Parson Hitcham's Sermon.

BY HELEN FORREST GRAVES. The sun was setting, a band of orange brightness, over the leafless woods. Around the doorstone, the red October leaves rustled, like voices whispering nivstic messages in the twilight, while on either side of the narrow gravel path the frost-bitten dahlias hung their black

and wilted heads. Rachel Hitcham gave a little shive as she put her shining brown head out of the door for an instant, looking vainly for Cordelia, her younger sister..

"How like winter it seems!" she said involuntarily. "And father out without his overcoat, as usual. Not that is's of much use when he has it on, for it's darned, and mended, and worn as thin as a sieve-but still it is an overcoat."

Closing the door, where the scent of dead leaves and the chill frost came in I ke a baptismal touch, Rachel went lack into the little study, at the rear of the house, where a fire of logs burned

on the hearth. For Parson Hitcham was sensitive to cold, and was wont to declare that his i teas were like the current of the little brook in the woods below—they couldn't flow freely when there was the slightest suspicion of frost.

And they were poor at the parsonage, and even gnarly pine logs cost money, so that the study-fire and the kitchenfire comprised the only warming arrangements that were allowed in the establish-

By the window, seated in the deep, old-fashioned seat, with the faded Turkey-red curtains pushed away, so as to get the benefit of the last fading rays of sunset, was Cordelia Hitcham, with her old atlas in her lap by way of desk, vellow hair wildly rumpled about her head, and white teeth nibbling the coarse wooden handle of her pen. "Cordy!" cried the eldest sister,

" what are you doing?" "How you frightened me!" said Cordelia, scrambling down from the window-seat. "I thought it was papa. I came in here because it was so cruelly cold up in our room. What am I doing ? I'm writing, of course. I've such an idea, Ray, for a love-story !"

"It's of no use, I'm afraid, Cordy," said Rachel, sadly, shaking her head. "But it shall be of use!" said Cordelia, impetuously. "And you know, Ray, we must earn something, if the committee have put papa's salary down. It's all very well for him to shake his dear old head, and say that the young ravens are provided for; but we're not young ravens, and consequently we can' dress in feathers, nor eat snails and cedar-berries. I say the committee are as mean as dirt, and I'd just like them to try the experiment of supporting three grown people on a salary of three hundred and fifty dollars a year. And if the Gossamer Magazine should pay me-Goodness me Ray! is that the front

The rusty old latches at the parsonage were defective, the October wind blew fresh and crisp, and the consequence was that there was a general gust adown the draughty halls, a banging of doors, a flutter of Cordelia's manuscript all over the floor. "Papa's papers, too!" cried out

Rachel. "Quick, Cordy, pick them up-papa does so hate to have papers misplaced!" "Go to the door," said Cordelia. "I

hear some one's voice, talking with papa. I'll set these things straight, while you take them into the parlor." "But the parlor is as cold as charity and as damp as a vault!" pleaded Rachel.

"Serves people right for coming here at this time of night," said merciless Cordelia.

But fortunately the guest, whoever he was, parted from Parson Hitcham on the door-step, and the good man came cheerily in, rubbing his blue and ungloved hands.

"My girls," said he, "I think I see a glimmer of good fortune ahead-the prospect of a call." "Do you mean a call to convert the

heathen?" said Cordy, who had by this time hidden away the dilapidated old atlas, which was her only portfolio; "or to have your salary reduced yet another ten per cent. By the stay-athome savages?"

"I am to preach at Waldham next Sunday," said the parson. "Always provided I can get Mr. Ross to take my place here for this once. And Mr. Meredith has asked permission to read one of my sermons." "Give him that one about autumn

leaves, papa!" said Rachel, eagerly. "No, papa," said Cordelia-"the one about the prodigal son!"

"I think myself," said Parson Hitcham, "that the one concerning Doctrine and Daily Life,-' "Oh, papa, that's a deal too prosy!"

said Rachel. "Papa is'nt the salary at Waldham a thousand dollars, and the rent of the

parsonage?" cried Cordelia. "Children, children! don't take too much for granted," said the parson. composedly. "Light the lamp Cordelia. Bring me a cup of strong tea,

Rachel: and leave me to myself a little So the parson sat down before the blazing pine logs, to warm his chilled

frame, and think.

"But old ?

"And a little cracked? Symptoms of were to come softening of the brain, eh!"

mean, Meredith?

coherence or common sense."

scription preached from our pulpit." as hard as bog oak. In fact, he was further particulars apply to

"Either I am dreaming or you are?" feeling jealous of the squire and discon. Chatham, 9, of March, '80.

said Mr. Ross, with a countenance of | tented with his own wife and children. hopeless perplexity. "Pray let me

"Come up to the Manor with me, and the squire's family! He frowned as he I will show it to you," said Mr. Merethought how badly he was used, and dith. "I am sorry this wild mass of incongruity had developed itself, for I had really conceived quite a fancy to him, and said it loud for him to hear,

grate, and a bronze statue of Minerva lifted its glittering spear on a black marble pedestal in the middle of the room-Cordelia Hitcham and her sister. Mr. Ross advanced and introduced them to the master of the manor.

