the pronunciation there was a pleased feeling in the soul. The accent on the first syllable somehow described the experience better than the word itself. Truly it is in-tire sanctification.”

In another Southern State not long since we heard a lay brother in a public prayer ask for the “In-flu-ence of the Spirit.”

The emphasis was laid on the second syllable as *Italicized*, and so it was transformed into “flew.”

We liked it and cried out Amen! The gospel once flew; let it keep flying, let it fly in us, and through us to the whole world. Yes, Lord, send down the in-flew-ence of the gospel.

But the climax of strange expressions was reached in our Chicago meeting, when some lay brother dropping in every other night during the prayer service tacked, in a most astonishing way, a series of “Ur’s” on to the words of his prayer. Every second or third word was betailed and adorned with this verbal interloper “Ur.” He prayed that “this meeting-ur, might be blessed-ur, and that-ur, the gospel-ur, might be blessed-ur, to the good-ur, of every body-ur, and that the preacher-ur, might-ur, be clothed-ur, with power-ur, that night-ur,” etc.

We felt much moved to tell him that “Ur” belonged to the Chaldees, and if Abraham left it, he might afford to do so. Moreover we felt like saying to

him “that-ur, if he did not quit-ur, using Chaldee words-ur, in his prayer-ur, that the people-ur, would not understand him-ur, and might get to laughing-ur, and so produce-ur, a good deal of harm-ur.”

Surely there was a deep meaning in the Bible statement that the beautiful ark of God was brought up to Jerusalem on an ox cart and drawn by two cows.

Another memorable saying is “getting through.”

There was a time in our dark, unconverted days that we laughed at this expression, which was most frequently used by the colored people.

When mention was made of a penitent or seeker of religion, the question sometimes asked was “Did he [or she] get through?” We objected in our ignorance of the term, saying that it conveyed the idea of one getting out of the woods, or through a hedge or wall.

The time came when we discovered what all realize who seek pardon or purity, that the hedge, wall or tangled woods of a thousand spiritual besetments and difficulties were all about the soul, and that we were not over them nor through them.

But when the Savior suddenly appeared to the distracted and fainting soul, and under his touch the wall smiled with an open gateway, and the hedge revealed a flowery gap, and we stood clear out of the woods in a boundless, sunlighted plain of Christian joy and liberty, we understood then as never before the power of the words, “Did you get through?”

O yes, we got through! And today we cannot think of it without wanting to shout.

So the blessed fact remains that there is a marvelous richness of thought, a world of suggestion, and a constantly unfolding meaning in certain gospel words and religious sayings, and in the way they are accented, whether pronounced by prince or pauper.

There are kaleidoscopic turns and twists in the expression —

“Bless the Lord.”

As it falls from the lips of different speakers it shows an inexhaustibility on the part of the words, and brings a constant pleasure to the spiritual hearer.

So with the word

“Glory!”

Who can count the diverse ways this mighty soul-cry has been wept, laughed, whispered, shouted and thundered forth.

Sometimes it booms forth like a solitary cannon; then it becomes the rapid-fire Gatling gun and does corresponding damage to the kingdom of darkness. With innumerable variety of utterance, while it is the same word, yet is it ever a new word.

Still another is the shout —

“Hallelujah!”

The susceptibility of this word to new and unexpected twists of sound and meaning is simply amazing. Every modulation of voice, every rising and falling inflection of speech, in connection with the word, sends a thrill of pleasure through us. Some stress the first syllable “Hal” in a way that is a benediction to the soul, and others bring out the syllable “lu” with a round, sonorous, buglelike note that makes one feel like charging an army of devils.

We once heard a holy woman say that she had lived in a single verse of Scripture for a week. It struck us at the time as a very surprising statement. We thought the bread must be very stale or quite scarce in a verse after living a week upon it. But our surprise has long ago vanished, and we have learned that the woman was speaking the words of truth and soberness.

So far from finding a single verse of Scripture to be narrow accommodation for the soul and the life itself, we have been dwelling in the word “Hallelujah” for seven years. It is a marvelously roomy word, with no end of delightful apartments of the upper-room order, and a glorious observatory at the top from which the golden-paved City of God is always in full view. So long as we live in it, white robes are provided, and

a table is prepared for us in the presence of our enemies; our head is daily anointed with oil and our cup runs over. Hallelujah!

The last expression of the kind we mention is the word

“Amen.”

What a word it is, and how it grows on one the deeper down we get in Christ, and the nearer we draw to heaven. The sea has not as many striking, changing and beautiful lights and tints as this word, as it comes from the lips, colored and affected by a hundred different emotions of the spiritual heart.

We could not count the different ways that we have heard it uttered, but we like every pronunciation that comes from the child of God. Some ways of pronouncing the word always bring the tears to the eyes, other ways make us laugh — the religious laugh of course. Still others make the hearer feel like he wants to go to heaven and see Christ, and others still bring a wave of strength over the heart, and one feels like standing on the lonely and difficult picket posts of earth until the Savior comes.

Sometimes the word is accented so as to make a big “A” and a little “men,” as follows: “A-men.” The whole force of the voice is put in the first letter, and the last part of the word is scarcely heard.

Sometimes this method is reversed, and we have a little “a” and a big “MEN,” as for instance, “a-MEN.”

Both are good and we heartily commend them to the hearing of the Church.

Recently we heard the word uttered by Eastern and Western Methodist brethren. We had thought that we understood the word up to the time that these two men of God in widely different parts of the country got hold of it. We saw at once new and greater depths.

The brother in the East with glowing face would say

“A-men-n-n-n!” and hold on to the last syllable as if he never intended to let go. It was a Garden of Eden to him; he had walked through, and was at the gate leaving; but held on to the latch hating to go. We thought then, this pronunciation can never be surpassed for sweetness and fervor.

But while in the West lately we heard an old brother say “Amen” in another way that filled the soul with pleasure and admiration.

He threw the accent on the first syllable and said “A-a-a-a-men!”

It would be difficult to describe how the heart was melted and impressed with that utterance. The voice of the old man was trembling and deeply unctuous; and somehow the eyes got wet, and the heart felt like honey was dripping on it, as that tremulous “A-a-a-a-a-men” came from the aged saint on the platform.

The first brother hated to leave the word, while the second with an Epicurean delight lingered in it after he entered. The first one went into the word rapidly and left slowly; the second entered slowly for he did not want to leave at all. Both lingered, one at the back gate, the other at the front; both in love with what they saw and felt in the word “Amen.”

At the close of a camp meeting this summer which the author had conducted, among those who came to say “Good-bye” was a German woman full of religion to overflowing. She was low in stature, and broad in a lateral direction. Taking my hand, with a face all bright and a voice full, rich and fervent she said “Amen!”

I thought she was going to say “Good-bye,” but the word that came forth was “Amen.”

Again she said it, and still more fervently, “Amen!”

A third time she shook my hand and with unctuous voice and tears in her eyes she said again “Amen!”

It would be impossible to put in print the peculiar influence and power that came forth from the honest soul with the repeated word “Amen.” I can only say that at the fourth repetition I found myself laughing and crying equal to the woman and saying “Amen” with her.

The cab driver was standing near by waiting for me to get into the carriage, and doubtless thought that he had struck two lunatics in a couple of people who did nothing but laugh, cry, shake hands, and say “Amen.” But he had no idea what was in the word, what it meant to us, and how much good we were getting out of it.

So we said “Amen” several times more and with a sweet joy in my soul I slipped into the carriage and was driven rapidly away.

“Amen.” Blessed word of the Bible and the kingdom of grace! May we all say it to the whole sweet will of God, utter it in every sorrow and trial, speak it in death, shout it in the morning of the resurrection, and on entering heaven say it again — “Amen!”

Now we offer the thought, that if these mono-syllables of Zion, and portions of religious speech be so full of grace and power here, what will they be in heaven when the remaining part of the sentence shall be restored, and the clear light of the glory land falling upon them shall reveal still deeper meanings in them all.

Praise God for what we know of them here, and hallelujah for what we shall know and feel hereafter in the world to come.

Let all the people say “Amen.”

CHAPTER 10

HOW PREACHERS ARE “TAKEN IN”

No one likes to be “taken in,” as the saying goes. The mocked or fooled sensation is not pleasant. One has several regrets about it; first that a fellow-creature should do a wrong thing; second that we should have that in our appearance which would suggest gullibility, and third that we should be gulled.

It is the general opinion that preachers are the most easily duped of all classes. The preachers themselves say that it is not so; that their vocation has taught them to study and recognize character; and that constant contact with all kinds of people has given them rare powers of discrimination. Indeed it is reported that one of our bishops can tell a fraud by looking at his shoes. But what if the impostor should be barefooted? where then could the bishop look for proof of duplicity?

We have heard ministers say that they had no trouble in reading men. In fact we have said so ourselves, although every time we made the remark in the presence of a certain lady who bears our name, we have discovered a roguish and amused look that we did not altogether relish.

We doubt not it sounds very well, these speeches about reading people through and through at a glance: but there are two things that it would be well for us to remember. One is that there are all kinds of assaults upon our credulity, and every species of impostor. There are “takings in” of a simple nature and some are compound: some are run on the jocular, some on the lachrymose and still others on the religious line. Until we have been fooled well on each one, we can hardly be said to be sufficiently wise and knowing to pose as a judge of such matters.

Another thing to remember is that the impostor is generally a judge of men and character. The tramp who is considered at the bottom of this class is a demonstration of this fact, as is seen by peculiar marks and characters he leaves on gates and doors, that translated by the knowing means “walk in

and help yourself.” One of these English highway citizens lost his pocket wallet (not pocket book). In it was some interesting information for his class as well as the citizens that he was accustomed to dupe. One page was headed with the words — ”Soft Tommies.” Among the names that composed this list was that of Chas. H. Spurgeon. So while we read them, they read us.

There was a time when this deponent thought he could not be deceived. He took a joy in regarding himself as a rapid and correct reader of character. But the opinion of all his friends and especially his family is against him in this regard, and he does not boast as much now as he formerly did.

If he then is one of the gullibles, that is a man easily taken in, how can it be accounted for in view of his own convictions to the contrary. Does not a man know himself?

We have a great way of going back these days, in order to find out who and what our ancestors were in order to thoroughly understand ourselves. It is certainly in cases of weakness, infirmity, and other deplorable things very soothing to our spiritual vanity to find these failures and flaws in some old ancestor we never saw, and so be able to shovel the responsibility on him, while we go free. Alas for the ancestors on the day of judgment.

Suppose for instance I should find in my father what my friends laugh at in me. Then must the laugh cease and the gullibility is found to be an inheritance and no fault of mine.

It seems from what I can learn about my father who died when I was six years of age, that he was possessed of an exceedingly tender heart, and had an amazing faculty of being hood-winked by people who had well-memorized tales of sorrow.

One lady in particular had repeatedly raided his pocket book through the narration of a sorrowful family history. On learning afterwards that he had been more generous than wise in her case, my father would resolve to guard himself in the future and not be taken in again by that individual.

After a high-sounding speech of this character by him one day, the lady in question was seen coming up the road toward our house.

“Now Brother Frank” said one of my aunts to him “Get your handkerchief ready. Mrs. Blank is coming for another onslaught on your feelings and purse.”

“Never” exclaimed my father. “She has shown herself unworthy by her ingratitude, and will find me like cast iron in her presence.”

At this speech there was a general smile from my mother and aunts.

In a few moments came a servant saying that Mrs. Blank desired to see my father at the front gate. Off he went as stiff as a ramrod amidst the suppressed smiles of the family and a significant shaking of pocket handkerchiefs. They had seen the ramrod demeanor before, and had also seen it become a string repeatedly. All watched him through the window blinds, and as the interview proceeded had to hold on to each other.

At first my father was very dignified. Then they could see signs of wavering in the lines: for the woman was gifted in speech and knew how to lay on the colors in pathetic style to suit a man with the tender heart of my father. All could see that she was winning her way; and so by and by the two came walking side by side up the long walk toward the house. She continued to talk while her white hand held back the black crape veil, and she bent forward to see what additional argument she could make to complete the victory. Victory it undoubtedly was for her, for all could see that my father’s artillery had been parked, his cavalry dismounted, and the infantry discharged from service. He had evidently shot his last gun. Nothing was left but the baggage train, which, by the way, was all that Mrs. Blank wanted.

Suddenly as the woman poured one more touching fact into his ears, my father all forgetful that the family were looking at him through the shutters, sank down on a seat near the walk, bowed his face in his handkerchief and wept.

Of course the wagon was loaded with provisions after that and sent to Mrs. Blank’s residence: and my father returning to the family circle gravely told my mother and aunts

“That the case this time was very peculiar.”

All of which they believed beforehand, and now dropped their heads with that distressingly amused look.

Perhaps I obtained a spark of gullibility from my father: or perhaps the calling of the preacher is such that he is ready to look for penitents, and receive prodigals, and so is slow from his very vocation or work of love to suspect any one. We fear that the thing is too deep for us. We also remember that our family and friends say that it is no trouble for any one to “take us in.”

And so a certain lady tells this upon her preacher husband; let no one ask for names. She says that one day a tramp called at the church study and asked for a dime to get some food. The preacher having nothing less than half a dollar in his pocket handed it to the tramp, telling him to get it changed on the street and to hurry back, that his office hour was up and he had to leave. The tramp disappeared promptly. About a half hour later a gentleman, one of the stewards of the Church, dropped into the study on some piece of business and to his surprise found the preacher there, long after his office hours.

“Why,” he said, “I had no idea of finding you here at this time of day. What’s the matter?”

The innocent reply of the preacher brought out a burst of laughter from the steward. Said the preacher:

“A tramp asked me for a dime, and I gave him a half dollar to get changed, and I have been waiting for him to come back with the change before I leave.”

The steward fairly shook as he said

“Are you going to wait until that tramp returns with the money?”

Light seemed to dawn on the preacher’s mind at this time, and with a look of decidedly mixed expression he replied

“I believe I will go now.”

All this prepares us for the following bit of life drama that took place with that same ministerial individual.

While sitting at the dinner table one day, the door bell rung, and a card was brought in by a servant to the preacher with these words evidently written hastily

Dear Sir: Can I see you a few moments in your office at the church at any hour you may please to appoint on a matter which is greatly disturbing me. I am a Jew and want light. Respectfully
JOSEPH KRAMER.

The preacher sent word by a servant giving the hour when he would be at his study.

Promptly at the time appointed came a humble apologetic knock at the door. It seemed to ask pardon for doing so and requested special consideration. The preacher said "Come in" and there appeared on the threshold a young Israelite of about twenty-six years of age.

He drew near with a deprecating gesture at disturbing the minister and said with strong Jewish accent, that he craved a few minutes interview upon a most important subject which disturbed his peace.

The preacher who had arisen with an expectant air, at once wore a softened and interested expression at the words "disturbed peace."

The Israelite saw the relaxed look, and humbly and politely drew nearer, and at the kind request of the preacher took a seat on the sofa near his side.

"What can I do for you, sir?" the minister asked, with his eyes fixed upon the young man.

The Jew with the unmistakable accent of his nationality began by expressing his regret at taking up the valuable time of the "Doctaire;" but that he felt that he must have light and relief for mind and heart, and so had come to speak with him and get advice, no matter how that act would estrange his own people from him, nor what suffering it would entail in that direction.

He had been led he said into the light of Christianity by reading the Bible. That he had given his heart to Christ and was now a saved man. But in reading the Book of Jeremiah lately he had become convicted more deeply and felt the necessity of being baptized, and joining some Christian Church. He had selected the church of the preacher before him in preference to all the other churches in the city — "Would the Doctor consent to baptize him and receive him into his church on the Sunday after the next."

Would he? Of course he would. Why here was the beginning of the "Return of the Jews." Here already was fulfillment of prophecy. The "fullness of the Gentiles" was certainly felt to have taken place in one heart; and so the preacher extended his hand and with a cordial grasp told the lonely Jew that he would gladly baptize and receive him into the church he had mentioned.

The Israelite, Mr. Kramer, confirmed his claims upon the confidence of the preacher by showing him a diploma of his graduation in a college in Germany. There was a curious erasure and rewriting of the date observable on the parchment, but the preacher thought little of it at the time. He thought a good deal more about it some days later.

All this was followed up by an invitation to Mr. Kramer to take dinner at his house the next day.

As the preacher walked home he had pleasant thoughts of the religious notoriety this whole affair would give his church. It was not only a blow to Jewish unbelief, but a great victory for the Gentiles; likewise it was a spiritual triumph for the preacher's own church, serving to show to a large city the spiritual supremacy of his own congregation over all the other churches, in that a converted Jew came at once to it for light and membership.

So, the preacher was in a good humor with himself, with his church, and with everybody else when he told his wife that a converted Israelite would dine with them on the morrow.

Exactly at the time appointed, Mr. Kramer appeared. The ladies at first were disposed to be suspicious and unusually dignified, but under the bland influence of the recovered Jew, who himself began to open like a

flower, they soon unbent and became as gracious as the young descendant of Jacob.

He paid some very tasteful compliments to the ladies, in regard to the meal, the arrangement of the room, and several other things. The fact that the praise was not fulsome, but very delicately and happily expressed, made his remarks go home. He was quick to pass what was wanted by them, without being offensive or burdensome in his table attentions.

The ladies smiled and he continued to unfold. It was no ordinary social flower we had at the table but a century plant. He lamented that he could not express himself with that perfect felicity of accent that he so admired in American ladies. He spoke three languages, he said, quite fluently; and as one of these was French and one of the ladies at the table spoke it with ease, it greatly helped our confidence in and opinion of him to hear him launch out in the Gallic language in company with the aforesaid lady.

However after a few minutes he very politely returned to America and the society of those of us who were so commonplace that we could only endure the burden of one tongue. This also pleasantly impressed us.

It was however in the narration of his European travels, and brief but piquant description of the Continental capitals that he showed to best advantage. As he had seen and heard some of the great masters of song over there, that fact secured still deeper attention from the ladies who were all musical.

Mr. Kramer did not speak of Jeremiah through the entire meal.

The preacher however sat in great satisfaction listening to this latest accession to the gospel, and saw in the dim future this gifted descendant of Abraham transformed into a flaming Methodist preacher, who would be another Moses or Joshua to lead great bodies of his own people into Christianity. He in reverie saw himself introducing Mr. Kramer at the Conference to the brethren and feeling the prestige the whole occurrence would give to that year's pastorate. He also saw as in a vision two or three hundred converted Jews in his church by another year. It would not have been difficult for him that day to have written a treatise on "The Recovery of the Ten Lost Tribes."

After dinner, and in the act of leaving Mr. Kramer requested the privilege of another interview at the study, which was cordially granted. The ladies all came to the door to say adieu to the visitor.

The second interview proved to be of a business character. Jeremiah again was not mentioned. The young man with a burst of candor said he wanted the Doctor to know that he was of excellent family and standing. Whereupon he drew out a package of letters that looked considerably worn, among which was the "diploma" that looked like it had been opened and folded a great many times. As the letters were mostly written in German and French the preacher was not much the wiser for their contents.

Having returned the papers to his pocket, Mr. Kramer with the most engaging and open demeanor said he felt that he must preach the gospel: that the burden was upon him: he could not fly from it. But, he added, that he must prepare for the ministry. He did not want to be an ignoramus in this matter, but a teacher who could command the attention and respect of his people. He plainly saw that he must go to a theological college, but would like to take up a course of religious reading beforehand, and through the reading and attendance upon his Church duties familiarize himself with the people and the denomination to which he proposed allying himself. That he knew the step he intended taking would result in his being utterly cast off by his family, friends and nation, and he would have to support himself. This he said he intended doing. He was young, strong, energetic and wanted to prove his religious life and integrity. He must take care of himself and felt he could do it. In looking around, however, he saw that every avenue was closed to him for lack of capital. There was one business however, that he perfectly understood. It was the "spectacle business." He understood all about glasses from the finest pebble down, and with the small investment of a few dollars he could purchase a line of eyeglasses and spectacles and so obtain a living without burdening anybody.

The preacher then asked him how much would be necessary to secure the stock that was desired. To which with a thoughtful face Mr. Kramer replied

"Seven dollars and fifty cents."

The preacher put his hand in his pocket and counted out the money.

Mr. Kramer was so touched and taken back by this kind act, and quick solving of the problem of his support, that he could at first scarcely speak. But controlling himself and pressing the preacher's hand he speedily left to purchase the stock of spectacles and get at once to business.

The next morning while the preacher was in his study, Mr. Joseph Kramer suddenly entered the office without knocking and with great signs of excitement,

"Please pardon my unceremonious entrance," he said almost breathlessly, "but I am in great trouble and have run down here to see you about it."

"What is the matter Mr. Kramer?" asked the preacher with genuine interest and solicitude.

"Well sir," replied the young Jew moving restlessly about the office, "I bought the stock of spectacles yesterday, and this morning I started out and had sold three pair, when a policeman pounced down on me and asked where was my license to peddle on the street. I told him I had none, and Doctor, he wanted to take me off to the station house, when I begged him to let me run down here and see a friend about it, and he consented, and I have run almost every step of the way to tell you and ask you what is to be done."

"There is nothing to be done," said the preacher, "but to pay the license. What is the cost of it?"

"Two dollars and fifty cents" said Joseph Kramer with downcast eyes.

Without another word the preacher went down into his pocket and brought up the amount, handing it to the Jew and bidding him go quickly and pay the authorities and prosecute his business hereafter without any more mental worry or fear of interruption.

Mr. Kramer needed no second bidding, but with warm expressions of gratitude, he darted off in the direction from which he came. All the afternoon the preacher with a warm feeling about his heart had visions of Mr. Kramer selling spectacles by the dozen, and fitting eyeglasses on the noses of scores of eye-afflicted people.

Days rolled by and Mr. Kramer did not return. He was not in the church on the following Sunday to the surprise of the pastor, for he properly thought the young man ought not to lose a single sermon in his commendable desire to obtain all light and knowledge possible.

In the middle of the second week and only a few days before the Sabbath on which the baptism and reception of the young convert was to take place, Mr. Kramer had not yet returned.

The preacher, however, made a number of excuses. He supposed that the absentee had been so busy selling spectacles that he had not been able to come to the study during the week; and perhaps was so tired from his labors of the week, that he had remained at home to rest on the Sabbath.

One Saturday morning at the end of the second week, a clergyman of the Episcopal Church in the city was announced by the sexton as a caller. As the two preachers already knew each other no introduction was needed, and a pleasant chat of a minute or so was indulged in.

After a little the clergyman said,

“The object of my visit this morning is to find out if you know a Mr. Joseph Kramer, a converted Jew. I heard he had been visiting you, and I am anxious to discover his whereabouts.”

“Yes sir,” replied the preacher, “I know Mr. Kramer. He is to be baptized and received into my church tomorrow morning.”

“Why sir,” exclaimed the clergyman with wide-open eyes, “he was to have been baptized and received into my church last Sabbath!”

“Is it possible,” replied the preacher. “There must be some mistake about it. There must be another Mr. Joseph Kramer.”

“Hardly” said the clergyman. “Is your Mr. Kramer a young man about twenty-six with black hair and eyes, and a soft way of talking, and with decidedly pleasing ways?”

“That’s the man,” was the preacher’s reply, and he quite impressed the ladies of my family with his gentlemanly manner.”

“Well so he did mine” rejoined the clergyman with a musing air:
 “This is certainly my Mr. Kramer.”

“As the case stands” sallied the preacher, “he seems to be neither yours nor mine.”

To this the clergyman made no response, but with an air of deep thought he said

“Did he show you some old letters and a diploma?”

“Yes.”

“Did he say anything about Jeremiah, and being troubled about baptism?”

“O yes; he could not rest he said on account of what he had read in Jeremiah. That his peace had been greatly disturbed.”

“Well sir,” flamed out the clergyman, “he had better have his peace disturbed by other chapters and words in the Bible I could tell him about. Why sir the man is a fraud.”

“I fear so,” was the preacher’s troubled answer.

“And he said he wanted to join my Church, the Episcopal, above all Churches, and wanted me to baptize him in preference to all other preachers.”

“He said the same thing exactly to me,” was the preacher’s response.

The two men stood looking at each other in silence for a few moments, and the clergyman asked in a lowered voice

“Did he tell you that he wanted to go into the spectacle business in order not to be dependent on his friends and thereby prove his character and integrity?”

“Those were his very words,” echoed the preacher.

“Did he ask you for help to buy the stock he wanted?”

“He told me that he needed just \$7.50.”

“Why, that is the very amount that he got out of me,” said the clergyman, striking the table with the palm of his hand. “And yet,” he added, “not all; for several days after I had raised him the \$7.50 he came rushing back to me one morning and said that he was about to be arrested down town for selling spectacles without a license; and borrowed \$2.50 more for the slick-tongued scoundrel.”

“I did the same thing for him,” put in the preacher, with a half-melancholy, half-amused look.

“Why, sir, the man is a rascal,” gasped the clergyman.

“So it seems,” answered his companion in misfortune.

“And he told me,” resumed the man of the white surplice, “that he could not rest on account of what he had read in Jeremiah. And there I was expounding Jeremiah to him by the hour.”

“He has evidently fooled both of us badly,” quoth the preacher.

Then followed a tableau.

The men stood looking at each other for fully a minute, the clergyman with corrugated brow, and the preacher with working mouth, and with difficulty keeping back an explosion of laughter.

“What shall we do?” asked Rev. Mr. Surplice.

“Nothing,” replied the preacher. “There is nothing to do, for we are already undone.”

“But should we not stop the impostor: he will bleed every pastor in the land as he has done us.”

“How can you stop him?” was the quick reply, “he is doubtless far away now.”

“I’ll publish him in the city press and head him off, and make it hot for him wherever he goes,” said the clergyman; and away he went on his benevolent mission.

In due time the papers came out with a flaming account of how two ministers in the city had been bamboozled and fleeced by an enterprising

Jew who had passed himself off as a convert to the Christian faith, saying that he had been led to it by reading Jeremiah. That he had succeeded in obtaining certain sums of money from the reverend gentlemen, both of whom expected to baptize and receive him into the Church. But the convert had “turned up missing,” and the preachers were minus ten dollars apiece, together with a great deal of wholesome instruction and sympathy, which they had bestowed on the Wandering Jew.

Several days after this publication, the papers of an adjoining city had a column with large headings in which the public was informed that the Rev. Mr. Wideawake of that city had come very near being taken in by a young Jew who had called at the rectory and said that he was a convert to the Christian faith; that he had been much disturbed by reading Jeremiah, and wanted to be baptized in Dr. Wideawake’s Church which he preferred above all others. He had gotten this far in his story, said the paper, when Dr. Wideawake reaching around took up a New Orleans paper and said,

“Allow me to read you a few paragraphs from a late New Orleans paper before I answer you.”

So he began with the headlines.

Two City Preachers Bamboozled And Fleeced By A Young Jew Claiming To Be A Christian Convert. Twenty Dollars Taken And The Jew Skipped To Parts Unknown.

This was as far as Dr. Wideawake read; for the next instant he heard quick retreating steps, the door banged, and the man who was so much disturbed by the writings of Jeremiah was gone.

In due time the news of the double “take in” of the Episcopal and Methodist pastors was generally known. So when the latter took his seat at the dinner table he saw by the suppressed mirth and other unmistakable signs around the table that the family knew all about his being victimized the twentieth time that year, and with anticipated enjoyment were getting ready to make a general attack upon his gullibility.

Therefore with arch looks the ladies said,

“So Mr. Kramer has given up the spectacle business?”

Whereupon the preacher turning to them said in a very significant manner,

“Yes; by the way what a pleasant impression Mr. Kramer made upon you in his vivid description of the foreign cities he had visited, and prominent people he had seen.”

Immediately the ladies looked grave, and even chagrined. The preacher felt his advantage, and so did the ladies.

So there is one “take in” about which there seems to be a treaty of peace, arrangement, or kind of mutual understanding that it shall not be mentioned. Other “take ins” are referred to with considerable relish by the family. But when Mr. Kramer’s name is mentioned with a sly glance at the Doctor at the head of the table; or the question is put to the preacher in plain terms whether he has found anybody lately who seems troubled over the Book of Jeremiah; the preacher with a dry accent and peculiar twinkle in his eye, begins to speak of the beauty of certain foreign cities, when at once the ladies become abstracted, and do not seem to understand his remarks.

In a word, as we have said before, a treaty of peace or mutual understanding seems to have sprung up to the effect that Joseph Kramer the Wandering Jew shall not be mentioned any more.

CHAPTER 11

THE CONFERENCE LETTER

“Good morning Doctor.”

“Good morning my brother. What can I do for you?”

“Well sir, I am on my way to Conference; and the editor of the Jericho Advocate has requested me to write up the proceedings for his paper. But I so feel my incompetency as a young preacher that I thought I would drop by and ask you to give me a few pointers.”

“Well my dear brother you have asked a hard thing, but I am willing to do what I can for you.”

Here the Doctor became very thoughtful and introspective for a while, and then lifting up his head, asked the young preacher to jot down or impress on his memory the following hints.

It is not every one, “pursued the Doctor,” who can write up a Conference. Many essay to do it, but all are not successful and all are not equally happy even in success. It takes wisdom and experience to achieve the best result. It requires that many things should be unobserved and unwritten. In fact it is considered the part of highest wisdom not to mention some things.

“It is not so much” went on the Doctor meditatively “a record of everything that is wanted, as a culling and presentation to the public of those things that are acceptable and agreeable. For instance an uninitiated correspondent would make a woeful mistake in saying that two of the brethren became angry in a debate on a certain resolution. If mentioned at all it should be that ‘Brother A spoke with great animation’ and ‘Brother B held up his side of the question with equal zeal and ability.’

“Again if the minutes say that a brother located at his own request, it would not do to go behind that and tell of an interview with a

presiding elder, or relate some piece of history that could not be reconciled with the expression ‘at his own request.’

“Still another feature of the letter is that it must be purely optimistic. It will not do to lament or bemoan in a Conference letter no matter what has, or is happening. Did you ever notice the fate of the reports at Conference on the state of the Church? That when some innocent, simple-minded and rigidly truthful brother has held up the troubles and dangers of the Church, etc., at once the report with all its “whereases” and “be it resolveds” is flown at, and torn to pieces and remanded to the committee room?”

“Yes sir, I have” said the young preacher.

“This fate of the report” said the Doctor “gives you an idea of what will befall your Conference letter if you record such gloomy news as that the leading churches in the Conference have had no revivals in ten years: that certain prominent preachers have not witnessed a conversion in twenty years; that one hundred preachers reported for twelve months’ work a net gain to the Church of fifty members. This you see would not do, as it is mortifying to Church pride, and strikes at not only the one hundred men, but at the whole Connection.”

“But what shall I say if this is really the case?”

The Doctor smiled at Brother Verdant’s question and replied

“The escape is in such a sentence as this — ’ The preachers have all been at their posts, and were never so hopeful about the work of the next year. ‘ This at once turns the attention from present facts and figures, and fixes the eye upon the rosy future that beautiful dreamland in which so many marvelous things take place before we get there. And it also saves the letter from the pessimistic tone which is so dispiriting to the soul.

“To be a successful Conference letter writer, not simply ink but honey and oil must flow from your pen. You must be able to compliment everything and everybody without giving the appearance of ‘ taffying. ‘ Physiologists will tell you that the

human body can take in a vast amount of sugar. It abounds in our food, and why not in a Conference letter?

“Again if the town in which the Conference is held happens to have a high school or some kind of a male or female collegiate institute: it is well to say that said town is the Athens of the State or that part of the country. Remark incidentally that the citizens are evidently an intelligent and cultivated body of people. The high school or institute is supposed either to be the cause or the result of that fact. Do not say which, but leave the people to work out the problem. The solution either way is pleasant.”

“Yes sir, I see.”

“In regard to the sermons and addresses delivered during the Conference session, the statement should be made that the speaker measured up fully to his past splendid record, or that the preacher ‘surpassed himself. ‘It would never do to say that he surpassed others, for that would make only one man feel comfortable, and cause the rest a certain measure of pain and mortification. But the expression he ‘surpassed himself’ is perfectly harmless, for while it is felt to be praise for the preacher alluded to, at the same time it is no dispraise or reflection upon any one else. In the statement he ‘surpassed himself ‘ you will observe he surpasses no one but himself, and so no one can be offended. This we regard as a real Columbus discovery, and we have thought of taking out a patent right on it.”

The young preacher smiled brightly and knowingly.

“Concerning the pastor, who is so to speak the host of the Conference, say that he entertained delightfully, that under his wise management every preacher was made to feel that he had the best home, and conclude the reference to him by saying that he is greatly beloved by his people, and is doing a great work. You had best not mention what the ‘great work ‘ is, but leave that to the imagination of the reader.

“About the presiding elder of the district, say that he is a wide-awake man, loyal to the Church, and progressive. You know you

never saw him asleep, and so you can truthfully say he is wide-awake; and as he is all the time going around the district he must be a progressive man. You might also say that there is capital bishop timber in him. He will always feel kindly to you for the utterance.”

“But” interrupted Brother Verdant, “is not the expression ‘capital bishop timber in him ‘ a straining of the truth?”

“Not at all” was the reply. “This does not mean that he will ever be a bishop, but that we see in him the same stuff that we see in bishops. Then you know there is much timber in the Conference ready to be made up into bishops. It is true there is much timber in the woods that is never made up into houses; and there is more timber in the trees today than there is in the houses. These are useful reflections, solemn to some in their application, but very comforting to other people.”

Brother Verdant laughed.

“Say of the presiding bishop that he was urbane and yet dignified, or dignified and yet kind, as if these qualities rarely ever met in an individual. Say also that the bishop in his administrative ability thoroughly justified the choice of the General Conference in electing him to this high and first office of the Church. That he kept the business of the Conference well in hand, losing no time and yet neglecting no interest of the Church. That he preached two of his grandest sermons, that were intellectual feasts to his audience. Do not mention the texts as the bishop intends using them on his entire round. In regard to his address to the class for admission into the Conference, say that it was one never to be forgotten. Add that he captured the entire Conference and that nothing would please its members more than to have him return. Conclude the reference with the words:

“Come again bishop.”

“In regard to the visiting connectional brethren representing the different Boards of the Church, say that they charmed and carried away the Conference. That these brethren are the right men in the

right place. That all regretted that they could not stay longer, but had to rush away to meet other Conferences.

“In personal mention of editors and college presidents, it is well to put in the adjectives after a double-barrel manner. For instance, the genial and learned editor of the Antioch Advocate; and the dignified and scholarly President of the Mesopotamia and Abel-meholah Female Collegiate Institute.

“In mentioning the Conference noteworthies never fail to put in a descriptive adjective before the name of the brother. If he is an aged super-annuate, say the venerable A. B. C. If quite a young man say the promising D. E. F.”

“We have just culled from one of the Christian Advocates of the Methodist Episcopal Church South a paragraph of personal mention at a District Conference by a Conference letter writer. It is exactly as it appeared in the paper.

“The genial Dr. W., the suave Dr. M., the jocund and diligent Rev. I. W., the sprightly Rev. T. B., the portly and dignified Rev. T. H. and the stirring Rev. R. W., were all on hand.”

“For fear you will lack for adjectives I present you a kind of glossary of complimentary terms, with the article ‘ the ‘ before each so that all you will have to do is to write the name of the brother opposite the adjective that you think will best describe him or better still, that will best please him.”

THE GLOSSARY.

The brilliant. The sparkling. The eloquent. The logical. The profound. The witty. The charming. The accomplished The learned. The dignified. The able. The scholarly. The gifted. The polished.

“This you will readily see is far better than such a list as the following.

The ignorant. The conceited The ordinary. The unknown. The snappish. etc., etc., etc.

“It would be well to speak of the ‘ personnel ‘ of the Conference. Say that it would be hard find a finer-looking and more intelligent body men. This will please the Conference, and at the same time does not reduce other Conferences to despair, because you do not say that another such body of men could not be found, but would be hard to find. Moreover, they remember that you have never seen their Conference and so forgive your ignorance. Meantime you have pleased the Jericho Conference.”

“Finally as to the appointments, state that everybody seemed to get the very place they wanted, and went off happy and rejoicing. Then indulge in a paragraphic laudation of the wonderful spectacle of one hundred preachers not knowing where they would be assigned for the next year, quietly receiving their appointments and going forth without a murmur to their new fields. Do not say that over half knew where they were going beforehand. And in regard to the statement that ‘ all went to their new fields happy and rejoicing, ‘ it is best not to tell how Brown groaned, Jones wept, and Robinson raved and tore up the ground!

“You will find numerous results flowing from this kind of letter writing.

First you will be asked to write again.

Second you will soon be regarded as a safe, level-headed and conservative man.

Third you will be elected a member of the Conference Managing Committee of the Jericho Advocate, which is a great honor for a young man. Some preachers have lived to be eighty years of age, longing for this promotion. They saw it afar off, were persuaded of it, would have embraced it, but died without the promise or the fulfillment.

A fourth and last result of the letter which you have written will be that when you return home and get still before God, you will have to repent and do considerable praying. You will feel a mistiness gathering in your

religious experience, and will have to promise to write more truthfully the next time and so will after awhile regain the lost sweetness of your soul.

But if you have to write another Conference letter, you will feel drawn again to write just as you did before; and so you will go on until at last without any peculiar pain or compunction you will throw off these letters with great ease, rapidity, and even enjoyment, feeling that such epistles are the best and wisest, and that you are actually doing God service.

CHAPTER 12

THE CONFERENCE COLLEGE

Colleges are numerous these days. Philanthropists build them, States endow them, cities ask and bid for them, and as for an Annual Conference it will have them.

It is a piece of property that is felt to be a proper and essential equipment as well as ornamentation for such a religious body. A Conference is hardly supposed to lift up its head, and take a dignified stand before the world until it can have at least one, and even more than one of these seats of learning.

The man is always to be found who has twenty acres of ground to donate on the edge of some remote village. Then comes the other equally well-known brother with the proposition that he will give fifty dollars to the endowment fund if one thousand other individuals will do the same.

All this is felt by the brethren to be providential pointings, and so the land is accepted, and then deeded to the Conference with the distinct understanding that if it is ever used for any other purpose it shall revert to the donor or his heirs.

These colleges of the Conference are all wonderfully alike in some important particulars. Most of them are in inaccessible places. And all of them are in a financially languishing condition. A third similarity is that each annual report announces the fact that said college has just started, or is about to start, upon a career of prosperity unparalleled by anything in its previous history. These last two features are invariably found in the Conference college.

A fourth similarity is that they all have fine names; long, euphonious, high-sounding and impressive. No single name is felt to be sufficient to herald forth the future excellence and achievements of these institutes, so that they nearly all have double names. Or if but one, that name must

represent some remarkable character, or some notable epoch in Church history.

An additional likeness is seen in the fact that every one need “coddling.” Just as the baby of the house is taken up, greased, wrapped in flannel, its feet warmed at the fire, and then trotted or rocked until it is quiet; so must the Conference college be treated. Every year it is taken out of its flannels, scrutinized carefully, greased and warmed by the Conference fire, rolled up again in lined and padded “resolutions,” and with a sugar tit or milk bottle in the way of big promises stuck in its mouth, the ailing thing is put back to bed for another twelve months’ rest or sleep.

Thus treated repeatedly, it gets to liking and then demanding this kind of coddling. It is not happy if it is not brought out and trotted on the ecclesiastical knee. It loves to hear its list of ailments enumerated by the old Conference mothers who take special interest in its past diseases and future perils. If the coddling does not come, and it is not trotted on the knee, and warmed and rubbed, the institute begins to kick and bawl aloud about it, and says in its sobs that “nobody cares for it.” It is a spectacle never to be forgotten to see the Conference mothers in the form of committees with spectacles on their eyes examining the institute, writing up and cataloguing its various diseases of colic, indigestion, weakness, dizziness, wind, swoons, paralysis, and other melancholy afflictions that have swooped down upon the Conference infant. But the “mothers” with tears of joy say that the darling little pet has lived through them all. That they now know of but a dozen more things of a direful nature that could befall the institute, and escaping these, they see nothing to prevent an “unparalleled course of prosperity.” This last hopeful sentence always moves everybody, and the educational foundling is returned to its cradle with general approving nods and smiles, and the bold affirmation of many that “she will yet pull through.”

Our observation at this point, of the college or institute is, that if you coddle it once a year at Conference, and make a fuss over it, and grieve over its pains, that said college is perfectly willing to be overlooked in its misery for another twelve months. As cats like their heads to be rubbed, and other household pets to be fondled, so the Conference college wants to

be dandled, rubbed, crooned and crowed over. If you do not do it, you will hear from it.

Still another striking likeness about Conference colleges is that few men remain as their President long. Scarcely ever more than three or four years. Each one on his election was felt to be and announced as the “coming man,” the deliverer of the college from all its debts and troubles, and the inaugurator of a new and “unparalleled prosperity.”

A few days after his election the Jericho Advocate came out in a handsome notice as follows:

“The newly elected President of Blank College is a man of wide experience and scholarly attainments, and has already achieved remarkable success as an educator. Previous to his election he was at the head of Froth Seminary, which school he built up from almost nothing to three hundred pupils. He is an A.M. graduate of the University of Bubbles, and is highly commended not only by the Faculty of the institute, but also by a number of prominent teachers, preachers, and patrons of surrounding states.”

The newly elected President referred to some of the above facts in his maiden presidential speech before the Conference. He also felt assured of “unparalleled prosperity,” and begged the brethren to “rally” to him and to this “great embryo seat of learning.”

There was a great shuffling of feet among the brethren at the end of the speech which was construed by the inexperienced into a sign of “rallying.”

But at the next Conference the President wore an injured and chastened look, and in his second speech he distributed a number of slaps and raps around about, and here and there. He said that the brethren had not “rallied.”

At the close of the third or fourth year he requested the Board of Trustees to relieve him of the honor and responsibility of the presidency; and the “coming man” became the going man.

After his return to the pastorate he was always looked upon by the brethren with a great degree of reverence. And it was noted that he was made Chairman of the Committee on Memorials, and of all special

committees that had intrusted to them affairs of a delicate, difficult and sorrowful nature.

Still another similarity to be seen in the Conference colleges is that they afford opportunity for much “resolving” and great debates. In this thing it proves a benediction to some, and a safety valve for the windiness and steam that has been gathering in the orators of the Conference for the past year.

More and more the Conference is becoming a regular business machine. Less and less are the opportunities for showing off oratorical gifts. If there were no other reason to retain the Conference college, this alone should have great weight, that the discussion of the institute with its ups and downs, its woes and perils, gives opportunity for pent-up eloquence to come forth. The word “woes” here would perhaps be better spelled “whoas” as descriptive of the college career and history. But to resume; the college discussion is now about the only chance left the brethren for a general rhetorical and oratorical coruscating and skyrocketing. Some might except the “Memorial Service,” a time when men can make any kind of a speech they want and not have the fear of being contradicted. But the Conference college is far superior as a linguistic arena, and as such, with all its feebleness and diseases, is a necessity.