"Please don't tell papa!" said Cordelia, turning pink and white, in a "He hasn't an idea that we have

come," added Rachel. "But, oh, dear the sermon-" "What sermon?" said Mr. Ross.

"And Cordy's story for the Gossamer Magazine," added she, hysterically. Mr. Ross looked more puzzled than

"They've somehow got mixed," said Cordelia, coming to the rescue. "You see, I was writing in papa's room, and there came one of those hateful draughts and papa's manuscript sermons from all right, but-"

Mr. Ross and Squire Meredith looked at each other, and both burst out laugh-"That accounts for it," said the lat-

"Perfectly," said the former. And then Mr. Mcredith explained

the parson's daughter how puzzled he

had been over the incongruities of the The missing pages of the contribution to the "Gossamer Magazine" were speedily found, and replaced by the genuine theology that properly belonged to "Doctrine and Daily Life." And Cordelia and Rachel were taken into the

glittering conservatories of the Manor, and shown the antique picture-gallery, and went home feeling as if they had caught a glimpse of a new world. "How beautiful it must be to be rich!" said Rachel, pensively looking down at the bouquet of pink azalias and

tea rosebuds in her hand. "I wonder if I couldn't describe those high-ceilinged, superbly-frescoed rooms in my next story," said Cordelia, reflectively. "I never saw anything so picturesque in my life-did you, Ray?" While Squire Meredith, reading over 'Doctrine and Daily Life" for the second time, saw it in quite a different | feel sheepish.

"There is talent here," said he, and discrimination, in an unusual

tiful?" said Mr. Ross, abruptly. "Rachel Hitcham, I mean," explain-

ed the young clergyman, laughing. "I'll tell you a secret, Meredith-I'm engaged to Parson Hitcham's eldest daughter.

are the loveliest girls I have ever seen." Parson Hitcham was duly "called" to the charge of Waldham parish, and he never knew how near Cordelia's love-

Meredith himself. At least, so gossips say.

New Joy\_ (British Review.

residence, which was found to prevent was sent for to ease it. At six o'clock, whilst he was still at work, carriage wheels were distinctly heard, and the squire's lady with her children came down into the hall, ready to welcome home Mr. Carey, who had been that day to town. Wedge, who was working inside the dining-room, listened with astonishment as he heard the shout the children gave when their father stepped out of the carriage. He saw, also through the door crack, that the eldest had caught hold of his hand, while the younger ones were clinging like little barnacles to his coat-tails; all dragging him along, as if, once having got him into their net, they meant, spider like, to bind him hand and foot, and devour him, as that interesting insect would a great bluebottle, at their leisure.

such delight was a puzzler for our worthy friend; for had he not, with his own eyes, seen this gentleman go off at half-past nine in the morning, no one could have persuaded him otherwise than that he must have been away a month, to put it at the lowest figure. He saw, moreover, that the squire was holding tightly in his hand a little parcel, which shaking off the children by a number of little dodges of which loving fathers only know the secret, "So you call this man a genius?" he quickly untied, for all the world as Ladies', Misses' and Children's said Squire Meredith, of Manor Wald- if he were a boy of five years old (and not a man of fourteen stone weight), "Not only a genius, but what is rarer | who could not wait a moment for anystill, in these days, a consistent Chris- thing. In a shorter time than we take tian man," said the "Reverend Rober to write it, he pulled the contents out Caps, Felt and Straw Hats, and gave them to his wife, with three distinct kisses. Wedge could swear "None too old for active, exemplary | there were three, for he counted them, and wondered how many more there

That the squire's return should cause

Soon the merry party went up stairs, "Not in the least !" cried Mr. Ross, the echo of their voices died away, and eagerly. "What can you possibly Wedge was left to finish his work on the door, whilst his heart and conscience "He gave me one of his sermons to began their work on him. He, too, read," said Mr. Meredith. "The had a home and wife and children; he, April 28, '80. strangest jumble I ever read. Theol- too, had been away all day; but the ogy on one page, love and sentiment thought struck him uncomfortably that on another-jumping from one subject his welcome home, if indeed, he got one to another, without any attempt at all, would seem poor and cold after the one which he had just witnessed. "You may see for yourself," said This reflection was not so sweet as to Mr. Meredith. "The man may possess make his work go smoothly; his saw a sort of erratic talent, but I can fancy seemed as blunt as a double bladed six how our sober old deacons would open penny pen-knife, and the wood of the their eyes to hear a sermon of this de- chair, whose legs he was cutting down,