At one of the first Conferences the author attended, when the report of the Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree Collegiate Institute was read, and then without a word of debate referred to the Board or Committee on Educational Interests, he was astonished and grieved for Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree Collegiate Institute. He thought that its troubles were not regarded, its claims not duly considered. How could they sweep all this mass of information and these wails for help away with a mere motion to refer to a certain committee?

Verily we reasoned as one of the foolish ones. The older heads knew better. The case was not dismissed, but postponed for discussion. Waterloo was to be fought on Saturday if we adjourned Sunday, or on Monday if the appointments were read Monday night.

All the week the platform Titans of the Conference gathered their wind and strength for the contest that was to try their own mettle, and the

patience of some of their brethren who wanted no debate, but their “appointments” that they might go home.

On the memorable Saturday or Monday, the long-expected report of the Committee on Education is brought in. The President or Agent of the college has requested the chairman to let him know when he would present the report. He has done so. The hour has come. The Titans are in their places. Electricity is felt to be in the air, and a downpour is expected.

The chairman proceeds slowly, as if weighing every word, and with great emphasis through the preamble of the report. The brethren bend forward to hear as though nothing of the kind had ever been read to them before. The report is so strikingly original that we give a part for its preservation in the archives of the Church.

THE REPORT OF COMMITTEE.

“The report of the Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree Collegiate Institute, has been laid before this committee.

“We mark with profound gratification the increased matriculation, the improvement of curriculum, the enlargement of Faculty, and the general toning up of every department of the college.

“There have been valuable additions to the college library and the chemical laboratory. New buildings have been erected; extensive repairs have been put on other buildings; and the campus has been improved and ornamented.

“The attendance of scholars this year has been above that of any previous year: and a still greater number are expected in the following session.

“The explanation of this great success is to be attributed to the untiring labors of the gifted President and his able Faculty. With such a man at the helm as Dr. Wise, we predict for this college in the future a course of unparalleled prosperity.”

After this came the “whereases” in the report, and then the “Be it resolveds.”

When the last “Be it resolved” was read, and the reader’s voice ceased, a pin could have been heard to fall. It was the lull before the storm.

Some one moved that the report be adopted, when suddenly a dozen men were on their feet with cries of “Mr. President!” “Mr. Chairman!” “Bishop!”

The member who said “Bishop,” was recognized. He, however, simply said that the President of the College was on the floor and should be heard at this time. The Chair so ruled.

The President’s speech was a portrayal of the tremendous difficulties in directing the course of such a college as the Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree Collegiate Institute. He spoke of its distresses and complaints. Its falling plaster and unpainted walls. Its broken fences and unfilled library shelves. He next spoke of the heavy debt that was now upon the institute. The slim salaries on which the President and Faculty were living, and the fearful struggle they were making to cause the college to hold its own in the face of other rival institutions in the land. He said also that the brethren had not “rallied” to him, that he was bearing the burden alone, college, buildings, twenty acres of land and all, and that it was all pushing him down into the grave.

Then the President struck a more hopeful vein and said that the possibilities of the college were great. That if he could secure the moral and financial support of the “brethren” the college would at once enter upon a course of “unparalleled prosperity” etc., etc.

After this the battle proper began which lasted three hours in the morning and two in the afternoon. Numerous were the speeches for and against the report of the college. The Conference was about equally divided. Horns were locked. Achilles dragged Hector around the walls of Troy, and then Hector suddenly came to life and pulled Achilles around. Oratorical swords crossed, flashed and the blood of reputation flowed. There were bursts of laughter and applause from the looking and listening Conference. The fame of speakers was made and lost that day. Some dated their promotion to big churches from this famous college debate. Some secured election to the General Conference, or elevation to Connectional position from that wonderful time. Intellects grappled, wit sparkled, arguments cut,

ridicule burned, eloquence soared, while all the time Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree Collegiate Institute blazed like an illuminated city in the skies. These were the hours that the college rose and reigned. This was the time it p aid to be President, or even the janitor of such an institution that could bring such wondrous scenes into an Annual Conference.

The motion was made to refer the report back to the committee.

Lost.

A motion was made to adjourn.

Lost.

The battle raged on. The time for adjournment arriving the motion was made to “extend the hour.”

Carried enthusiastically — and the speeches multiplied. Brother Spry said that the Conference in its business over the college reminded him of a hen with one chicken.

Brother Witt said that his mother once owned a turkey hen that sat on a small squash by mistake for two months trying to hatch it out, and instead of hatching the squash, the squash wore the hen out. This hen was the Conference trying to bring something out of nothing; and we were simply wearing ourselves out without hatching anything. That to call an ordinary-sized school of a hundred boys and girls a college, was to him absurd in the extreme. That the school was in an out-of-the-way place and was a failure financially and every other way, that there was no reasonable hope of its success when everything seemed against it.

Brother Hope replied that he knew a gentleman who said he would give fifty dollars toward the relief of the college if one hundred other men “could be found” who would do the same. The words “could be found” had a dubious and melancholy sound, and no response was elicited.

Brother Brilliant made a brief speech in which he said “The problem of the college can be easily solved, and the entire burden lifted if the preachers will pledge themselves to send two students from each pastoral charge. Two boys from each of the one hundred charges of the Conference will

give us two hundred students, and place Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree College side by side with other great institutions.”

This arithmetical argument had great weight for a while with the Conference; for all at the moment saw that one hundred times two was two hundred; and so figuratively they could see the college swarming with new students.

Rev. Mr. Pro said in his speech that

“While the College is in an out-of-the-way place as has been insinuated; yet this can be said of other great and good things as well and as an argument proves too much and so proves nothing. But I am glad to inform the Conference that the new “North Star and Southern Cross Railroad” now being projected is to pass directly through the town thereby increasing the value of our College property and adding to the facility of reaching the seat of learning.”

This speech decidedly impressed the Conference, and the members looked at each other and nodded their heads approvingly, and the stock of Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree College went up with a rush.

The Rev. Mr. Con followed Mr. Pro, and with a sarcastic smile proceeded to puncture this his railroad balloon or boom with these words

“I have recently interviewed Col. Crosstie the General Manager of the railroad that Brother Pro refers to, and he tells me that inasmuch as the town of Buncombe, at which our college is located, refused to contribute to the stock, that the surveyors have been called in, the route has been changed and will now pass east of Buncombe not less than ten miles.”

At this speech the Conference looked dejected and the college stock went down with a great flop, and some members called out “Question!”

At this juncture Rev. Mr. Oily in a smooth and smiling speech changed the entire situation:

“For my part” he said with great emphasis and a soothing wave of the hand “let the colleges of other denominations have all the

railroads they desire; I for one am opposed to there being a single one in the neighborhood of our seats of learning. The depots become lounging places for the students, and the trains are disseminators of vice. Our boys will study best in remote towns like Buncombe where nothing but the tinkle of cow bells and the note of the whip-poor-will can be heard. Here amid the quiet of country lanes and the stillness of village life, let them labor with their textbooks and prepare for the great duties and victories of life. As for my part I am delighted that the railroad is to miss Buncombe ten miles. This very miss of the railroad is a hit for the college, and will be the making of the boys. In my opinion this ten-mile divergence adds to the already inestimable value of our college one hundred per cent.”

The Conference approved and began to look hopeful again.

Time would fail to tell all that was said on both sides, that was good, bad and indifferent. There was the joking speech, the anecdotic speech, and the speech in which the speaker lost his temper, and then his argument.

Meanwhile the bishop looked and listened, and picked out future presiding elders.

From the wealth of oratory that was lavished that day we confess in our selection from the speeches to that confusion which is called the embarrassment of riches.

The debate finally narrowed down to the two Boanerges of the Conference, Dr. Coole and Dr. Blowhard. Brother Pro after repeating himself three times fell off. Brother Con got mad and sulked under a ruling of the Chair. Brother Oil ran out of oil. The arena was filled with the wounded and slain, and only the two gladiators mentioned above were left to finish the gory contest.

Dr. Coole in his last speech said

“Mr. President, let us look away from these rosy colorings that our brethren have with such a large brush and liberal hand laid upon the future of our Conference institute.

The college is in an inaccessible spot, and out of the world. It was born sick and has never seen a well day since its birth. The location is evidently unhealthy. It has been nothing but a burden on our hands for twenty-five years. Our preachers have been taxed for its support until they are sick and tired of it, and all that we get in return are groans and lamentations at the end of the year, and fresh appeals for more help.

It calls itself a college and has not the attendance of some village or country schoolhouse. Why should a Conference be taxed to support just one field school in a corner of our territory? Why not be assessed for every other school?"

"Here is the report," continued Dr. Coole who from this moment became Dr. Hot. "Here it is," he repeated loudly, holding it in one hand and striking it with his right forefinger.

"Listen to these expressions, 'Gratifying increase of attendance and larger matriculation this year than any previous year. 'What is this increased attendance sir, and enlarged matriculation? I find in looking in the catalogues of the past, that four years ago they had 101, three years ago 100, two years since 99, last year 100, and this year 102! This is the gratifying increase over anything known in previous years?"

It is a well-known fact sir, that fully eighty of these pupils are boys and girls in the town of Buncombe. Then ten of the remaining twenty-two are free pupils, and less than ten are students from any distance, and yet here is the college so-called that we are expected to support.

"I note the expression 'valuable additions to the college library and chemical laboratory. 'These valuable additions Mr. Chairman are the antiquated library of one of our deceased preachers and a forty-gallon can of muriatic acid.

"I read lower down here on the report, of improvements about the campus and additional buildings going up. I was particular to inquire about all these, and the only buildings that I can hear about are a small stable and a hen house built for one of the professors. As for the campus improvement it seems to consist in a new gate

on the town side, a wagon load of gravel piled into a sink hole in the road, and some Jimson weeds cut out of the fence corner.

“I mark the words ‘ extensive repairs. ‘ I grant that the repairs are needed; the buildings shake at every wind as if they had the palsy, and the walls inside show great sheets of plastering gone and broad splotches of discoloration, that give the appearance of leprosy. It surely needs repairs. But where are those repairs? I could not find them unless it be some new shingles on the main building, that in their contrast to the old mossy boards around them makes one think that the roof had the smallpox.

“I mean sir no reflection upon the President of the college Dr. Wise and his able Faculty. They are not to blame for these things. The trouble is we have located our college where it cannot flourish, and we are putting good men there to suffer and die, and to be the victims of our denominational pride and Conference folly. The work they are doing can be done by the laity, by any of the excellent instructors we have in the land. We need these preachers in the pastorate, or at the head of institutions that will afford the proper scope for their talents.

“I move sir, that this Conference take steps for the sale of this college, and that we settle upon an institution of learning that in buildings, fixtures, appliances and situation may deserve the name of college and command the respect of the whole land.”

The applause that followed this speech would have been louder and longer, but it was observed that the bishop looked grave.

Dr. Blowhard arose for the last speech.

“Bishop, I confess to being amazed at the inflammatory and ill-considered utterances of Dr. Coole. More than that he has said things that were positively harsh and unkind, and reflected upon the wisdom and judgment of the Conference.”

When Dr. Blowhard said this, quite a number of members began to put on an injured look that belongs to people whose wisdom and judgment have

been reflected on. Dr. Blowhard seeing the good effect produced by this remark went on,

“This college, bishop, is no mushroom affair. It is the product of the intelligence, liberality, sacrifice, toil and suffering of this body of men.”

Again the Conference assumed the proper look under this praise, and tried to appear humble in spite of being so intelligent, liberal and sacrificing; while the President of the college who was listening intently gave a great groan when Dr. Blowhard used the word “suffering.”

Dr. Blowhard continued

“Dr. Coole in his speech says that the town of Buncombe is in an out-of-the-way place for a college. For that matter sir, the north pole is in an out-of-the-way place; but what would we do without the north pole! He says that our college was born sick and has never been well a single day. Sir is that to be an argument against Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree Collegiate Institute? Then do we strike blows at Bishop Simpson, Payson, and even Timothy himself, who was far from well according to the letters of St. Paul. It is a well-known fact that Payson was a frail, delicate man, and yet he was a great power. Some of the strongest men that I have ever known were once very feeble in health and had numerous diseases, but are now robust and useful members of society. Our college has had sore trials and troubles, but I believe she ‘will yet pull through.’”

Some applause.

Dr. Coole has been pleased to ridicule the able report of the President Dr. Wise. Is it not enough for Dr. Coole that a committee of his brethren sat in deliberation upon all the papers bearing upon the institute, and passed favorably upon them! Have these brethren no judgment? Were they not carefully selected from the Conference body because of their years, character and experience? As one of the committee I protest against the reflection upon our labors. While Dr. Coole was attending night services at the church and enjoying himself, we were toiling sir, yes toiling over these reports.

“As to the reflection upon the number of students, and the idea of calling an Institution a college which only had a few scholars in attendance, I would say sir that just seventy men made up the Sanhedrin, and twelve constituted the Apostolic College. There is nothing in numbers. Besides do we not all know that a college is as much a benefit to a hundred people as it is to five hundred. Does the fact of three or four hundred additional students make the college course and training what it is, or is the benefit in the curriculum and tutorship? What sir if most of the students come from Buncombe? Do not the Buncombe boys and girls need a college? Are they not to be considered because they are from Buncombe?

“Bishop, I have one more word to say by way of argument for the continuance of the college. Does the Conference know that the Baptists have just purchased twenty-five acres of land, and have already broken ground in Buncombe for the erection of just such an institute as ours. Are we going to allow this aggressive denomination to rob us of our influence, take our glory from us, and sweep us from the field? Is it the policy of the Methodist Church to retire? Can this Conference afford to sacrifice the labors and influence of a quarter of a century, and let the Baptists reap where we have sown, and gather into their folds the results of our long and arduous labors? I for one say let us stand up for our own, let us not forsake the field that Providence has plainly given us, and above all let us preserve the fruits of our own previous industry.”

These last remarks were felt to be clinchers. While at the words “the Baptists” every eye was on Dr. Blowhard, and it was plain that the battle was won, the report would be adopted, and Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree College continued on the list of American colleges for another year.

From this time Dr. Blowhard arose in eloquence with each succeeding sentence. The Conference was complimented, but on what it would be hard to say. The President and Faculty were lauded, and the college magnified. From the reverberating peroration we are only able to gather

some fugitive sentences that fell thick and fast upon each other bringing out rounds of applause from the Conference. As well as can be recalled they were “This nineteenth century” — ”The eyes of the world are upon us in this matter” — ”Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree Collegiate Institute” — ”Rally” — ”Upward” — ”Zenith,” and “Unparalleled prosperity.”

Dr. Blowhard sat down on uttering this last sentence wiping his face, and in the midst of thundering applause. A number of the brethren shook hands with him and congratulated him.

The bishop added a few words saying that “It is well for us who are Methodists to remember that Methodism was born in a college.” Whereupon the Conference assumed a dignified look, and several of the preachers could have been taken for professors of Sanskrit, not to mention languages of only one or two thousand years of age.

The bishop also said “that the twenty acres deeded to us is a gift of trust, and we cannot afford to ignore the character of the conveyance. It has been given us for a certain purpose, and we must not be recreant to the trust.”

This brief speech with other similar remarks from the bishop bradded the nail so to speak, that had been driven by Dr. Blowhard: and so with cries of “Question!” “Question!” the vote was taken, the report adopted by an overwhelming majority, and men drew their breath as people do when a great danger has been averted.

That day the events and occurrences of the college debate were the theme of conversation in a hundred different homes. And citizens of the town still talk about the great speeches of that wonderful day. And preachers who mingled in the verbal contest still regret to this hour that they did not say things that occurred to them after they got home.

The following year Dr. Wise resigned the presidency and returned to the pastorate, saying that the air of Buncombe did not agree with him, and that the water of Buncombe did not agree with his wife.

Dr. Soft was then elected by the board of college trustees to take his place. At the next Conference he made his maiden presidential speech, in which he was heard with great emphasis to say that “the Conference must rally

to the Wesley-Coke-Asbury-McKendree Collegiate Institute” and concluded with the words “unparalleled prosperity.”

At the close of his speech there was a great shuffling of feet among the brethren, which was construed by some to be a sign of the rallying of the Conference to the college.

CHAPTER 13

A MARTYR

She was a lovely girl of eighteen. Her hair a rich dark brown was coiled in a Grecian knot at the back of a finely shaped head. Her eyes dark in the day became perfectly black at night through a remarkable expansion of the pupil. Her figure was perfect. And when she first appeared in Y___ many said that no fairer girl had ever been there before.

It was a wonder to many that turning away from other and more eligible suitors, she gave her hand and heart to a Southern youth of twenty-one, who like many others had been left without a penny through the instrumentality of the war.

After a few years of wedded life the young husband was converted to God, and soon after entered the ministry. The hardships that followed could not well be mentioned here. But the young wife gladly entered upon the difficult field with her husband, and endured privations and toil such as she had never known before.

She had the most unbounded hope and faith in the future of the young husband: and there was not a murmur that ever fell from her lips during the years of severe trial in which he was struggling upward to public recognition. Her deft and tasteful fingers made the humble-looking home like a bower with trained vines at the door and window, domestic ornaments inside, cushioned barrel chairs, swinging flower pots, and wooden shelves transformed into things of beauty by scalloped tissue paper. The wheel of her sewing machine flew with a dizzy rapidity, as the beautiful form bent over the loved task that was to supplement the meager larder and purchase theological books for her husband.

Promotion came gradually but steadily with him, but he marked with pain that the toil of these years was manifestly telling upon her. The figure was as perfect, the complexion as white and pink-like, the profile as striking, the smile as captivating as ever. But there were days when she seemed to

go down with attacks that seemed to puzzle the physicians of the small town where they lived. She would emerge from her bedroom after a few days, saying that she was all right again, but it was noticeable that these attacks came oftener and lasted longer. The step by and by began to lose its spring, the form some of its roundness, and one day in speaking to a lady friend in the parlor the young wife burst into tears and said she could not bring herself to tell her husband of the almost unbearable pain she was enduring.

On a certain year the young preacher was swept upward to the first appointment in his Conference. The wife was more gratified than he. She could not conceal it. And when he met her eyes he saw the proud fond loving look that seemed to say

“I knew it would be so.”

They had barely entered upon their new charge when the last of those strange attacks came; and one night after midnight hearing her moan, the husband turned to look upon her and to his consternation found her unconscious. Physicians were hastily summoned, and with grave faces they labored with her. In the afternoon of the next day they called the husband into the parlor and one of them broke the tidings to the husband that “there was no hope:” that the gentle sufferer would never be roused again.

With a cry that went to every heart the unfortunate man threw up his hands and fell upon the floor.

Hours afterwards it was pathetic to see him bending over the unconscious form and calling in vain upon her who before this had always responded with brightest of smiles to his lightest utterance.

As he took her limp hand in his own, he remembered how those fingers had done a thousand beautiful things for him, and how her feet had taken many a step for his comfort. He recalled the first time she had met him at the door, upon the day of their marriage. He had returned from some business errand in the town and was thus greeted as he laid his hand on the door knob. How beautiful she looked that day in her soft lawn dress with a dainty bow of ribbon in her hair. From that time she always opened the front door of their home to him whether he came by day or night, or early

or late. How bright she had made that home and how he wished now he had told her oftener how completely she had filled his life.

Thought was very busy as he knelt by her side looking at the unconscious face. He remembered the hours in which he was buried in his books and studied while she sat silently near, needle in hand mending little garments and darning little socks that made a great pile in the basket by her side. Would that he had lived less with dead authors, and spoken oftener with her of the flying needle.

One scene kept coming up. The year before on a certain work he had trudged a great deal on foot through streets of town and country lanes looking up cold and strayed-away parishioners. One evening about the hour of sunset he was passing the parsonage, and glancing in saw her in a rocking-chair on the verandah with that same busy needle. He stopped near his gate and unobserved himself watched her. The handsome head with the Grecian knot was bent over the sewing. There was an atmosphere of loneliness about her that was indescribably pathetic. The man's heart felt a sudden pang, and he said to himself

“Here I am visiting every man's wife except my own. I am acting as if every woman needed spiritual sympathy and help but my own wife.”

A mist dashed into his eye as he spoke aloud to her from the gate,

“Would you like for me to come in and sit with you?”

She quickly looked up from sewing with a bright happy smile and said,

“O I would be so glad.”

He came in and sat down near her, but he could not see clearly for some time, and his voice had a huskiness in it that did not at once clear away.

It all came back to him now, and he called her name at the bedside as one speaks who is uttering a last farewell. But the words of endearment were not heard. She never answered him again.

But in the moment of death, as the last breath fluttered on the lips, a sudden gleam came upon her face, and a smile so perfectly heavenly, and

that remained even after death in such a marked degree, that it impressed every observer.

The city papers the next morning deplored the untimely end of the young wife and mother who was lying still and white in the parlor. "Her sun had gone down at noon," they quoted. They also explained to the public the cause of her death, giving it some high-sounding name as unusual as it was mystifying. The young husband knew better. He remembered the flying wheel of the sewing machine, the meager and unnourishing fare for years of their table while he preached the gospel and struggled upward. He remembered how the color had gradually left her cheek, the buoyancy had gone from her step, and strength had at length failed. He knew with a bitter feeling in his heart that the technical term given by the physician and reported by the papers as the cause of the early death, needed a commentary or glossary that he could furnish; and that the real explanation was a life of hardship to which she had been unaccustomed, and the lack of food that makes blood and restores wasted tissue. So, as he read the words, he drew a pen over them and wrote

"She died a martyr."