Why were they not eager to rush out and welcome him, after the fashion of

his saw grated as though very dull. But conscience had a word to say to although he was making noise enough But when they reached Manor Wald- to prevent any one from trying to gain ham, two girls sat there in the great re- his attention. It told him the fault was ception-hall, where a fire of cannel coal chiefly in himself, for if his wife and blazed behind the burnished bars of the children were not like the squire's, neither was his likeness to that worthy gentleman particularly striking. He couldn't blame his wife for not making enough of his presents, for he well knew he never gave her any ; nor did he greet

> her with those words which would not have failed to draw the same from her. Wedge was a good husband without being a kind one, spending his money for the most part on his family in a hard, business-like kind of way, but showing no affection toward his children, who consequently did not love him.

> As Wedge walked home, his tools on his back, he came across an old friend, carrying carefully a dainty bunch of snowdrops in his big, rough hand.

Here, Will, he said, walking along by the carpenter's side, I've just given a trifle for these flowers, pretty bits of things, ain't they ? For my wife makes that are always tearing through that of any little present I take her home; old house, and away went all my papers | she never minds what I bring her, so long as I give it to her myself, for to be the desk; and I thought I had arranged sure I always tack on a little something, in the shape of kind words, which makes the thing seem more valuable in her eyes; I don't know how I should get on sometimes, if it wern't for having flowers pretty handy : you can get them for little or nothing at any time, and yet they are more beautiful than anything we could make.

> Wedge's road now lay in a different ed company, Joe Sparks putting a supposing he would know what to do

Wedge turned the snowdrops over in his hand, and looked after Joe, who had nearly turned the corner; what could the man mean by giving him the the trip both ways at one fare. snowdrops and never saying a word? he couldn't have krown what had just happened at the Hall, yet it was strange | are not provided with Tickets will be charged extra that he should come up and say all this about presents just when Wedge was thinking about that very subject, and enjoying the excuse, too, that he could'nt afford to buy his wife anything. But now having heard so much about

them, it seemed as if nothing else would do but that he must give them to his wife, and this new proceeding would be such a new and extraordinary one, that the very thought made him

Wedge's wife was a nice woman, but family cares were weighing her down, so that the light was fast dying out of her eyes and the color fading from her "Don't you think she is very bean- cheeks. She would not have minded them half nor even a quarter as much Squire Meredith looked up inquiring- if, when Wedge came home, she could have told him all about them -- for ten to one he could have set things right. But he had always poohpoohed when she ventured to begin the subject, so that she had left off looking for help Regular Fare to Boston, where there was none to be got. It "And I wish I was engaged to his seemed to Wedge that if he paid down youngest," said the Squire. "They in hard cash for clothing, feeding and schooling the family, he had done his share towards their bringing up. Such being the state of things, you may well imagine how surprised was Mrs. Wedge story had been to ousting him 'there- | when she heard a cheerful voice call out where are you Mary ? But greater still And there is every prospect that the | was her astonishment, when, on going young lady will live a love-story before to the door, her husband presented her long, and that the hero will be Squire | with the snowdrops, declaring as he put them in her hands, that beautiful as they were he thought the rosebud on her arm beat them out and out. Wedge had done many a handy bit of work with those tools on his back, but he did a neater job now with those snow-A thick carpet had lately been put | drops than he had ever done with all down in the dining-room at the squire's of them put together, for he, so to speak, sawed Mary's heart right in two, and to suit the Holidays. The stock comprises is part, the door from opening and shutting got to the very inside, and planed down easily, so Wedge, the village carpenter, no end of knots and rough places, and All the Latest and Newest polished her off, as if she had been some choice piece of cabinet work to be sold

for nobody knows what, That day was the beginning of brighter times; Mary's heart having been, as we before said, sawed right open, never closed up again, by reason of her husband's continually putting in one little thing and another on purpose to keep it open; and warm streams of affection came gushing out that nobody knew were ever there at all, they were hidden down so deep. And as to Wedge, he never knew before how many pretty little speeches he could make. Without any notice before hand whatever, they seemed to come from somewhere inside, packed up and directed. ready to be delivered with care, this side up, to his wife, whilst the contents of these said parcels, or sentences, generally brought a smile on Mrs. Wedge's face, and made her as lively as a cricket for some time to come.

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my Deputy for the County of Northumberland to all whom it may ) JOHN SHIRRETT

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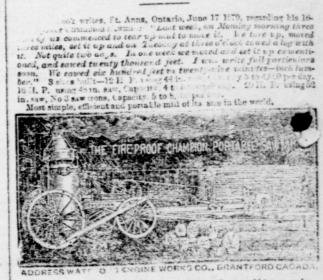
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