The young wife and mother was buried in the morning. The funeral scene at the grave was peculiarly pathetic from the silence. The voice of the officiating minister was heard breaking the stillness with the words

"The earth and the sea shall give up their dead, and the bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed and made like unto his own glorious body."

Then came the fall of the first clods, and the husband sitting in a carriage hidden from view, crouched down in a corner feeling that a pall of darkness had settled on everything.

A great bunch of white roses was laid on the grave just over the heart of the young woman who lay as white and beautiful as the flowers six feet beneath them under the sod. The last glance thrown back by the bereaved man showed the lonely grave on the hillside, the flowers lying on the fresh-made ridge and a group of cedar trees standing by like an emerald frame for the peaceful picture.

Is there anything sadder on earth than the return from the cemetery to a home whose light and sunshine has been buried. The effort of kindly hands to make the return less dreary by changing the furniture, having fires blazing on the hearth and lights twinkling in the different rooms, and then meeting you kindly at the door, is sweet to the heart and appreciated. But all fail to keep back the lonely feeling, the desolation that sweeps over the spot, and the inward or outward burst of grief as one enters the door of the desolate home. She who had never failed to open the door for years, with warm loving smile and greeting was not there.

The bereaved man with stifled choking feeling went out of the house and sat on the back steps and looked at the empty back yard whose emptiness and silence actually smote the heart. His horse whinnied plaintively from the stable lot, and he felt like going out and putting his face on the neck of the faithful animal and crying out with a great cry. Restless he changed his seat, and walked about as one missing something.

That night was a wakeful one to the lonely man.

He had his four children placed to sleep side by side in one large bed, and lay on the edge watching their slightest movement and saying often with a groan,

“God have mercy on my motherless children.”

How quietly and happily they slept, all ignorant of the fearful loss that had come upon them. The father looked at the cheeks flushed with health, marked the gentle breathing, the dimpled hand resting upon the coverlet or snugged up to the cheek, and the awful sense of their loss and his own would roll afresh upon him and he would moan out in the night.

As he walked the next morning into the dining room to breakfast, the little ones were there before him two on each side, but at the head of the table where she used to sit was an empty chair.

Hastily bidding the servant watch over them and attend to their wants, the man with an awful oppression on heart and lungs, and all but gasping left the house and staggered out on the street. Homes bright, cheery, with sunshine on gallery and yard were on each side of him. His own seemed to have an Egyptian blackness resting upon it. O for a lonely place in the

forest where he could fling himself down and cry out until the agony that like leaden bands was pressing about his heart would snap and give way. O for sympathy, for a kindly voice, a loving face.

He almost ran along the street; his face was white and eyes hollow from mental suffering and loss of sleep. Every one who passed him, knowing his bereavement heaved a sigh at the man's face, but being tied up by social customs did not speak.

Hardly knowing why he did so, the sorrowing man ascended a long flight of steps that led from the pavement to the upper verandah of a beautiful home owned by one of the members of his congregation. He had hardly realized that he had rung the bell when it was noiselessly opened by a servant who led him through the hall into the dining room. A cheery fire crackled on the hearth and the table was spread. The gentleman and his wife, the only occupants of the room, were about sitting down to the morning meal, when the ghastly-faced preacher was announced and walked in. The lady moved swiftly to meet him with the tears falling upon her cheeks. The preacher looked at her a moment with that drawn look of pain in his face and said,

“O Sister R my home is desolate! I am a broken-hearted man! I don't know where to go! I have come to you.”

And the blessed woman of God, old enough to be his mother, without a moment's pause, and with the tears fairly streaming from her eyes kissed him as if he had been her own son, and as she put his head upon her shoulder said —

“I will be a mother to you.”

How he wept upon that faithful shoulder; how the flood gates were literally torn open and the burdened, tortured heart found temporary relief in scalding tears and sobs that shook the man's whole body.

What a breakfast it was, or more truly, was not. Eating was not thought of, and the Savior came down and girded himself and ministered unto them. The lady herself had lost precious members of her household, and could feel for her pastor. He spoke of heaven and the resurrection. His tone was softened and gentle, but the influence was one of flame. The skies opened

over the breakfast table and the head of the household a man of business and of the world, swallowed with difficulty the few morsels he ate, while his tears fell into the cup over which he bent to hide his emotion.

It was a week before the bereaved man could summon up strength to visit the cemetery. One afternoon he drove out with the four little ones to the young mother's grave. The cemetery lay beyond the city a mile on a beautiful slope in a broad valley whose sides were made of two parallel hills that were long, green, and lofty. Far away at one end of the valley could be caught a glimpse of the distant town and the broad and yellow Mississippi; and at the other end, still more distant, was a perspective of blue sky and white clouds closing up the valley in that direction as with a heavenly gate. A brook with an occasional willow on its bank, and spanned by two bridges, murmured along its way down the vale to the river. The golden sunshine seemed to sleep upon the grave-dotted slope covered with its motionless white pillars and whispering cedars and pines. It was a "Sleepy-Hollow" indeed.

The grave that they called "Mamma's grave" was in an upper remote corner of the cemetery, at the foot of a cedar-crowned bluff and commanding a wide prospect of the beautiful valley.

Here on the ground the man flung himself, near the grave, while the children with grave eyes and silent lips grouped themselves near. But after a little the children's sorrow was over, and the two youngest, and two and four began playing quietly about their mother's grave. As the father watched them and listened to their innocent prattle, and thought of the faithful heart six feet below them in the dark and cold, who could not see or know that they were all there thinking of and loving her; another storm of sorrow swept over him, and he buried his face in his hands that the children might not see his grief.

How every moment of that afternoon is remembered. The eye took in the quiet sleeping place of the dead below them, and followed the broad sweep of the valley disappearing in the distance. The soft coo of a dove came floating from a distant tree, while farther away still was wafted to them through the still afternoon the voice of some one driving cattle in the field. Later he heard the far-away whistle of a steamboat on the river. How faint it was, and plaintive. It seemed to sorrow with him. O if he could take

passage on it, and sail away from the heartache and loneliness. O if he could go to the end of the valley where the white clouds were piled up against the horizon, and turn one of them as on a hinge and raise up the curtain of blue and get away from a world that seemed now so utterly empty and lonely.

How wondrous is it that the absence of one person can bring such a solitary and desertlike feeling and appearance to the whole world!

Late in the afternoon they had to say farewell to the sacred and precious spot. It was hard to leave her all alone out there in the night, She who had made home so bright and beautiful, to be left in the dark under the stars, and lying among strangers. The thought of the winds sighing about her, the autumn leaves falling, and the snow drifting upon her resting place, brought a great pang to the heart.

With a tearful and tender look, he turned away from the lonely grave. The sunlight had left the valley and was now far up the lofty slopes and near the summit. The shadows were filling the valley and creeping up the hillsides as if after the sunlight. A little later came out a sunset blush at the end of the valley toward the town, the evening star gleamed white like an angel's hand over them, and listening to the church bells chiming softly in the distance they drove silently back to the world — back to the city of the troubled living, from the city of the peaceful dead.

Many days have passed since that afternoon. The promotion of the preacher went on steadily, and his busy life has been thrown in the midst of the large cities of the land. But from their noisy streets his mind recalls the past, and his heart travels back again to the lonely grave on the hillside. He sees the sunlit valley with the gleaming river and distant spires at one end, and the white clouds and blue sky at the other. Engirdled with cedar trees he sees the lonely grave, with a small cluster of white and pink shells, and a rosebush at the foot shaking out fragrance and blossoms upon the gentle mound, and there comes a great longing to lie down by her side and be at rest.

A marble slab now shines at the head of the grave. With the erection of the tablet came the question what shall be inscribed upon it.

Truth wanted to write

“Here lies a martyr,” and that would have been true indeed.

Love said put the sentence,

“The wife of my youth is here, and in her grave the sun of my life has set.”

Sorrow asked for the inscription

“My heart is buried here.”

Faith urged that the single line be carved,

“We shall meet again.”

But Justice at last prevailed and taking up the mallet and chisel went to work and cut into the slab a verse taken from the Word of God, which seemed to have been written for just such as the pale-faced sleeper —

“Well done; good and faithful servant — enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

CHAPTER 14

GUY

The handsome young wife with a telltale blush whispered something to her husband at ten o'clock one night. He was engaged in his "Study" when her hand was laid lightly upon his shoulder. Arousing himself from his book reveries, he felt the gentle touch and caught the whispered words as in a dream.

In a few minutes more he was speeding through the darkness for physician and nurse. As he remembered the troubled look and whisper of his wife while he hastened on block after block through the silent streets, the recollection would spur him afresh and he would change the fast walk to a run.

An hour afterwards the physician, nurse and husband were in the sick room looking solicitously upon the young wife, whose fine head with heavy knot of dark-brown hair lay propped up on the snow-white pillow.

In another hour a fifth life was added to the group, and the father, physician and nurse hung over the beautiful child with interest and tenderness. The little fellow enveloped in the softest and whitest of goods was then laid for a moment by the side of the young mother. The flushed face had become white as marble, and the long eyelashes drooped wearily upon the cheek. The nurse said,

"Look and see what a fine boy you have;" and the handsome head was turned, the dark eyes full of a warm love light fell upon the babe at her side, and with a fleeting tender smile the mother said, "God bless my precious child."

And so this was the way that Guy came into the world.

From the beginning every one loved him. There was something about him even in babyhood that drew people strangely to him, and that peculiar influence was realized all through his short life.

He had “old ways,” and above all loving ways that made him many friends in his earliest childhood. These old and loving ways never left him. He had as a rule a serious face, that was tempered with such sweetness that one loved to look upon him. And there was in his brown-gray eyes such a look of innocence, frankness and confidence in every one that the heart was speedily drawn out and knit to him.

Far back in his first years we recall him in the arms of his nurse prepared for an evening walk. The little Scotch plaid dress, and cap with feather, the long brown curls falling on his shoulders, and the big innocent eyes taking us all in, and the rosy mouth put up for a good-bye kiss, is a mental picture that time has not been able to destroy.

Later on in a Southern city the curls were taken off, and he was promoted to boy’s apparel. But the gentle loving spirit never changed, and he went on making friends. He soon struck up acquaintance with the policeman, milkman, ice-man, and many other characters who belong to a city. It was remarkable how all took to him and listened to his prattle, as mounted on the seat of car or wagon, or perched on fence or tarrying on the pavement he both asked and answered questions.

A number of his cute sayings are still remembered and repeated in the family. We mention one.

His mother one day forbade him to dig what he called a “well” in the yard. He discontinued at once, but after an hour put in a plea that he might be allowed to do so. It was refused. Later on he asked again, when his mother said

“If you ask me again I will punish you.”

About an hour afterwards Guy appeared close by the side of his mother playing very plaintively on his harmonica. After a few melancholy strains he stopped and said

“Mamma, do you hear what the harp says?” “No Guy, I do not.”

“What does it say?”

“Well it says, please let little Guy dig that well in the back yard.”

The mother bowed her head over her sewing to conceal the smile that would come up over the adroit way of making an instrument do what his tongue dare not and so while risking one more effort for the coveted pleasure, he could not be in strict justice punished for disobedience, inasmuch as it was the harmonica and not himself that made the third plea.

After this he used the harmonica extensively to get his requests granted.

Guy was just four years of age when his young mother died. That death has already been described in the preceding chapter. When the funeral was over, and twilight settled upon the city, the father took the little fellow in his arms and walked up and down in the starlight before his desolate home. The innocent prattle of the child about his mother brought a strange measure of relief. While the child talked he kept glancing up at the stars, and finally said,

“Papa I can see God’s eyes and mamma’s eyes looking down at us.”

From this time there seemed to be a growing spirituality in the boy, and his remarks became older as we say, and his heart was full of kindness to all.

The family moved to New Orleans, but Guy soon had a large circle of acquaintances, admirers and friends, who took the deepest interest in him, and recall to this day some of his sayings. In the large kindergarten school where he attended, principal, teachers and scholars all alike felt and yielded to the characteristic beauty of the child.

At home if any one gave up in a childish difference or dispute, it was always Guy. It finally became an expected thing on his part. It had been taught him as a lesson to be “a little Christian and give up to your sister.” One day as he observed how his sister took advantage of this spirit in him, he said to her very firmly

“Now suppose you be a little Christian some.”

One Sunday afternoon we missed him for fully an hour. Just back of the house was a large unbuilt grass-covered square, on which the young men gathered on the Sabbath and desecrated the day with games of baseball. Their loud cries and shouts could be plainly heard the day we speak of,

and we began to fear the influence of it all upon the children, when Guy came walking in.

“Well Guy,” we said, “where have you been so long?”

Looking steadily at us he said

“I have been sitting for an hour on the fence enjoying the evening breeze.” There was a pause of a couple of moments and his tender conscience made him add, “and looking at the boys play ball.”

Another pause.

“And thinking all the time how wicked it was!”

He was very fond of being read to by his father at night, and would with drooping lashes sit up late waiting for his return that he might have the coveted chapter. One of his favorite volumes was “Scottish Chiefs,” and his heart became frequently full, and his eyes overflowed as we progressed in the melancholy career of Sir William Wallace.

In illustration of his tender heart, we recall that one afternoon he was quite late in returning from school. This was so unusual with him that considerable uneasiness was felt by the family as first one hour and then another rolled by and no little boy with school satchel appeared. Finally the gate clicked, and Guy flushed excited and with big tears in his eyes and many more in his voice, narrated quite brokenly the history of the afternoon, which was strangely corroborated months after Guy’s death, and just as he gave it.

He said “A poor old blind man met me on the street and said that he did not know how to get home. He told me that he lived away across the city near the river, and asked me would I lead him home. I told him yes, to take my hand and lean on me. And O he leaned so hard! and he lived so far from here! But I took him home and I had such trouble in finding my way back,” and two great tears rolled down the face of the child, and the voice unsteady all along broke down and could carry the narrative no farther.

Months after this as we said, the blind man of that afternoon episode met a member of the family and told him that sometimes he became confused in his mind when on the street, and on a certain afternoon a little boy at his

request had led him miles across the city to his home, or rather hovel. How the blind man felt when told that the little boy who helped him home that day was now dead, the writer does not know; he only knows that the father's heart melted, and a certain scripture took upon itself a new and tender meaning from that hour, "He being dead yet speaketh."

Guy loved to be with his father; and while the pen of the preacher flew at his desk, for hours the child would be silently employed near his side, or near his feet on the floor.

One evening a few weeks prior to the fearful death of the boy, the preacher was writing in his study, until the shadows of the sunset hour began to fill the room. Guy had stolen noiselessly out. The father thought he heard his voice in the church; and so going in softly at the door he saw the little fellow sitting in the front pew near the pulpit, with a hymn book in his hand singing. The church was filled with shadows, but the boy seemed to have no fear or uneasiness. He was in his "Father's house." He was singing his favorite in "Gospel Hymns," called "Hiding in Thee."

It seemed so strange and weird to see a boy of eight years thus employed: and using such words

*O safe to the Rock that is higher than I,
My soul in it sorrows and conflicts would fly!
So sinful so weary, thine, thine would I be
Thou blest Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee.*

Other lads of his age were even then romping and shouting in the street, while he sang alone in the dark church

*Thou blest Rock of Ages
I'm hiding in Thee.*

It was the swan's death song with him.

The father stood some moments watching the little figure in the shadows and listening to the plaintive song, and then crept noiselessly away. But to this day there is no hymn that so moves him as the one sung by the lonely child in the shadowy church. To this day the song brings back the child, and the child the song.

*Hiding in Thee
Hiding in Thee
Thou blest Rock of Ages
I'm hiding in Thee.*

One day Guy met with a slight accident to his foot. Nothing was thought of it. But in the damp climate of the Gulf Coast it is a perilous thing to receive a wound or cut on hand or foot, and not pay special attention to it.

A few nights afterward the little fellow walked with such difficulty from the prayer meeting, that his father took him in his arms and carried him home. The next day he complained that he could not eat; and an older member of the family came to the father with a pallid face and said

“I am afraid that Guy has lockjaw!”

The father in another minute was making a second long run in behalf of the child: one at his birth, the other in connection with his death. There was no time to wait for cars or anything else. He sped as if winged along the street stopping not to speak to people, nor to think how he appeared to them. It was a ten-block flight! And yet with a deadly calmness that amazed him he stood before the doctor and told him of the case. The reply of the physician was

“He is gone there is no hope.”

The father staggered under the words as if a bullet had pierced his heart.

What happened in the next ten days was like an awful nightmare.

The physician bade the father return at once, and told him what to do; informed him that convulsions would begin in the next hour, and would increase unto the end. It was all fearfully fulfilled.

The father laid the Johnlike, yes Christlike boy upon the bed; administered medicine and talked and read to him with a breaking heart. He was reading a story of schoolboy life in which the principal character was a noble lad, thinking to divert his mind and give him some pleasure. In one of the chapters there was a vivid description of how the “bully” of the school was surrounded by the boys and was getting a well-merited thrashing; when a sob from the bed revealed Guy in tears, and he said

“Papa don’t read that.”

He the loving little fellow, and nearing a heaven of love, could not bear to hear of even a bad boy being ill used and hurt.

The first convulsion came on as predicted, and the little form was curved as we see in cases of meningitis, and the straining moan so peculiar to tetanus was issuing from his lips. In ten minutes more there was another convulsion. In five minutes there was another. And then they came like the waves of the sea in frequency.

It was after one of these that he said with a strange intuition of coming death,

“Papa I thought I was going to be a preacher.”

It would be hard to describe the melancholy accent in these simple words. Here was a child of eight years wrestling with a problem of the divine providence on his deathbed; while his father was struggling with another by his side. He could not endure to tell the child that he was dying. He kept hoping against hope, and yet despairing at the same time. The utmost he could bring himself to do in the way of warning, was to get on his knees by the bedside and with his lips near the ear of the boy who was already to some extent under the influence of narcotics say,

“Guy my darling boy — repeat after papa.”

*When we’ve been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun.*

He did so line after line as it was repeated slowly and gently to him, although the response was with difficulty and pain.

There never was a kinder physician than the one who attended upon the sick boy. And he was as skillful as he was kind and faithful. Through his skill the child’s life was prolonged ten days.

Once on the ninth day when the breath seemed gone, the doctor resuscitated him by manipulating his chest with his hands, so that the weary wheels of life rolled on another day. It was nine o’clock on the

morning of August 30, 1886, that the father hanging over the now unconscious boy saw again that ominous failure of breath. Remembering how the physician had done, he with streaming tears pressed the breast and chest in and out, and saw the breath once more restored. But it was only for a few minutes; again came the breath failure, again the father with a cry of agony worked with the precious form, and blew breath into the open lips — but it was all in vain; the heart had ceased to beat, the spirit had gone to God, and a child life pure and beautiful was translated from earth to heaven.

Did the reader ever go alone with the body of a loved one, on boat or car to some distant burial place? All that night in the train the father traveled with head leaning against the window looking at the distant stars and thinking of the precious silent form in the dark coffin in the baggage car ahead.

He was buried in the city cemetery at Vicksburg by the side of his mother. The lonely grave of the latter has now a companion mound by its side. The little fellow who four years before had so unconsciously of his loss played by the grave of his mother, had soon grown weary of the journey of life. He heard the Savior who loves little children calling him, and so came back and lay down beside his mother under the sod. There they sleep together side by side, beneath the cedar trees and in the midst of the broad sunlit valley with the river at one end and the clouds at the other. There they are, the lovely young mother and the gentle little boy whom every one loved, waiting for the coming and the voice of the Son of God.

*“He tasted of the cup of life
Too bitter ‘twas to drain:
He put it meekly from his lips
And went to sleep again.”*

On the marble slab at the head of Guy’s grave is his name, with time of birth and death, and a Scripture verse descriptive of the brief but beautiful life. “He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

His little trunk still sits in the room of his father after the flight of ten years. It has within it his kindergarten books and a few playthings, together with the clothes cap and shoes he last wore. Also a purse with fifty small coins in it which his father gave him one by one to assist him to

take the fifty nauseous draughts of medicine, that after all proved of no avail. The little hands that counted the money, and that did the beautiful kindergarten work are folded over the loving heart that has grown still. The trunk that holds these treasures is rarely opened; for to one heart it is like unsealing a sepulcher. And when it is unlocked, and the eyes rest upon the books and playthings; to this house the same mortal anguish sweeps like a storm over the breast of the father as the face is buried in the little garments, and the same heartbroken cry ascends that was wrenched forth on the morning of that day of death.

What this pen finds hard to describe has been powerfully and pathetically drawn by that matchless poet of the children, in one of the most touching poems he ever wrote.

LITTLE BOY BLUE.

*The little toy dog is covered with dust,
But sturdy and stanch he stands:
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,
And his musket molds in his hands,*

*Time was when the little toy dog was new
And the soldier was passing fair,
And that was the time when our little Boy Blue
kissed them and put them there.*

*“Now don’t you go till I come” he said
And don’t you make any noise!”
So toddling off to his trundle bed
He dreamt of the pretty toys.*

*And as he was dreaming an angel song
Awakened our little Boy Blue, —
O the years are many, the years are long
But the little toy friends are true.*

*Aye, faithful to little Boy Blue they stand,
Each in the same old place,
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,
The smile of a little face.*

*And they wonder, as waiting these long years through
In the dust of that little chair,
What has become of our little Boy Blue
Since he kissed them and put them there.*

Often the writer stops to watch boys at play who are of the age of Guy. He follows them with wet and wistful eyes as they fly the kite, sail the tiny boat and laugh and shout in their merry play. His own heart is very tender and full of love and prayer for them all. But memory keeps traveling back to the dear little boy with the loving heart and gentle life, whose body is asleep in the graveyard at Vicksburg, and whose soul is with the Savior in the skies.

CHAPTER 15

LITTLE JACK

I had just concluded the morning service at the St. Charles avenue Church in New Orleans, and was descending the front steps of the building, when my eyes fell upon a respectable-looking white woman standing before me. She was evidently a nurse, and carried in her arms a baby of about four months of age. The child was dressed in pure white and strongly and strangely attracted me from the first by a face of unusual sweetness and beauty. The woman handed me a note in female handwriting and signed by a name unknown to me, in which I was requested to call as soon as possible at a certain number on a certain street; that the writer was in great trouble.

This was the first time I saw little Jack.

In the afternoon I rang the bell of the house to which I had been directed; was met at the door by the lady of the note, whom I found to be a woman of about twenty-eight years of age and remarkably handsome.

Inviting me into the parlor she said that she had taken the liberty to send for me that I might use my Christian and ministerial influence with her husband who had been dissipating for weeks and who was now in an adjoining room recovering from mania a potu. That he had been unmanageable and dangerous; that he had broken the glassware hurled-knives and every other missile that he could find at them, and imaginary beings: and she in daily terror and misery could stand nothing more. She wanted me to go in and talk and pray with him, and above all warn him that she would not live with him if he continued such a life.

Certainly this was no small request. Here I a mere stranger was asked to go into a room where a man had delirium tremens and was throwing everything that he could find at inoffensive people, and tell him that he was doing wrong and that he must change his life, or as the Georgia evangelist would say "Quit his meanness."

It is perfectly wonderful to note the confidence which has been inspired for the ministry in the people. They are sent for in every kind of trouble. They are felt to be excellent lawyers, fairly good physicians, first-class advisers, and most efficient policemen — in a word good for everything.

In a few minutes more I found myself in a darkened chamber and approaching a bed in a remote corner, on which I could distinguish the form of a man lying. The lady evidently having all confidence in me, left me to hold the uncertain interview alone. Drawing near I became conscious that the man was gazing at me; and as I still approached, he sat up in bed and looked at me without a word.

Extending my hand and taking his, I said “God bless you my dear sir, I am so sorry to find you unwell.” He replied with a thick tongue that he was “quite sick.”

Much of the interview has faded from my mind: he however saying but little and replying only in monosyllables. One thing I said that remains clearly with me, and is so impressed on account of the curious effect that the speech exercised upon the man. Turning to him I said

“My dear sir why is it that you go on in such a course of dissipation; you have a lovely wife, a beautiful child, a sweet home — everything to make you a contented man, and cause you to live a true temperate noble life.”

The look he turned upon me strangely disturbed and impressed me. It seemed to be the gaze of despair. It was a look of voiceless trouble. He never opened his lips.

Kneeling down I prayed with him, commended him and family to a loving Christ, and left. But the look haunted me; and as I recalled it again and again it seemed to have a language that I could only partially understand. It was weeks before I got the key to the language and saw that the look meant “You do not know what you are talking about.”

Before leaving the house I saw the nurse and little Jack in the yard. She was wheeling the child in his carriage. I bent over the cooing baby with a voiceless pain and sympathy.

A few days afterwards I was summoned to another interview with the lady, who reported that her husband was still drinking, and that she had resolved on a course of action that she knew would make her husband furious, yet it might succeed in saving him; and if it did not, she had determined to leave him. After a few minutes' reflection she said

“My husband belongs to a very prominent family in New York. They ought to know his condition. They have great influence with him, and to tell them now is all that seems to be left me.

So I have written a telegram which I wish you to send in your name for me, and after it has been sent will you not kindly come by and tell my husband that you have dispatched the message.”

The telegram read as follows: “The wife of your nephew, Mr. V___, bids me tell you he needs attention and help at once.” To this was attached my name as pastor of a New Orleans Church.

In an hour the message was sent; in another hour I was sitting by the side of Mr. V___, and after a little told him that his wife and I had a consultation in reference to himself, and felt that we owed it to himself and family to dispatch to them his condition.

With a quick startled look he said

“What did you say in the telegram?”

In reply I read a copy of the dispatch: “The wife of your nephew, Mr. V___, bids me say that he needs attention and help at once.” With a deep groan the man fell upon his back on the bed. How little I understood the groan that day; how well I knew what it meant a few days later.

The man paid no further attention to me; and though I lingered some minutes he never opened his lips again, but lay like a stone with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling.

All this time I was growing more and more interested in little Jack. Save my own, I never had a child to take such strong possession of my heart. Nearly a week had elapsed since my last visit, when I felt so hungry to see him that I could resist it no longer. So one evening on returning from a pastoral round, I determined to make a detour before returning home, and

take in the home of little Jack and see how things were getting on. As I approached in the twilight I noticed that the house was dark. Opening the gate and passing through the yard I knocked at the door. There was no answer. After knocking repeatedly to no avail, I opened the door and stood in the hall. The whole house was still and appeared forsaken, with the exception of a faint gleam of light at the end of the hall near the kitchen. Walking in that direction, and looking through the kitchen door I saw the Scotch nurse with a taper in her hand stirring something in a vessel on a gas stove. At my step and voice she looked around with a startled gaze, which was quickly exchanged to one of relief as she saw who it was.

“I knocked a number of times,” I said in explanation .

“I did not hear you,” she replied, “for I was back here in the kitchen getting the baby’s supper ready. He’ll be awake now in a little while and ready for it.”

“Where is his mother?” I asked.

“Gone sir.”

“Gone!” I exclaimed.

“Yes sir, gone for good.”

She had better have said “Gone for bad.”

“Gone where?” I said, looking my surprise.

“Away up north somewhere.”

“You do not mean to say that she has left her child!”

“Yes sir.”

“Did she say nothing about coming back?”

“No sir not a word.”

“Where is the father, Mr. V___?”

“Down town drunk, where he has been for nearly a week without coming home.”

I leaned against the wall and stood looking at the old nurse whose little taper in her left hand threw a gleam of light on her rugged but kindly face.

Just then there was a sharp peal of thunder and a dash of rain against the window. Whereupon the nurse taking up the corner of her apron wiped her eyes and indulged for a few moments in a deliverance of self pity.

“Just to think that here am I a lone woman, a stranger in this country, and left here in this big empty house with this wee child, and with no money and but little provisions, and in all this awful weather that we have been having for these last few days.” Here there was another thunder crash that made the tin and iron vessels on the wall rattle, and we heard the voice of little Jack partly fretting and partly crying, evidently having been awakened by the noise from his sleep.

We went into the room where he was lying. At the sight of the nurse, the lighted lamp and his supper, he was soon in fine humor, and with his dimpled hands clutching the milk bottle swallowed its contents with hearty appetite, while his eyes rested first on the nurse and then on myself, stopping occasionally to give a crow, or make that googly sound in his throat that cannot be spelled but means perfect animal content. He was having a royal good time, while both of our hearts were aching over the forsaken child.

Right then and there I determined that although the father and mother had given him up, yet little Jack should not lack for a friend while I lived.

As the child progressed with his supper, the nurse made some startling revelations to me.

“Do you know the real trouble in this family?” she asked, glancing at me where I sat.

“No I do not.”

“Well sir, they are not married!”

Seeing my astonishment she continued

“Do you remember when you telegraphed to Mr. V___’s family in New York, and told him about it, and what you had said in the telegram, how he fell back on his bed?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“Well you nearly killed him. He is a reckless kind of a man in his life, but was keeping this last piece of wickedness from his people who seemed devoted to him. But when your telegram saying his wife requested you to dispatch to them, that let the whole thing out.”

“Why did the woman have me send such a telegram?”

“Well sir I can’t tell, unless she hoped it would compel him to marry her at once, rather than return home and face his shame.”

“When and where did he first meet her?” I asked after a long pause.

“Mr. V___” replied the nurse “came to the World’s Exposition on business. One night while standing in a drug store, this woman came in to buy something, and he was so struck with her good looks, that he opened conversation, and walked home with her. They soon after rented this house and in about a year little Jack was born. It was then in answering an advertisement for a nurse I got first to know them.”

“When did you find out all these things you have told me?” I asked.

“Only lately. Mrs. V___ if I can call her so, told me herself after Mr. V___ became so miserable, and got to drinking so heavily.”

“Now that little Jack’s mother is gone, and the father drunk and neglectful of you both, what are you going to do?” I asked.

“I don’t know what to do sir: nor where to turn. I could get work for myself after awhile I reckon, but what is to become of the baby?”

Reaching over the cradle I shook the woman’s hand in farewell and said

“I will stand by you and little Jack.”

As I walked home through the night, my mind was busy revolving the case. How should I act; what could be done. A problem was before me. In

the first place my own family consisted of three grown persons and five children. Besides this the salary that year was unusually small, being entirely inadequate to meet regular expenses, and yet here I was proposing to introduce two additional members into my family. Still graver than this was the question, would the family consent to the addition of a "child of shame" to their number.

For several days I kept the matter in my own heart taking counsel of none save God. Meantime the only relief I could obtain was in going up late in the evening to see little Jack, and with the child in my arms, walk him up and down the gallery, or rock him in the lonely house.

One day I laid the matter before the family. All expressed deep sympathy as they heard the touching history, but when I suggested that we bring little Jack to our home, the answer was that "it was impracticable." I have never liked the expression from that day to this.

That evening I took another lonely walk with the forsaken bairn.

The next evening a happy thought came to me. I would get my wife to come up and see the child in person. So after sunset, she at my request came with me to the solitary home. We reached it at twilight: and as on a former occasion there was no light in the house; the whole building looked dark. We stood at the side door and knocked, and after awhile were admitted by the nurse who pointed silently to the baby carriage in which little Jack lay asleep. She then went out to prepare the supper.

My wife and I sat on either side looking down at the innocent and deeply wronged child. He never looked so pretty, and was the picture of health and innocence and helplessness as he slept ignorant of the shame and wrong done to him, and knowing not of the clouds that were gathering in his own short future. I saw at once in the tender expression of my wife's face that little Jack was preaching in his sleep to her with an effectiveness that I could not do when awake.

By and by he began to stir in his slumber, and in another minute opened his eyes on the lady at his side and stretched his arms toward her. He doubtless thought it was his mother. She at once stooped down and took him in her arms, and when the little fellow laid his dimpled hand on her cheek I knew that he had conquered.

We said nothing on our homeward trip through the dark, but just before going to sleep that night, the wife said "We will take little Jack."

The next morning by ten o'clock the nurse and child were at our home as recognized members of the family. The news gradually crept out and certain gentlemen meeting the writer would say with a smile, that they knew of several other children ready to be adopted if I desired them, etc., etc. And meanwhile they talked thus, and were amused at their own speeches, I wondered how people could smile over such a pathetic history.

Little Jack lived with us about four months, when troubles began. The mother could not be heard from, the father had vanished, and the nurse getting tired of the job gave notice that she intended leaving. With the slim income that year it was impossible to pay what she demanded. Moreover as the summer advanced the salary receipts fell off so seriously that the cook had to be discharged. Still another trouble came in the serious illness of little Jack. The child drooped and steadily grew worse in spite of our care and the attention of our family physician. How my heart used to ache those days over the little sufferer, who would stretch his arms out for me whenever I came near him.

In the midst of all this came the last announcement of the nurse that she must leave. The parents she said had forsaken the child and would never remunerate her for what she had done or might yet do, and she intended she said to leave the next day. As I looked at our own servantless house, the already overburdened members of the family, it seemed that everything was against the poor little "cast off" and the man who strangely loved him.

At this juncture some one came to my family and told them that there was a lovely home for forsaken and motherless children near by, with airy rooms, spotless beds, and perfect care and attention from nurses and physicians. That in the present distress it was the very place for our sick waif.

When first told me, it brought a stab as of a knife to the heart, the idea of parting with the child and placing him at an asylum, even though it should be of the very best character. But the facts were urged that the child could

have even better care there than at our home, and that when he recovered I could bring him back again.

Before consenting we visited the “Children’s Home” and found true all that had been said about its cleanness, homelikeness, and tenderness of matron and nurses. Even then with an aching heart I consented and have regretted that consent with bitter pain and often with tears ten thousand times since that day. The fact that I did what seemed best and wisest, and indeed what I was actually driven to do, has failed to allay the pang.

The parting on the doorstep of our children with little Jack I well remember. The sick child with head drooping on the shoulder of the nurse took but little notice of the merry farewells from the thoughtless little ones about him. But Guy graver as usual than the others, waved his hand from where he was sitting in the hall, and said “Good-bye little Jack.”

Ah! my blessed Savior, they are both with you in heaven today!

The nurse and I took the little sick one to the “Home.” The greeting given him was all that my sorrowing heart could desire. A special nurse with sweet motherly face was singled out for him. Into her arms with charges and promises I laid the little fellow after kissing him while the tears ran down my face like rain. Tearing myself away I heard him crying and looking back saw him stretch his arms after me. My heart was like an aching lump in my throat, and I could hardly see how to get back to the carriage. This was the last time I ever saw little Jack. He was much nearer heaven than any one dreamed.

This was Saturday. I had to preach as usual twice on Sunday, and proposed going over to the “Home” on Monday morning to see this child that I found myself loving like my own.

As I was in the sitting room at home about the breakfast hour on Monday, a messenger from the “Home” came running in and said breathlessly,

“I’m sent over to tell you that little Jack is dead.”

For several minutes everything looked black to me; I could not speak, and thought I would fall from my chair. Then nature came to my relief and I bowed my face in my hands and wept as people weep for their own children.

Does all this seem strange to the reader? Does it seem remarkable that a poor little forsaken child of shame could have such a hold on a man's heart who was in no wise blood related, save by the blood of Christ. Remarkable or strange as it may appear, yet it was so, and is so still. I loved the child and still love him. And I have asked God to let this little one who was cast off by his own parents on earth, be as my child in heaven, and in a sweet sense belong to me forever.

Telegrams were sent North to the parents, but there was no response. And so I took charge of the body, and with wife and children accompanying me, we laid him to rest in a vault belonging to the family in Girod Street Cemetery in New Orleans. There the little fellow rests; and there I have gone repeatedly while living in the city, and stood by the door of the tomb and thought of and hungered to see him.

On All Saints Day when the whole city with flowers go out to deck the graves of loved ones: little Jack was always remembered by his one earthly friend. A strange spectacle truly to the world; a preacher of a large city church standing by the grave and grieving over the ashes of a poor little forsaken child of shame. But Christ and the angels understood it, and so it became a sweet and sacred spot.

I live now nearly a thousand miles away from the grave of the child, yet in memory I often revisit it. The one unhealing regret and ache in my heart being that the little fellow did not go to heaven from our home, and the one ever fresh and beautiful hope in my soul is that one of these days, Guy, little Jack and I will walk the beautiful and healthful fields of heaven together.

CHAPTER 16

EMMA C.

A dozen young ministers were on their way to the seat of the Conference, to be held that year in the beautiful city of Natchez on the banks of the Mississippi. They were a day ahead of the great body of the Conference as they were under-graduates and had to undergo an examination through committees on certain theological studies for the year just passed.

The young preachers had taken passage on one of the handsomest steamers that floated upon the great "Father of Waters;" and seated upon the forward upper deck, tossed the conversational ball and took in the picture before them of the broad yellow unfolding river, the blue and white cranes flying before the puffing boat, the waves from the steamer breaking in foamy crests upon the distant banks, and the white clouds piled up in lazy majesty upon the remote horizon.

One of the young preachers made a motion that in view of the slim salaries of the past year, one of their number should approach the captain of the boat and see if any reduction would be made in their fare as ministers of the gospel. The writer was delegated to make the speech; and so approaching the captain politely, he asked if such a favor could be extended to the dozen young clergymen.

The short reply was

"Yes if you regard yourselves as objects of charity."

The spokesman replied at once, "We do not feel ourselves to be such and so could not ask or receive a reduction of fare in that way;" and touching his hat courteously he returned to the upper deck where he made known the result of his fruitless mission to the surprised preachers.

It was noticed that the captain looked restless after that all the morning.

Later in the day the chief clerk approached the clerical band who had dismissed the circumstance from their minds, and said that the captain had

reconsidered the matter, and if the preachers would call at the office he would be pleased to have returned to them a part of the fare they had already paid. The message was so courteously sent, and graciously given that the visit to the office was made by one and all and certain moneys changed hands the second time.

Eight years after this scene, the spokesman of the preachers that day found himself in charge of one of the leading churches in the city of New Orleans.

One day he received a sudden summons to call at a house on one of the prominent avenues, to pray with a young lady who was dying. It was the home, and the young lady was the daughter of the captain who years before had taken part in the incident just related.

It was a beautiful home. The birds were twittering in the shrubbery about the house. The sunshine poured in a silver glory through the open lace-hung windows. The servants moved noiselessly about over the thick carpets, and friends came in and out with sorrowful faces and whispered together under their breath. The mother a picture of woe met the preacher in one of the parlors, and told him that Emma was dying, that she would soon be gone, and as yet was unprepared and unreconciled to die; that he had been sent for to pray for her, but that he must not let her feel in his prayer that she was a dying girl.

Here indeed was a difficult and most painful task. To pray for a dying unconverted person in such a way as not to excite uneasiness or alarm.

With earnest inward supplication to God for help and guidance, the preacher was led to the room of sickness on the second floor, and saw the beautiful girl marked for death lying in an invalid chair near the window and gasping for breath. The prayer was uttered in a low fervent tone, and while no allusion was made to approaching death, yet the pleading for salvation was such, and the unconscious solemnity in the voice was such, that when the man of God withdrew, and as the door closed upon him, the girl wrung her hands and cried out in an accent of agony

“He prayed as if I were going to die.”

At once soothing voices replied to the contrary. But the Holy Spirit strove, and the conviction was so deeply wrought within, that on the morrow while the mother prayed by her side, the burden of sin was lifted, and the light of pardon and peace shone into and out from her soul.

At once she demanded to see the preacher who had been with her the day before. And from that time until nearly two days afterwards he was frequently by her side and saw the work of God go on in her with a rapidity beauty and glory that he had never before seen equaled. Stationed in an adjoining room to be near her, the instant a paroxysm would be over she would request his presence, and then would follow another season of religious conversation, singing in a low voice, and prayer. On each return to her side he would see the deepening peace of God, the ineffable purity and blazing holy joy that declared the swift ripening for the skies. She became a preacher, and delivered such messages, exhortations and warnings to every one who came in to see her, that the whole house was in tears. She overflowed with love. It shone in her eyes, poured from her lips and literally beamed from her face. Her voice weighted with this love seemed to break every heart who heard it, and she had a word for every one.

Her father the captain, was not a member of the church. When he bent over the bed he tried to speak in a bright cheery voice, as if they were all expecting great things on her account and that she would soon be up again. How it wrung his heart to counterfeit a gladness that was not in him, and to speak brave words when his own heart was in despair.

She looked up at him and taking both his hands in hers said

“Papa — you have been — such a good papa — to me.”

I saw the strong man tremble all over, while his tears rained upon the soft white coverlet.

“But papa,” she continued gasping for breath “I want you to be good — and love God — and meet me in heaven — won’t you papa?”

In spite of the sobs that choked the captain, I heard his voice which had often rung out in stormy nights on the river in loud tones of command, all softened and tender say

“Yes my daughter.”

There was not a dry eye in the room. In the preacher’s heart there was such a pain of suppressed feeling that he longed to cry aloud.

Again the white hand went up and stroked the father’s face bent over her; and we could just hear the cooing words,

“You dear — good papa — I do so love you — papa.”

Nothing but sighs and sobs all through the room.

“Papa” spoke the girl again “won’t you — promise me something?”

“Yes darling.”

“Won’t you — promise me papa — to join — the Church?”

All could see the struggle that went on in the captain. Many persons had tried to get him to join for years: but he had laughed joked and tossed off every such suggestion.

“Won’t you papa” said the gasping voice, and again the white hand touched and patted the weather-beaten cheek of the man bowing over her.

“Won’t you — my dear papa?”

A moment’s pause, and then came the choking reply “Yes my daughter,” and the man bowed his head on the bed, while the white fingers of his dying child strayed through his hair, and such a look of gladness shone upon her face.

A few minutes afterwards in the parlor, the, preacher approached the captain who was leaning against the mantel with his handkerchief over his face. With a gentle voice the minister said

“I am so glad that you are going to join the Church.”

“Yes” replied the Captain uneasily “one of these days I intend so doing.”

At once the preacher saw that the enemy was at work, and so softly going to the bedside of the dying girl he said

“Miss Emma, much depends on you now. You must get your father to promise not to postpone giving himself to Christ and the Church, but to do it in the near future.”

At once she sent for him, and at the very utterance of the word “papa” the man utterly melted.

“What is it my child?”

“Papa I want you — to join the Church — right now — by my side — won’t you papa.”

Again we saw the strong man go down beside the bed, and with a gush of tears he sobbed

“Yes daughter I will.”

It was a never-to-be-forgotten spectacle. One that for tenderness and solemnity we have never seen surpassed. The writer has taken many people into the Church, but never before did the ceremony seem so touching and beautiful. The Captain stood by the side of the deathbed; the dying daughter had her eyes fixed lovingly upon her father; other members of the family with friends were grouped in different parts of the room. The words of the service always impressive, never sounded so weighty and so beautiful as they did that night; and when in conclusion we knelt in prayer, all felt that heaven had come down and Christ was in the room.

This was not all that happened on that memorable night.

Among the sorrowing persons in this house of trouble was a young man who was engaged to the dying girl. They were to have been married in a few months when this case of galloping consumption rudely broke into the plan of earthly happiness. How it came about we cannot tell, but the whisper crept through the room that the young couple so soon to be separated desired to be married that very night.

What had to be done, must be done quickly, and so the arrangements were made speedily. The license was obtained, loving hands prepared the bride and placed her in a half-reclining position in the invalid chair. As the preacher entered the room, ritual in hand, his eyes fell at once on Emma C lying on the chair robed in a white dress, a single white flower in her hair, a

bunch of white flowers in her hand, and her face as white as Parian marble. She never looked lovelier. The thought flashed upon the preacher “Here is a three-fold bride.” She was the bride of death, the bride of the man who stood by her, and the bride of Jesus Christ. Each one claimed her, and there were unmistakable signs that she had accepted all. The stamp of death was on her face, the love for the affianced shone in her eye, and her devotion to the Savior was evident and paramount.

What a strange sorrowful service that marriage ceremony was. The words, “So long as ye both shall live,” had a mournful sound indeed. “So long!” Alas! — they were to be parted in a few hours.

The family and a dozen or more friends were busy in wiping the tears that flowed fast from their eyes. At the conclusion of the service the ladies present went up to kiss the bride. No one could speak a word — for what congratulations could be offered at such a time.

Later on she asked that the Lord’s Supper might be administered, and it was done with only the family present. All felt that one of their number now taking the bread and wine would soon be eating it new in her Father’s kingdom in the sky. Here were three religious services in one night and in the same room.

Emma C — lived through the next day into the following night. At midnight she sent for the writer who saw her for the last time. Turning her luminous eyes upon him she said

“Talk to me.”

God helped him, and soothing strengthening thoughts sprang into his mind and fell from his lips in her behalf. In addition he related the incident of a young girl in Germany, who found God while on a sick bed in Heidelberg; how she glorified him by writing little poems of Christian resignation, which were published by a friend, and were scattered, read and blessed to the souls of thousands of wounded soldiers in the Franco-Prussian war, so that many hundreds were brought to Christ. Throughout the narration her eyes never left the face of the speaker. She then said with laboring breath

“Sing to me.”

And the preacher sang “Rest for the Weary” and “Home of the Soul.”

“Kneel down now — and pray — for me,” she gasped.

The preacher did so, and God helped him to pray. The Spirit gave tenderness and utterance. He felt that the words were undergirding her and she was being blessed. She thanked him with that distressingly short breath, and said

“Now kiss me good-bye.”

He did so, and with the tears falling on his cheek walked softly and noiselessly out of the room. He never saw her alive again.

In two hours more Christ called her; she heard, and went up with a smile to meet him and to be with him forever.

Some blessed truths or lessons are obtainable from this piece of life history.

One is the power of Christ to make the young cheerfully leave a world that is bright and full of hope and promise; joyfully lay their bodies in the tomb, while the spirit with an unutterable happiness flies to the bosom of him who made it.

Another lesson is that after many efforts in which we have despaired of saving our friends, God still has ways left that can bow the mightiest will, and make a strong man as tender and helpless as a little child.

A third truth is that like Samson, some people will slay more for God in their death than they did in life.

A fourth lesson or teaching from the above life story is to be kind and courteous to all. For all we know the man we meet on the cars or on the boat may in after years be the means in God’s hands of leading a dying child to God, in the time of trouble be a heavenly friend, and whose words and presence will bind up our hearts and keep them from breaking, when the dead one is lying still and white in the parlor, the sun is set, no star is out, a black storm seems rushing over the life, and night for awhile seems to be everywhere.

CHAPTER 17

PROFESSOR S___.

A good lady member of our Church, a widow of some years' standing, read in the morning paper one day the following notice:

WANTED

By a young man, a teacher of music, a quiet room with one meal a day at a reasonable price. The home of a widow preferred. Address Prof. S___, Box 900 City.

This small notice put quite a little flutter under the half-mourning bodice of Sister Smiley, and as she rolled the matter about in her mind, she "dreamed dreams" not that a mortal never dreamed before, but — well it is no matter: only the words "young man" — "widow preferred" — nestled somewhere very pleasantly in her cardiac region; and mental queries and affirmations would spring up such as "who can tell," "stranger things have happened," etc.

In a word she answered the advertisement, and on the next day Prof. S___ was settled in the quiet room. He was a heavy-built young man of about twenty-six, with a smooth German-looking face. His hair was brown and hung almost to his shoulders. He had also a Professor-musical look.

The contract was for one meal a day and that one to be dinner: but Sister Smiley's warm heart melted, and she threw in lagniappe as they say in New Orleans, in the shape of a fragrant cup of coffee each morning, which cup she prepared with her own hands, and then tapping at the Professor's window would hand it to him with a smile and with what was intended for a blush. How grateful the Professor was, and how he also smiled as he took the cup and said it reminded him of the coffee he had drunk across the ocean in his boyhood home.

On the following Sabbath Sister Smiley appeared in her pew at church with the good-looking professor at her side. He requested an introduction

to the minister, and said that he was “most happy to know one of whom he had heard so much.” The next Sunday he was again in the pew with Mrs. Smiley, but this time seemed to be very sad. The explanation of his melancholy which was apparent to all was given to the preacher by the Professor’s landlady. She said that the Professor had just received a letter from his home across the seas telling him of the severe illness of his father. That the Professor had desired Mrs. Smiley to request an interview with the preacher; that he felt in his present sorrow and anxiety he needed advice and spiritual consolation.

Of course the preacher said certainly; and stepping over to the pew where sat the drooping professor of music, he told him to call at his study the next morning. The Professor was in such a melancholy state of mind, that he did not lift his head, but simply pressed the preacher’s hand, and said

“I am not a Christian, but want to be one, and feel that you can do me good.”

All this moved the preacher, and the invitation was renewed.

On the next morning the Professor put in his appearance. He was still quite sad, and sighed heavily.

The preacher begged him to unburden his heart.

There was little however to say more than had been told before. His father was quite low. There was little likelihood of his recovery. Duty seemed to call him home at once to England where his parents were living, but there were serious difficulties in the way. First he was the main support of his family. Second he had large classes of pupils here who paid well; and to give them up would be to cut his parents out of their support. Third he could not get such positions in England as he had here. What must he do; go or stay?

The preacher told him that he honored his devotedness to his parents, and felt a deep sympathy for him in the strait of conflicting duties. That he could afford to wait a few days before taking such a serious step as giving up the engagements he had by which he supported his father and mother; that possibly his father might get better etc. etc.

The interview was concluded by the preacher praying a fervent prayer for the Professor kneeling by his side; in which he begged that the father might be restored, and the Professor himself converted to God. In a few minutes more the Professor with a muffled voice and averted head to hide doubtless his tears thanked the preacher for his kindness and departed.

Two days after the preacher received a hastily penciled note from the Professor saying "Please call at my room at Mrs. Smiley's and see me — I am in great sorrow."

The lines were almost illegible, they had been written in such haste and agitation. Accompanying his letter was a note from Mrs. Smiley saying "Come as soon as you can. The Professor has just received a letter from England. His father is dead."

In a few minutes the preacher was on his way, threading the streets, turning up here, and turning down there on his way to the residence of Mrs. Smiley.

Ringling the bell, that good lady with a sympathetic sorrow on her face for her boarder's trouble answered in person, and conducted her pastor into the Professor's room. He however was not in, but in the center of the apartment were two chairs drawn one before the other. On one the professor had evidently sat, while in the seat of the other was a crumpled white handkerchief and a letter of some ten or twelve pages with a deep black border on every page. There was also a small Bible open and leaning upon the back of the chair. The black-bordered letter was doubtless the epistle of heavy tidings, that had been spoken of by Mrs. Smiley.

The preacher, Dr. Gullible had just time to glance around and take in these things when the Professor entered from a side room. His hair was disheveled and his eyes that were cast down looked red as if he might have been weeping. Hastily taking the preacher's offered hand, the Professor still with averted countenance sat down and buried his face in his hands.

"I am very sorry" said Dr. Gullible "to hear of your great loss, and wish much that I could help you."

"Your sympathy is a help" replied the bereaved man from behind his hand.

“You must remember” gently put in the preacher “that our parents, as much as we love them must go — but it is very sweet to feel that if we give ourselves to Christ we shall see them again.”

“Yes” sighed the Professor “I know all that. But just now I am thinking of my poor mother left alone in London with all my brothers and sisters on her hands.”

“How many have you” was the query.

“Seventeen” said the professor from behind his hand.

“Seventeen!” the preacher was about to ejaculate, but checked himself and uttered instead a quiet “indeed!”

“Yes sir” said the man of music.

After more ghostly consolation from the minister, the Professor with a sudden burst of frankness said

“Doctor what do you think I ought to do; stay here or go to my mother?”

“Did you say Professor that your mother has no means! and no one to look to but yourself?”

“Yes sir.”

“You are the oldest of the eighteen children, are you not?”

“Yes sir.”

“I dislike” said the preacher, “to advise in a matter so important, but I cannot but feel impressed that your duty is to go home and be with your mother, and be a father as well as brother to your sisters and brothers.”

“That is exactly the way I feel about it, and I will do so” spoke up the Professor with considerable animation.

So ended the second interview. The Professor first asked Dr. Gullible to pray with him before he left. This was done most heartily. The Professor again thanked the preacher, and Dr. Gullible took leave of the musical man

who followed him out to the gate, renewing the thanks for the relief he had given him, while Mrs. Smiley who had heard every word through the door, now standing on the porch wiped a tear out of the corner of her eye as the vision of the approaching farewell rose before her.

“He is so young to have so much trouble” Mrs. Smiley remarked later to her sister in the kitchen, while she was preparing an extra cup of coffee for the Professor who had just complained of a sensation of faintness.

“He needs a mother or a sister to be with him” said Mrs. Smiley’s sister.

“You had better say a wife” precipitately replied Mrs. Smiley as she poured the amber-colored coffee into a China cup, upon the top of rich cream and white loaf sugar.

The sister cast a furtive glance at Mrs. Smiley who oblivious of the look daintily wiped off a tiny speck from the saucer with the edge of her white apron, and carried the steaming fragrant beverage to the Professor.

The next day while Dr. Gullible was sitting in the study at the church, there came a hasty step and then a quick knock at the door.

“Come in” cried out the Doctor cheerily.

Immediately the face and next the form of Prof. S___ appeared.

“Take a seat” said the preacher noticing with surprise the worried brow and heated appearance of the visitor.

The Professor took his broad-brimmed hat and fanned himself, while the worried look deepened.

“Doctor” he said at last “I do dislike to be running to you with every new disappointment and trouble, but I cannot help it, and you have been so kind, and I do not know where else to go.”

“What is the new trouble today” asked the preacher with a kind voice.

The Professor fanned himself silently for a minute, and then with one of his bursts of frankness that quite became him said

“I feel that it is best to tell you at once my position. You know that I am a, teacher of vocal and instrumental music. I have classes all over the city, and among the best people. Yesterday I made up my mind to go straight home to England to my mother. The next steamer leaves New York for Liverpool on Saturday and this is Thursday. I have just time by leaving this evening on the train to catch that steamer. Knowing this I went immediately around and collected what is due me from my pupils and found that I lacked just fifteen dollars to pay for my ticket on the steamer. If my rich patrons were here we would have no trouble in getting this amount advanced to me. But as you know, people of means leave the city in the summer, and my well-to-do patrons are far away in the North and I do not know where to reach them by letter or telegram, and if I did, I have not the time to wait for an answer to a letter, and I could not say what I desired in a telegram, So you see I am in a quandary. I know not what to do, nor where to turn. And so I hurried here to get your advice.”

After this long explanation the Professor fanned himself vigorously with his eyes fastened on the floor.

The preacher racked his head for the “advice” that would bridge the gulf produced by a lack of fifteen dollars. He had scarcely a dollar in his own pocket, and it was now two weeks off before his small monthly salary would be paid to him.

The Professor fanned.

The preacher meditated.

Strange to say the burden seemed to be shifted from one man to the other. The Professor looked relieved, and his face was clearing, while the countenance of the preacher was clouded with thought. The Professor had cast his load upon Dr. Gullible who was having anything but an easy time with it.

The Professor waited.

He seemed to think that something would happen after awhile. And something did happen. for Dr. Gullible turned to his desk and wrote the following note to a business friend of his down town.

Dear Mr. J___: I have met a case of genuine distress in the person of Prof. S . His father has just died in England, leaving a large and helpless family. The Professor feels it to be his duty to go at once to their assistance, but lacks fifteen dollars to purchase his steamer ticket. I have not this amount, but will in two weeks when the church treasurer will pay me my salary. If you will advance the Professor fifteen dollars for me, I will repay you at the time mentioned above. By doing this you will personally oblige your friend,

A. GULLIBLE.

Turning to the Professor, and reading the contents of the note to him, he placed it in an envelope and said

“Will you deliver this in person for me?”

“Certainly,” responded the man of music with great alacrity.

“If Mr. J___ hands the amount to you,” said Dr. Gullible, “you need not trouble yourself to return, but take the money and complete your preparations for departure, for I know you have but little time to lose.”

It is needless to say how grateful the Professor was, and how taken back he was, and how he said several times “I will never forget you.”

In a couple of minutes he was gone; and in a couple of hours he was back again bearing a sealed letter for Dr. Gullible, which that gentleman opened and read as follows.

Dear Dr. Gullible, Your note received. I herewith inclose you a check for \$15, which you will notice I have made subject to your order.

I believe that Prof. S___ is a consummate rascal, and he like others has practiced his deception upon you. Yet I cannot refuse your request, and so send the check to you. You must indorse it in his favor if you insist on

giving him the money. As for myself I cannot get my consent to put the cash in his hand. Again I warn you. As ever your friend, W. H. J.____.

Dr. Gullible carefully tore the note into small pieces, lest one of the words be seen by and wound the Professor. He next indorsed the check, and turned it over to the now smiling man of the piano.

Then followed another farewell hand shake, another declaration that he would never forget Dr. Gullible, and the Professor was gone. He left hurriedly that he might be able to catch the train going north at five o'clock that afternoon, and so be able to make close connection with the steamer that was to sail in two days for Liverpool.

This was two o'clock in the afternoon. At five the train was to leave that should bear the Professor to his widowed mother and seventeen brothers and sisters. He would arrive in New York by making close connections along the way just in time to take the steamer that sailed on Saturday morning.

At a few minutes before six Mr. J____ who wrote the note to Dr. Gullible was standing on the wharf by the river where a long line of steamers was moored. Some were loading and others unloading their cargoes. Great clouds of black smoke were pouring from the lofty chimneys of several, and one large steamboat filled with an excursion party bound for Memphis was ringing one of its last bells, when suddenly Prof. S____ satchel in hand appeared walking quickly toward the gang-way of the excursion steamer. Mr. J__ could scarcely credit his eyes, that the Professor should be here on the wharf moving toward a Mississippi steamer, when he should be fully fifty miles up the railroad on a fast train trying to catch the Liverpool steamer.

Mr. J____ followed softly behind the unconscious musical instructor, and seeing that beyond all question he was making for the boat, he drew still nearer, and with his mouth close to the man's ear, cried out

“Why Prof. S____!”

The Professor dropped his satchel, and shot up in the air fully a foot high, and came down again with a most frightened look, which did not become easier when he saw the dark sarcastic look on Mr. J____'s face.

“Why Professor” repeated Mr. J___ “How comes it that you are over here in this part of the city. I thought that you were going to take the five o’clock train for New York.”

“O — I — ah” gasped the Professor, “I — I concluded to take the boat for Memphis.”

“The boat for Memphis!” exclaimed Mr. J___, “why it will take you four days to get there, and you said you wanted to go by rail at once to catch the Liverpool steamer that leaves Saturday.”

“Yes — O yes — I — ahem! — I heard that it was cheaper to go by boat to Memphis.”

It was pitiful to see how the man gasped.

Mr. J___ eyed the Professor up and down with a look of contempt that no words could express.

The passengers were hurrying past them, the hackmen were calling out with their usual vociferousness, the black smoke from the smokestacks poured out in denser volume, and the big bell was solemnly tolling its last warning notes. In the midst of the scene of confusion and noise Mr. J___ looked at the guilty countenance before him and started to speak out his indignant mind. But suddenly as if despairing to do justice to the subject before him, or filled with disgust that would not allow him to tarry another moment, he whirled upon his heel and left the fraud to himself.

The Professor only too happy for such an easy letting off, picked up his satchel and vanished over the gangway into the steamer.

A month later, a gentleman who happened to be one of the excursion party going up the Mississippi, said to Dr. Gullible “Among the passengers was a Prof. S___ of New Orleans. He started out the gayest of the gay when suddenly he encountered Col. A___ a man from whom he had in some way obtained fifty dollars over a year ago; when like a flash the professor disappeared in his stateroom and under plea of indisposition sweltered in there for four days. He thought the Colonel had not seen him, but A___ had recognized him at once and greatly enjoyed running him into his stateroom, and keeping him there. He said laughingly about it, that he would do less harm there than on deck.

“What became of the Professor finally” asked Dr. Gullible.

“He stood the smothering atmosphere of the stateroom until we reached a town on the Arkansas shore above Vicksburg, when without saying a word he slipped off the boat with his satchel, and was lost to view.”

Four months later a lady visiting New Orleans from Memphis, spoke to some of her friends in the most exalted manner of a Prof. S___ whom she said had been in her city several months as a teacher of vocal and instrumental music.

So the Professor had not reached the Liverpool steamer yet. And the lonely mother and solitary seventeen sisters and brothers — where were they?

Now when Mrs. Smiley heard all these things, her indignation knew no bounds.

“The low-life fellow” she exclaimed. “He went off owing me for two weeks’ room rent and one meal a day besides. To think of all that sniffing and taking on about his dead father and seventeen brothers and sisters, and me a grinding and fixing up extra cups of coffee, and handing them through the window to him when I thought he looked faint: and he faint with telling lies. Oooo-h! what a sleek-tongued rascal he was. Dead father indeed! I don’t believe he had a father dead or alive.”

“He must have had one once” remarked Dr. Gullible with a smile.

“As for the seventeen brothers and sisters” continued Mrs. Smiley excitedly, and paying no attention to the preacher’s remark, “I don’t believe in one of them. I wonder where my seventeen senses were, that I should have swallowed all he told me about himself and that precious family.”

“You ought to feel kindly to the Professor” said Dr. Gullible slyly. “You remember in his advertisement he said he preferred renting a room from a widow.”

“Yes he did, the blarney-tongued fraud. He knew that widows are lone and unprotected and trusting and — Oh! I just wish Mr.

Smiley was alive; he would fix him so he would not come round fooling widows again, with all his blubbering — and me a grinding coffee for him and fixing it up with my best sugar and cream.”

“Well, Mrs. Smiley” said Dr. Gullible “we have both been badly sold, and will have to accept the situation, and be wiser next time.”

“Yes I know it” responded the excited female “but how I wish I had him here just for a minute!”

It was evident to Dr. Gullible that it was well for Prof. S___ that he was not there.

“Just to think” continued the irate lady “of him a blubbering over that father’s death, who is neither dead nor alive, — and me a grinding coffee and tapping at the window and passing it in to him and a saying “Professor have some coffee — it will make you feel better — Oooooh!”

Here we let the curtain drop with Dr. Gullible on the left and Mrs. Smiley on the right; Mr. J___ down town looking out for sharpers, and Prof. S___ far away in some other city still receiving heavy black-bordered letters telling of another death of his father, of the continued grief of the widowed mother, and the loneliness of seventeen, perhaps by this time, twenty sisters and brothers.

CHAPTER 18

A PHOTOGRAPH OF A CLASS OF CONFERENCE UNDERGRADUATES

The Conference session was rapidly approaching. In another two weeks, and upon the usually silent and empty streets of a certain inland town, there would be seen a line of stovepipe hats overshadowing another line of bloated or collapsed-looking valises; all bobbing on together to some common center. Two weeks before this descent upon and waking up of the aforesaid somnolent town, this notice appeared in the Conference organ or paper:

The class of the year will meet the committee in the pastor's study, in the basement of the church at Blanktown, at nine o'clock sharp, on Tuesday, the day preceding the Conference. Let all the brethren be in attendance and be prompt. I. B. A. SOLOMON, Chairman.

This notice was duly and religiously read by all the readers of the Advocate. It had a varying effect. On many lay perusers who never attended a Conference, the words came with a solemnity that the booming of cannon does to the one who never witnessed a battle. Visions of spectacled professors and students with corrugated brows, and textbooks the size of Webster's Unabridged, and frequent and disastrous failures, floated through the minds of the distant reader of that solemn notice. The effect on the old preachers was quite different. A close observer could have noticed the heels of a quickly tripped-up smile appear and vanish in the corner of the mouth and eye. I will not explain the laugh in the eye. Perhaps the recollection of their own examination came suddenly up; perhaps they had been behind some curtain, and discovered that what at a distance appeared to be a lion, was a meek-faced apothecary's clerk who had been hired to wrap himself in a lion's skin and roar. Truly, the notice "roared like a dove."

The smile in the eye arose from the mental approval of the absolute necessity of the notice. All the preachers, young and old, knew well that the Conference was to meet in Blanktown; that the examination took place on Tuesday preceding the regular session; that the committee met at nine o'clock, and very naturally in the only Methodist church in town. Right here, however, is seen the full beauty of the notice. The bishop and preachers supposed that if the undergraduates could reach town and find the church, that possibly, all things being favorable, they might be able to discover their several Examining Boards in one of the three or four rooms that opened into the basement. But the framer of the clarion call was more considerate. He designates the spot itself upon which the victim is to be strangled. He rushes out into the basement, so to speak, lays hold upon the bewildered members of his class, who are about to be lost in the intricate windings and corridors of the church, and dragging them after him, just as the clock strikes nine, he lays them on the altar, viz., the pastor's study. Hence, the smile of approval in the old preacher's eye.

The effect of the notice on the class to be examined was remarkable. Low-spirited before, they now became exceedingly depressed. We all remember the feelings awakened within us under a certain invitation of a dentist, who pressed us to arrange our physical economy in a reclining chair while he proceeded to kill two or three nerves and extract a couple of jaw teeth. So felt this class. The word "sharp" that followed "nine o'clock" went through them like a knife. And the expression, "Meet us in the basement," was in mournful consonance with their state of mind.

Several almost concluded not to go to the Conference at all.

However, they all start. And the eventful much-thought-of Tuesday arrives, and throws its peculiar light on the earth. The class assembles, but alas! for the vanity of official bulletins, it is ten o'clock and not nine, when they sit down. And not in the pastor's study. That was to be used as a general rendezvous; but after much wandering up and down stairs, the class with the committee at the head, finally after much hesitation settled in a dark moldy-looking place called the class meeting room, where the chairs in utter forsakenness of spirit, had cast dust on their heads, while the walls seemed to be trickling with the tears of Zion. Here they are at last — the lambs and the slayer, the sheep and the shearer. The sheep look

very sharply and anxiously at the shearers; but it is the shearers now who are dumb and open not their mouths. It is felt to be a solemn time.

The chairman takes his seat a little forward of the other two committeemen. They seem to defer awhile to his station, if not wisdom. The class, after an experience of dry lips and throats and considerable nervousness and now and then an outbreak of hysterical laughter, subsides into decorous and yet awful silence. They are arranged in the form of a semicircle, their variety, temperament and attainment, presenting a study.

There are just ten of them. There ought to be eleven; but Brother Eleven is not there; neither does he appear at noon, nor at night. But on the morning of the third day of the Conference he puts in a woe-begone appearance, and renders a pathetic recital of how he started in full time, but failed to make connection with everything from a passenger train down to a plantation mule; in fact, he missed everything but the creeks. In these, with their friends and relatives, the bayous and swamps, he became involved, and this which the Conference now beholds is what is left of himself. Brother Eleven is a remarkable man, and well known by the bishops.

Brother Ten, if possible, is more remarkable. He had entered the room boldly, sat down firmly; but at the last moment, just when the chairman had opened the first book and had parted his lips for the first question, Brother Ten backed squarely down and begged to be continued another year in the course of study. He said that he had not had time to more than glance at half of the books; that he had been so busy; that his child had been sick; that his brother had been on the grand jury; that his wife had gone to visit her mother; and many other things had taken place, all of which kept him from being the devoted student his heart craved to be.

Brother Ten went down so suddenly out of sight from the expectations of the committee and the calculations of the class, that quite a sensation was produced. An uneasy feeling as if quicksands and ragged-earth openings were sprinkled about, stirred every heart. The committee was restless for awhile, evidently expecting other vanishings or boltings from the track, while the class was only too plainly stirred and shocked by this defection of one whom they calculated would answer one-tenth of the questions propounded. The look born of the consciousness of an additional burden,

now settled on them. There was a spiritual closing up of ranks, as is seen in battle when a soldier falls in the platoon; and in each eye there was seen the strain and agony of a mental calling upon all that was in them to rise up and assist its owner. However, in spite of the nervousness, a silence that could be felt prevailed, even as one stratum rests upon and keeps down another stratum in the bowels of the earth. Meanwhile Brother T moved his seat out of the circle, looking subdued and unhappy and a trifle foolish.

*Ten little blackbirds sitting on a pine;
One flew away, and there were nine.*

I remember once to have seen a young horse bear down at full speed toward a ten-rail fence with mane and tail flying, and with evident intent to clear it at a bound; when just as I expected the grand rise and flight in the air, suddenly the horse stopped, wheeled short off and with most subdued and shame-faced demeanor went to cropping the grass in the fence corner. Never was there such a metamorphosis.

Brother Nine was a heavy-set good-natured man! with an abundance of adipose tissue and a remarkably slow transmitting set of afferent and efferent nerves. Impressions that broke with instantaneous flash and gleam on some brains traveled with dignity and deliberateness to the nerve centers of this brother's occiput; and after resting awhile there, as staid and well-poised people at stopping places finally do, wrote back that all was well and sent the answer by a kind of mental stagecoach process.

I had once a cousin who was a well-to-do planter, but whose intellectual and physical machinery were regulated according to the fashion just mentioned. A young lady riding with him one day threw out some casual remark. My cousin rode on three miles without a word. Meantime the idea contained in the remark had not been idle. It had been traveling steadily all that while along the highways thrown up for the passage of impressions toward the brain. When my cousin had gone one and a half miles the question reached its destination. My cousin's mind received it, turned it over and over, and viewed it from every side. By negative process of thought he made it less, by various inductions and deductions he stripped it, and by the employment of different intellectual laws and forces, analyzed it, and so finally came to a conclusion. He arrived at this point at

the end of the third mile, when he cleared his throat and thus delivered himself:

“Ahem! Mary what was that you said?”

Brother Nine had a deliberate mind like my cousin’s. The sin of quick and rash speech had never been charged upon him. Brother Nine that day answered about one question in twenty. One peculiar thing about the brother was that he never knew when he was right and when he was wrong. This saved him, of course, a great deal of mortification and suffering. At the conclusion of the day’s examination, he was in as profound ignorance of his status or whereabouts in the estimation of the committee as a man blown up on a steamboat is doubtful about his present locality and approaching loading place.

Brother Eight was wiry, nervous, and sharp-featured. He spent the day in squirming on his seat, crossing and uncrossing his legs, sighing like a grampus, and putting questions to the committee. The chairman mildly told him that he (Brother Eight) was there to answer questions, not to ask them; but the gentle irony was lost. The fact was that Brother Eight had not studied the course; he had skimmed it and had a nebulous idea of a very small portion. Hence he questioned. After the manner of politicians he buttonholed the chairman. Poetically, “he fastened him with his eye.” Socially, he held him with his tongue. He was, so to speak, in the temple with the doctors, not answering, but asking them questions. He tried to draw forth the chairman’s opinion on the various points that were up for the exercise of the class. He became mightily anxious to know whether the chairman agreed with Watson or Wesley. He besought him his opinion of the atonement; what he thought of the logical construction of a sentence, and what he thought of any question before them, and then listened with breathless interest. Finally, the committee growing wary as well as weary, Brother Eight became suddenly concerned in matters outside of the year’s course of study and asked the chairman if he thought that the moon was inhabited.

Brother Seven stood six feet two inches in his socks. Being lonely in his situation in midair, he had encouraged his vertebral column to incline somewhat toward the children of men, so as he walked or sat he took the form of the letter C. With a kind, good-natured face, he looked forth on the

world from overhanging brows, and laughed uproariously at every witticism or ghost of a witticism that issued from the lips of any member of the committee. Brother Seven labored under two misfortunes. One was that while he had been studying as he said very faithfully, yet he had discovered too late that he had devoted himself to the wrong books, either getting hold of the wrong volume or the wrong author. His other misfortune was his inability to clothe his ideas and thought accumulations in words. To put it as he expressed himself when questioned: "I know what you mean, I see what you are driving at, and I have the answer in my head, but I haven't the words to express myself."

This naturally gave Brother Seven a great advantage over the class as well as the committee. He was superior to the members of the class in that he knew the answer to every question. They had failed now and then, but he could not be so accused as all the answers were in his head. The rebuke thus silently conveyed to the committee was that they did not have the address to propound questions that would draw out the hidden wealth of the brother's mind as a sampling auger goes down into and comes up out of the sugar barrel incrustated and laden with sweetness. Again and again the committee thought that they had the sugar on the sampling auger. Again and again under different questions Brother Seven seemed to be taken down with intellectual birth throes. The committee, with sympathetically working lips and eyebrows, stood ready to assist the travailing brother. But he was never delivered; the answer was never born. Brother Seven said it was there; but he lacked power to bring it into the world.

Brother Six lacked the strongly marked individuality of the others. He corresponded in mental clearness and force with the ancient daguerreotype that looks forth in a faded, misty way on mankind. Brother Six bore a mystified look, which was seen to overspread his countenance the moment that the examination began and never left him until the work of asking questions had ended. He fastened his eyes on the chairman with a puzzled expression, as if he were trying to fathom the innermost thoughts of the questioner. Wherever his eyes turned, you saw in them that far-away, mystified look. He seemed to be gazing on problems that refused all solution. And no matter where he looked, whether at a chair or a member of the class or one of the committee, he had the same puzzled look for all.

Brother Five was as frisky as a section of summer lightning on the horizon. I remember to have often watched the electric fluid play up and down and all around a quiet-looking purple cloud in the west. Just so, about the grave-looking chairman did Brother Five frisk with his answers. He was here, he was there, he was yonder; he advanced, he retreated; he made bold statements, he took them back; he shone and he paled; he scintillated, went out in darkness and flared up again; he rose and he fell and he fell and he rose, and to pile figure on figure, he churned the intellectual sea about him into the wildest confusion. Brother Five never waited for the chairman to finish a question. He caught it on the fly; he, with his ready wit, fathomed it at once, anticipated the rest, and rushed away in rapid word-flight to discover in a few minutes that he was all wrong; that like Ahimaaz self-elected, he had run by way of the plain; like him had practically nothing to say, and like him at the end of his pointless speech, was quietly set aside.

Brother Four possessed a corrugated, thoughtful brow. He had a marvelous way of getting the answer piecemeal from the chairman, and then giving it back to him as a whole. He edged himself into the enemy's country, stronghold by stronghold, or more clearly word by word. The chairman would assist him to one idea, and Brother Four holding it like a captured fortress repeated it over and over with knit eyebrows full of thought, until the chairman overcome in some way, in like manner surrendered another idea and still another until finally, Brother Four stood on the last fort of the foe and waved the answer in victory.

When Brother Four could not make at times the successful raid over the fair fields of knowledge in the chairman's mind; when Dr. Solomon got more solemn and refused to commit himself, and to the baffled brother gave the whole answer at once with most rebuking air, then Brother Four's invariable response was

“I was about to say that.”

And now, what more shall I say concerning Brothers Three, Two, and One? Are they not known as having acquitted themselves well and nobly? They were men who studied the course not simply to pass the committee, but for self-improvement and development. They were men who mastered the textbook, and strove outside of the curriculum for general knowledge

and a wider culture in order to meet the frequent and various demands made on brain and heart; and whether with pen or on platform or in pulpit to be felt as powers and powers for good in the noblest of works and highest of all callings.

Reader, take a farewell look at the class. There is much that I feel impelled to say but refrain; there are many amusing incidents connected with the class and committee that I could relate but for several reasons am silent. Meantime smile a farewell upon the brethren sketched in every stage of agony on the examination rack, and as you leave the room bear this thought with you. You may travel many thousands of miles and see myriads of young men, but you will never find ten hearts anywhere more loyal to God and man than these. You will be cast with many clergymen whose broadcloth has a finer sheen and whose education and attainments have a rarer polish, but, I question whether all of them put together have that knowledge of heart, of sin, of the way of holiness, of God, that a single one of these plainly clad, unassuming young men possesses and has possessed for years. You will meet many a Church dignitary this year, many a spectacled D.D. or surpliced ecclesiastic, whose appearance will awe you and make you think that they have all power in heaven and earth, but mark you, look in the faces of these young ministers. There is not one of them but will comfort and instruct more hearts, build more churches, push God's kingdom farther in every direction, lead more souls to God, in a word do more work for heaven in one year, than the aforesaid imposing-looking ecclesiastic will do in a lifetime, and a hundred lifetimes upon the top of that.

CHAPTER 19

THE SICKNESS OF ZIUNNE

Ziunne was sick. I grow confused when I try to recollect her place of abode. It seemed once that I heard she resided on such and such a street in a large city. Then the report was that she was living in a small town, then again some one said that she was in the country, deep in the piney woods. Of only one thing I was absolutely sure — that she was sick. The rumor had been abroad some time. There lingered no doubt in the minds of those considering her case. Dr. Out-going, her last physician, was certain of it. He said as much to Dr. Incoming, the physician who was to follow him.

“You will find her very far gone,” he said.

“What seems to be the matter with her?” asked Dr. Incoming.

And then followed the consultation. The two physicians looked at the form lying before them. She had been upon her back for many years. This perhaps was the reason that her physician reported each year at an annual gathering of doctors like himself that her particular case was “looking up.” Indeed, when one got to thinking about it, it was about all that she could do under the circumstances.

They both looked at her. She had a frail, wasted appearance. Evidently, she did not occupy as much sitting room as she once did.

“Why sir,” said Dr. Outgoing, “time was when the house could hardly contain her. She so to speak spread herself and filled the building, but” dropping into a sad tone — ”you see what is left of her.” There was a moment of thoughtful silence and contemplation. Then Dr. Outgoing continued, “In rainy days she is even thinner, and at night she can hardly be seen. Moreover she seems to have but little feeling; the afferent and efferent nerves are deadened. You can jostle or jog her sharply, and she gives no sign. It matters not in regard to treatment whether it is gentle or severe it is all alike to her. I have blistered her; and she groaned not. I have then spread

healing and soothing plasters all over her, and she evinced no satisfaction.”

“It seems to me,” said Dr. Incoming, “that she looked brighter when I came in just now. There was certainly an appearance of life, an expression of hope.”

“O yes!” interrupted Dr. Outgoing. “She always does that way. She did the same for me when I was installed as her physician four years ago. She looked brighter for awhile. She gets color and appears revived with each new physician for several weeks or months, and then she goes right down again. I remember,” continued the doctor, “that when the physician who preceded me told me just as I tell you these facts, I hardly believed it; but felt sure that the patient was better, and wrote in my first official bulletin that there was every prospect of her recovery; that we thanked God, took courage, and would go forward. At this time,” went on the doctor, with a heavy sigh, “her form rounded out; she covered more sitting room; seemed animated; but, alas! it is all over. You see for yourself how spindling she is. She has wasted away to nothing. The last time that I prescribed for her, which was on last Sunday night, I could hardly see anything of her, she seemed so emaciated.”

“Maybe,” said Dr. Incoming, “your treatment has been too severe; too much allopathy, for instance.”

“Not at all,” replied Dr. Outgoing. “I commenced with homeopathy. I didn’t dream at my first diagnosis that she was so critically ill; so I gave her little sugar pellets, and highly colored but harmless draughts and effervescent drinks taken from the fields of nature and science; but to my astonishment she grew rapidly worse.”

“Why, I heard,” put in Dr. Incoming, “that she increased in size at that time.”

“Yes,” returned Dr. Outgoing, with a groan; but it was an unhealthy state of things, a dropsical or bloated condition. I soon saw that she had no true strength. What did I want with so much

flesh before me if there was no real life present? So I discontinued homeopathy and went to powerful medicines administered in allopathic doses. I tell you it was simply amazing to see how the flesh disappeared under this treatment. She shrunk away to nothing after the third or fourth dose.”

“What did you give her?” asked Dr. Incoming. “Well, I gave her some decoctions of wormwood and administered sulphur freely. I also used some biting acids and caustic on some proud flesh which I discovered. I also relied on fly blisters, not to speak of cupping bleeding and one or two surgical operations. You see for yourself what is left of her.”

“Did you do nothing to build her up?”

“O, yes; I gave her plenty of strong meat, but she turns from it with loathing. I urge it on her, telling her she must go on to perfect strength, and she closes her eyes and stretches out on her back flatter than ever.”

“Has nothing else been tried?”

“Yes, every physician that she has employed has had a plan and treatment of his own, but nothing has succeeded.”

“So, then,” said Dr. Incoming; “she has had a number of physicians?”

“A dozen” replied Dr. Outgoing; to my certain knowledge. And she actually intimates that this is partly the matter with her. She says that she is like the woman in the gospel who suffered much of many physicians. Nevertheless, she has hopes connected with every new physician who arrives to take charge of her case. That accounted for her brightening up a few moments when you first arrived.”

“Ah, indeed!” said Dr. Incoming, with a dry cough.”

“Yes, sir,” pursued Dr. Outgoing; “she may take a fancy to you or she may not. No one can tell. She is very whimsical and hard to please.”

“Did she like any one especially?”

“Well, yes. Now I think of it. She had several favorites. She says that she once had a doctor who was very lively and hopeful; that he used to hold her up from her seat, and by propping her up in some way made her stand awhile, telling her that she stood in her own strength; that she did feel better for a while. But he left her after two or three years; is now in a distant State, and no one else will do her that way, and so she is down flat again. Then she speaks occasionally of another whom she says did not believe in medicine, particularly bitter medicine, nor in strong meat, but gave her thin soups dashed with something sparkling and exhilarating, and a light hash diet made up of she hardly knows what, only it was pleasant to the taste. Moreover, she says that he kept her laughing all the time; he said so many funny things. At one time, she never can forget it, she laughed until she cried. Under his treatment she almost forgot she was sick. Now and then she felt when alone, a great pain in her heart; but while he was talking and prescribing she forgot her malady; indeed he insisted all along that there was nothing the matter with her; that she was all right. Then she wound up the recital by saying ‘ How much I would like to see him again, and where is he now, anyhow? ‘ Moreover, she speaks of another who put her to sleep with opiates. True, she was easy; but she fears during those days, her disease made rapid inroads.”

“How about her voice?”

“She has none to speak of. Years ago she quit singing. Several months since she made an effort; but the failure was so marked that she has not tried again. And yet what a singer she once was! As to talking, she is about done. Her voice, as I told you, is nearly gone.”

While the two physicians were engaged in this consultation, they were sitting upon a piece of furniture called a pughlpit (From the Sanscrit) which, from its height, gave them a good view of the patient. After Dr. Outgoing had finished speaking, they sat together looking at the wasted object before them. Ziunne meanwhile had manifested little or no interest in what was being said. Sometimes she idly turned the leaves of a hymn book. Sometimes she lifted her heavy eyes to glance through the open

window at the distant clouds, but never showed by a sign that she understood the remarks made upon her condition.

After some additional conversation in regard to her case, Dr. Incoming, in bidding farewell to Dr. Outgoing, announced that he intended calling in to his assistance four or five other practitioners well and favorably known. "I haven't a doubt but that you have met them. Their names are Drs. Sollum, Proppoorzeeshun, (A difficult German name) Lowd, Criezy and Cevere."

Dr. Outgoing arched his left eyebrow and elevated his right shoulder in reply.

In due time the gentlemen arrived and first Dr. Sollum exhibited his skill. He lost little time in making his diagnosis. "My dear friend," said he, in a funeral manner; "I am under the sad necessity of informing you that you are very far gone, indeed. From the crown of your head to the sole of your feet you are diseased. There is no soundness in you." As soon as Ziunne heard this far, she at once collapsed figuratively speaking, and straightened herself out for burial. Cold at first she became much colder. Her eyes became lack-luster and the whole body rigid. Dr. Incoming at once protested. But Sollum at once retorted, "You sent for me to help recover the patient, and I have started right. It is necessary, first, to impress upon her her desperate condition, then she will take the alarm, reaction will set in, and" — "It looks to me," interrupted Dr. Incoming, with a groan, as he contemplated the rigid body before him; "that you have about finished her."

"Very good," said Dr. Sollum, with frigid dignity; "I will retire and trouble you no longer." And retire he did.

The second evening, Dr. Proppoorzeeshun took charge. His method, he said would be different. His idea was to draw out her resources and surprise and encourage her with her strength. He accordingly took his position before the recumbent form and in a very cheerful and confident manner thus delivered himself, "My dear madam, if you feel that you are all right and well, please signify the same by holding up your right hand."

The patient was motionless.

“Ahem!” said Dr. Proppoorzeeshun, somewhat taken aback; “I will slightly alter my request and will utter it plainly and slowly, so that you may thoroughly take it in. If, my dear friend, you would like to become well, please stand on your feet.” To this there was some response, though peculiar. It seemed as if only a portion of the body arose after much hesitation and effort.

Dr. Proppoorzeeshun was radiant; but even while he was congratulating himself and had turned to speak to Dr. Incoming, Ziunne evidently weakened and sunk back rapidly and looked as though she had never stirred before nor could ever rise thereafter. It proved a dead faint, and nothing else that was done for her that evening could arouse her.

Time would fail to tell all that was done on the evenings that followed. Suffice it to say that Dr. Lowd greatly tried her nerves, indeed so much so that she rallied enough to thus express herself and positively refused to listen to anything he had to say.

Dr. Criezy won upon her for awhile; but she soon wearied of hydropathy and said he made her feel sick and uncomfortable.

The last one who tried his skill was Dr. Cevere. His first announcement was certainly not soothing. “Madam,” said he; “I discover that several of the members of your body are diseased. The only hope for you is amputation.”

This brought Ziunne to her feet — while she delivered a flat refusal — adding that they were no more diseased than his own members. All this was communicated with such spirit that Dr. Cevere was for a time thrown off his balance; but he soon recovered and returned to the charge.

“I am moreover confident,” he continued, “that much of your trouble springs from internal derangement. Certain organs are not performing their proper functions; your stomach is overloaded with indigestible matter, and right here, among other things, I see the need of an emetic. This I will proceed to give you. What you need is to become very sick, not as you have been, but sick absolutely of yourself, a feeling as if the very pains of death had got hold upon you. I urge the emetic upon you because you have partaken of things — ”

“You mistake,” said Ziunne, sullenly; “I have nothing in me at all.”

“But, madam, your eyes and tongue declare it, and other symptoms are unmistakable. You must take this emetic. What you want is a perfect cleaning out.”

The emetic was administered. In due time Ziunne exhibited some qualms.

“Now, then,” said Dr. Cevere, encouragingly.

“I can’t do it,” replied Ziunne, gloomily.

“O, but you must. Do this way,” said the doctor, making certain motions; take also this draught of hot water, it will help you.”

“I repeat,” said Ziunne, “there is nothing in me. I have done nothing to deserve this. Why have you all agreed to torment me before the time?”

What need to say anything more? The week’s conference and labor ended as Dr. Outgoing’s eyebrow had predicted — in nothing.

The physicians in attendance left at different times and in ways peculiar to themselves. Dr. Sollum left with a groan. Dr. Criezy went away shaking his head. Dr. Proppoorzeeshun departed looking mystified, and with the air of a man who had exhausted all earthly expedients. “Nothing less than a thunderbolt from the sky, a miracle from heaven,” said he, “can do the work.”

Dr. Cevere, in leaving, shook the skirts of his coat in a remarkable manner, and at the front gate was observed to wipe off the dust from his shoes.

Dr. Incoming was left alone with the patient for the rest of the year. Some say he looks more haggard and prostrated than his patient.

The time is approaching for the regular annual convocation of physicians, and the doctor is preparing an official bulletin relative to the health of his interesting charge. I have just looked over his shoulder and read the following original and thrilling item, “Ziunne is looking up.”

CHAPTER 20

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Tarrypin Conference was to meet in the town of Blusterville. The Church in that place had asked for it, and sent up a delegation to see that their pastor in voicing the request should have proper moral support and backing. The three gentlemen composing the delegation had each prepared a speech declaring the many excellences of Blusterville, the superiority of the railroad that ran by the town, the hospitality of the people, etc., etc.

They however were not allowed to deliver themselves in an impromptu way of their carefully prepared speeches. In fact there was no need for two reasons; one was that the preacher in charge had already said everything that could and should and should not be said. We recall a few things. He said that the citizens of Blusterville desired this convocation of ministers above their chief joy; that even now in the uncertainty as to whether the great privilege would be granted them they were filled with anxiety; that the church there needed the moral toning up that would be given it by the Conference; that if the Conference did not come his work as a pastor on that charge would be set back four years; that his people had never seen a bishop and they wanted to see one, and had a right to do so. "What!" he exclaimed dramatically, "should our old members go down to the grave and our children grow up without ever seeing a bishop?"

The inviting preacher inspired by the approving smiles and nods of the Delegation of Three, also said that the men in Blusterville were willing to give up their rooms and sleep in the galleries if necessary; that the front doors would be knocked down if need be and split up into kindling wood to make fires to cook the meals and warm the bodies of the members of the Tarrypin Conference.

A number of other very nice sweet oily enthusiastic and impossible things were said by the brother who suddenly wound up for the lack of breath and from a sheepish consciousness that his point had been gained some time before. The Conference had been willing to go from the start; and like

a woman we know who accepted the suitor for her hand before he finished his speech, even so was the spirit and attitude of the Tarrypin Conference.

The other reason why there was no need for the Delegation of Three, the Colonel Judge and Doctor to speak their prepared impromptu speeches and urge their plea, was that there was no other place that was bidding for the Conference. It was Hobson's Choice with the Conference; they had to go to Blusterville.

The town of Nabobville that had enjoyed the session of the Conference the year before, said publicly and with startling plainness that the members of the Tarrypin Conference had nearly ruined their church walls and floor with tobacco juice, and had scented their window curtains at home with cigar smoke, and they would take a rest for a while.

The fact of there being no other place bidding for the next session, seemed to escape the attention of the eloquent inviter and many others in the Conference who took a serene pleasure in having their heads softly and soothingly rubbed, until Bishop Bland with a rap of the gavel said

“No other place being in nomination, you will now proceed to vote. All in favor of the next Annual Conference being held in Blusterville say I.”

The vote was unanimous. Whereupon the preacher in charge at that town the Rev. Mr. Frisky smiled, nodded his head, and looked as if a mountain had been rolled off his breast, and went over immediately to the Delegation of Three, and shook congratulatory hands with them all, one of whom an old gentleman with the palsy actually shed tears of joy.

So this was the way that the Tarrypin Conference came to Blusterville. It is true that Brother Frisky told his wife that his speech did the thing; but there was a conviction among the laity started by sundry nods and dark sayings of the committee which went with him, that but for the strong and silent influence of the Delegation of Three, the Colonel Judge and Doctor, that Brother Frisky could never have carried his point. So all were contented. But it was evident to all that the Colonel Judge and Doctor were regarded with increased respect from the day they returned from the session with the news that they had secured the Conference for their town for the following year.

There was quite a flutter among the citizens of Blusterville when twelve months after that, the first arrivals of the Conference took place, and certain beaver-hatted and overcoated gentlemen walked the streets of the town.

These first comers were the committees and classes for examination, with a few other brethren who came on ahead of time from their charges.

One of this last class was put up at night to preach. But he preached and the audience listened with the feeling that the big time was to come on the morrow, that the biggest guns were yet to arrive and be unlimbered. The sermon was evidently prepared for the Conference, and it was most unfortunate that the brother was caught up so soon, and before the Conference proper had arrived. But the sermon appeared in the regular Conference letter in the following paragraph —

“We heard great things of Brother Toosoon’s sermon on Tuesday night; the echo of it had not ceased to reverberate at the time of our arrival. We greatly regret that it was not our good fortune to hear it.”

At midnight of Tuesday the main body of the Conference with the bishop arrived. Next morning beaver hats were everywhere; and all were seen moving by stages toward a common center, the one Methodist Church of the town. In front of the sacred edifice was another collection of beaver-hatted and overcoated gentlemen who were shaking hands and hawhawing with great heartiness over the sallies and salutations of still other incoming beaver hats and overcoats.

Promptly at 9 A.M. the Bishop arose and read the hymn,

And are we yet alive?

At the sound of the hymn the hats in front of the church all came in, and the feet corresponding to the hats proceeded to tread into an undistinguishable mass the first two stanzas of the grand old melody that has moved and melted ten thousand faithful hearts on earth and in heaven.

After prayer and Scripture reading by the bishop, there was a second prayer by Brother Patriarch.

After this the bishop made some opening remarks. He said that he was “glad to be at the Tarrypin Conference;” whereupon the Conference looked glad also.

He said that he had “often heard of the life and movements of the Tarrypin Conference, and how it had outstripped other sister Conferences in the race, in some good things.”

Here the Conference was undecided whether to look proud or humble.

The bishop went on to say that he had “been traveling several days to reach the seat of the Conference and had lost much rest and was feeling quite jaded.”

Immediately the Conference looked very tired for him.

“But,” the bishop added, “he looked for their aid, sympathy and prayers, and felt that they would have a pleasant and profitable service.”

The Conference at once brightened and looked as if they felt so too.

With some other general and inspiring remarks the bishop directed the secretary to call the roll. After this officer had performed on a remarkable human instrument in which one hundred and fifty voices answered “Here” and “Present” in one hundred and fifty different intonations, the election of secretaries and appointment of committees took place.

During these preparatory steps, and clearing of decks for general action, there was considerable bustle in bringing in two small tables for the “Press.”

The “Press” was represented by two beardless youths who carried a great roll of white paper in one hand, a pencil on one ear, and wore burdened and yet consequential looks on their countenances. There seemed just a curious flicker in the bishop’s eye as he glanced under his eyebrows at the two young gentlemen of the quill as they sat one on the right hand, and the other on his left. The twinkle seemed to say “We are in for it now.” And so it proved in the different reports that fell from their remarkable pencils. One statement being that “twenty traveling preachers had their characters examined and all were located at their own request.” (an actual report.)

The two Mr. Quilldrivers were exceedingly anxious to know the name of every one who stood on his feet to make a motion, or to call the attention of the "Chair" to the fact that Brother So and So from Wildcat Bottom had arrived and desired his name to be entered on the roll as present.

When the reading of the Publishing House report took place the "Press" was evidently fluttered, and the way their pencils flew one could see that they thought they had struck the very kernel and substance of the Conference proceedings. But soon becoming mentally abstracted and involved over the report, one commenced paring his nails, and the other drew heads and curious designs on the margin of a newspaper.

At this juncture other little tables were brought up the aisle with their legs lifted appealingly in the air, and deposited in various corners and nooks for the editors of the Jerusalem and Jericho Advocates, and for the treasurers of the different Conference Boards.

Pencils now abounded, paper was in demand, a business look settled upon all faces, stooping forms passed in front of the "Chair," others tiptoed around and whispered, fine-looking men with beaver hats held up straight in the left hand, and with umbrella or walking cane under the right arm moved about smiling bowing shaking hands here and there and listening occasionally to the proceedings.

Ladies lent their smiles and feathers to grace the scene. Some of them bent forward to ask who the young preacher was with flowing black hair and gold eyeglasses who had just arisen in an impressive way to announce that Brother Jack Higginbotham a lay member of the Persimmon District had just arrived, and he wanted the secretary to take note.

Clusters of whisperers gathered in corners. Men buttonholed each other in whispered speech. Still others bowed down over sitting forms in whisper. Congestion speedily set in, in the form of groups in the vestibule, around the stove, and about the tables of the money changers. The combined whisper became simply terrific, when — Crack! down came the bishop's gavel on the table before him, scores started, congested groups broke up, the ganglionic centers were relieved, and a profound stillness was realized for two minutes in the midst of which sudden silence and compelled

attention could be heard a voice with monotonous mechanical and nasal accent saying

“We have four church buildings bishop, and a membership of three hundred, etc.

“Are your people religious” queried the bishop looking sharply over his gold-rimmed glasses at the reporting brother.

“Well bishop” drawled Brother Mechanical rubbing his chin reflectively “I would say middling so.”

But here the buzz in the corners began again and other interesting and edifying facts were lost.

Prominent and conspicuous in the assembly were the presiding elders. They all carried in their hands large leathern wallets or bill pocketbooks filled with all kinds of papers. They also carried about with them a burdened and careworn look as if not only the Conference but the entire Church rested on their shoulders. Their eyes had a look as if they were trying to remember two or three dozen different things at once. This greatly impressed the young preachers who were divided in their opinions as to whether this look of care came from anxiety in regard to the stationing of the preachers or from other responsibilities not understood but connected with the office. Some of the older brethren thought this look sprang purely from a concern about their own appointments; but it is to be remembered that there are always suspicious people.

It was noticeable that these gentlemen were never alone after the Conference was opened, but were armed around, and buttonholed, and pulled into corners, and sought after with great assiduity by different members of the Conference. It was observable also that the presiding elder at such times had a faraway look as if he were contemplating distant ranges of mountains or watching sea waves break on lonely shores. Curiously also the interviewer on his departure bore away with him a like abstracted gaze.

Still another fact was that when the bishop in his announcement each day would say

“The presiding elders will please meet me at three o’clock this afternoon at the residence of Col. Blowhard,” one could have heard a pin drop. This with other things equally strange and remarkable impressed the mind with the fact of the importance of the presiding elder, and his eminent fitness to go to the General Conference whether he should ever be one of the twenty-four elders that stand around the Throne or not.

The introduction of connectional officers was a marked feature of the first morning session. It is true that this had been done a number of times before, but some people we know are bashful, and it pays to be polite. Anyhow the Conference arose to be introduced again to the brethren they had been introduced to before, and seemed really glad to know the officers.

So the Conference came from a sitting to a standing position, and then fell back, and rose and fell again, and fell and rose as first Dr. A of one Board, and Dr. B of another Board and Dr. C of a third Board, and Dr. D of no Board at all were presented.

There was a playful bit of sparring between two of the Doctors on the subject of age: Dr. B saying that he was glad to be preceded by Dr. A who had preceded him into the world by a good stretch of years: that he remembered as a child how his mother eulogized the preaching of Dr. A. As Dr. B looked even graver than Dr. A, all this produced great laughter, and so the Conference unbent itself and shuffled its feet, and laughed quite loudly, until it noticed the gravity of the bishop, who by the way had heard the humorous sally a dozen times, and who therefore could hardly look otherwise; then the Conference suddenly became grave and like Henry of England never smiled again.

Two expressions could not but deeply impress the visitor at Conference. The words were not remarkable in themselves, but their frequent repetition actually made a mental gully or canyon so that the thoughts had to move in that direction. One of the expressions was “This Conference sir.” The loftiness with which this phrase was uttered could not be justly described. Something very high and exalted was alluded to, and yet every one seemed to know its mind and just what to do with and for it. It seemed in a sense to belong to every speaker. “This Conference sir will never agree to this or that,” “This Conference sir has not been consulted,”

“This Conference sir is not to be treated this way,” “This Conference sir cannot afford:” or the “prestige,” “standing” and “record” of “this Conference Sir” etc. etc. It was a psychological study to see how the Conference changed its looks as it felt the touch of certain adjectives, and so would look offended, injured, dignified or gracious according to the picture that was being drawn of it at the time.

Another memorable expression washed up on the shore of memory is “That’s so.”

How often it was heard as the week’s session rolled on. Especially in times of speeches and debates. As one brother made his point clear, a chorus of “that’s sos” would ring out. But alas for human stability, the brother who followed the speaker knocked down his arguments and then presented his side of the case when lo! a perfect volley of “that’s sos” from the Conference. With a nine-tenths vote a question looks settled, and the Conference raised a slab over the buried matter with the inscription “That’s so.” But Speaker No. 3 said that he felt troubled at the hasty action of the Conference, that he did not want “this Conference” to go down to history as having done such a thing, and proceeded to pile up arguments some new, and more of them old, and asked as having been a voter with the majority for the privilege of reconsidering the action they had taken. Whereupon the Conference with a hearty “that’s so” proceeded to take the back track or flop entirely over. The story is told of a clerical member of one of the Conferences that after most warmly advancing his views in a certain matter, the bishop arose and just as fervently advanced opposite views, whereupon this brother wiping his face not yet cool from his own speech cried out

“That’s so bishop, those are my sentiments.”

The Conference laughed uproariously over the incident, but failed to see that the man was doing just what the Conference itself had done a thousand times before.

The first announcement of the Committee on Public Worship was also an impressive moment. Again the pin-dropping stillness was apparent, and a sudden rigidity fell upon fully twenty preachers.

“Preaching tonight in this building at 7:30, by Rev. U. R. A. Skyscraper.”

The effect of his announcement was equally striking. At least ten men breathed easier, others felt overlooked, and Brother Skyscraper tried to appear unconscious, but failed. He spent the afternoon pacing up and down his room rehearsing the golden periods that were to roll forth on the astonished and delighted audience of that night. But he had used up most of his vitality in a confined room, lost mental spring in the burden of memorized speech, and failed to linger for the divine freshness and unction upon the soul without which all sermons are failures. So Brother Skyscraper’s kite flew low that night; it failed to answer in upward soarings the jerk of the hand in the pulpit; and it was vain for the brother to toss back his hair and look upward as if he saw his subject aloft, when the tail of the kite was in a blackjack thicket. There were no responses from the brethren that night as is wont to be at Conference, and as is always the case when the holy fire falls and God comes down upon his servant. Brother Skyscraper came out of the church that night a sadder man, but not wiser, as he attributed his lack of soaring power to loss of sleep on the previous night. The only compliment that he received was from a girl sixteen years old who told him next day that he had preached “a mighty pretty sermon.” Brother Skyscraper groaned inwardly. So his abstract abstruse erudite discourse was “a mighty pretty sermon!”

If he had known it he was in a similar condition to that of the young preacher who had lamentably failed in the pulpit after entering it full of swaggering confidence. An old preacher laid his hand upon the drooping head, and said these wise words —

“If you had gone into that pulpit feeling like you do now in coming out of that pulpit; you would have come out of that pulpit feeling like you did when you went into that pulpit.”

One morning the business proceedings were stopped that a gavel might be presented to the Conference by a certain individual. It was made out of wood taken from a rafter of the house in which Bishop Longtimeago was born. The Conference expressed its thanks by a rising vote. The donor wanted to deliver a speech in connection with the presentation of the gavel, but the rumor getting out that the speech was an hour long,

compromise was made with him for five minutes of it, and the rest was ordered published. All of which was satisfactory to both parties.

Other interesting and important features of the Conference we pass over because touched upon in other parts of this volume.

The resolutions of the last day are familiar to all. Everybody is thanked in these resolutions, the railroad, steamboats, hotel keepers, telegraph operators, newspaper reporters, citizen entertainers, sexton, and all. Who can forget that rich original and highly correct sentence "Who have opened their doors and spread their tables."

The appointments were to be read at 8 P.M. Monday. The church was jammed before the hour by people who came to behold the last of the Tarrypin Conference and see how preachers could take appointments and disappointments.

The presiding elders came in late, all wearing a burdened look. It was whispered that the bishop was lingering in his room over the "list." Fully half the preachers looked like they were Jacob's cattle, for some felt streaked, others striped, and still others spotted.

Some last piece of business was attended to, several hymns were sung, and the bishop was seen working his way up the crowded aisle. He looked graver than the presiding elders, and Jacob's cattle increased.

The old-time hymn was raised and sung,

*Blest be the dear uniting love
That will not let us part:
Our bodies may far off remove
We still are one in heart.*

Brother Patriarch was called upon to pray, the brethren groaned all over the house, and some marvelous battles were fought and victories won known only to God.

After this the bishop gave his final address, in which he said that he would like to have given every man the best appointment; but there were few as the world called it good appointments and many preachers to appoint. He begged them to remember however that all appointments were good if there were souls to save and broken hearts to bind up. He recalled the

sacrifice and poverty and toil of the Savior, and bade them go out in his spirit to do good and bless mankind. He called them bundles of mercy, and told them how their presence would bring light, comfort and salvation to many a soul that this moment was sitting in sorrow and darkness and knew not that God was even then preparing to send the messenger of peace and life.

When he concluded and opened the list a stillness that was painful filled the room. One could almost hear hearts beat. The only calm ones were some who knew where they were going, and two connectional officers who were out of the ring and looked on with a curious gaze as they tried to recall how they used to feel in other years before their promotion.

The "Press" was on hand with a ream of paper. Preachers with notebooks and pencils fixed a steadfast eye on the bishop waiting for the first word. Still others were crouched in dark corners that when the dagger of disappointment which they expected was thrust into their hearts, no one would see their blanched faces and witness their suffering. And others still were scattered through the congregation assuming a smiling careless spirit which they did not feel.

The reading at last commenced with the words

NABOB DISTRICT.

A. Soft, Presiding Elder.

Nabobville Station, U. R. Nice.

Hollow Circuit, M. T. Head.

Hard Mission, I. M. Poorman.

Etc. etc. etc.

During the reading of the appointments scarcely a preacher opened his lips. A Spartan courage and fortitude was in more than one that night. But while the preachers who were receiving the elevations or the knockdowns said nothing; from the audience came sympathetic "Ahs" and "Ohs" that would rise like the sound of a wind in the trees, and as suddenly die away. And once there was a hand clapping when the name of Brother Frisky was read out for the second year at Blusterville.

The end was reached at last, the doxology was sung, the benediction pronounced, and then the dying and the dead began to be found. There were hand shakings, hearty congratulations, and also words of tender sympathy spoken in secret. Some faces were smiling, some were cloudy, and others were nigh to tears. But the Lord looked down and said that he would take care of them all; and that the laughing brother needed him as much as his sighing servant who was walking heartbroken at that minute on the darkened street. And he did as he said, he took care of them all.

It was not yet day when the Tarrypin Conference assembled at the station for departure on the early morning "Express." Here and there a late member could be seen hurrying along the shadowy streets while feeble lights gleamed through the foggy air from the windows of homes that had prepared a hasty meal for the vanishing guests.

A freight train loaded with geese thundered by and then backed into a side track. The confined fowls stretched their necks and screamed loudly at the preachers, at which there was a loud laugh among the beaver hats.

Strange sights were seen while the Conference waited for the "Passenger." The leaders of the two wings of the Conference were seen fraternizing as if there had never been a difference of opinion. The two Boanerges who had cut each other to pieces on the Conference floor the afternoon before were now seen sitting amicably on a trunk side by side. The brother who wrote the Jeremiad on the State of the Church was enveloped in a cloud of tobacco smoke of his own making. The bishop who had been fairly encircled with individuals and burdened with attentions before the reading of the appointments, now stood alone in meditative position leaning upon his umbrella.

Just as day was breaking the red eye of the locomotive was seen in the distance, and in a few moments the panting "Express" ten minutes late rolled into the station, and in a trice had swallowed up a hundred beaver hats and valises.

Just then a lonely rooster away up town somewhere flapped his wings and sent forth on the air a dismal and heartbreaking crow. The Conference went out, and the rooster came in and crew bitterly. He was the last of his tribe.

In two minutes more the train was thundering out of town; the last coach disappeared with its red lanterns around a curve, the black smoke of the engine drifted heavily off amid the pine trees, and the Tarrypin Conference with all its speeches and debates, with all its “whereases” and “be it resolveds,” with all its motions and commotions, with all its proceedings and recedings — was gone.

THE END

PUBLISHERS NOTES

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