

## DEACON EMMONS' WEEK.

THE WEEK OF PRACTICE IN SUGAR HOLLOW.

Well Known to Some of "Progress" Readers as One of Senator Boyd's Best Readings—A Narrative Truth to Nature and Life by Rose Terry Cooke.

The communion service of January was just over in the church at Sugar Hollow, and people were waiting for Mr. Parkes to give out the hymn. But he did not give it out; he laid his book down on the table and looked about on his church.

He was a man of simplicity and sincerity, fully in earnest to do his Lord's work, and do it with all his might; but he did sometimes feel discouraged. His congregation was a mixture of farmers and mechanics; for Sugar Hollow was cut in two by Sugar Brook, a brawling, noisy stream that turned the wheel of many a mill and manufactory; yet on the hills around it there was still a scattered population eating their bread in the full perception of the primeval curse.

So he had to contend with the keen brain and sceptical comment of the men who piqued themselves on power to hammer at theological problems as well as hot iron, with the jealous and repulsion and bitter feeling that has bred the communistic hordes abroad and at home; while, perhaps, he had a still harder task to awaken the sluggish souls of those who used their days to struggle with barren hillside and rocky pasture for mere food and clothing, and their nights to sleep the dull sleep of physical fatigue and mental vacuity.

It seemed sometimes to Mr. Parkes that nothing but the trump of Gabriel could arouse his people from their sins, and make them believe on the Lord and follow His footsteps. Today—no, a long time before today—he had mused and prayed till an idea took shape in his thought, and now he was to put it in practice; yet he felt peculiarly responsible and solemnized as he looked about him and foreboded the success of his experiment. Then there flashed across him, as words of Scripture will come back to the habitual Bible reader, the noble utterance of Gamaliel concerning Peter and his brethren when they stood before the council, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." So with a sense of strength the minister spoke:

"My dear friends," he said, "you all know, though I did not give any notice to that effect, that this week is the Week of Prayer. I have a mind to ask you to make it for this once a week of practice instead. I think we may discover some things, some of the things of God, in this manner that a succession of prayer meetings would not, perhaps, so thoroughly reveal to us. Now, when I say this, I don't mean to have you go home and vaguely endeavor to walk straight in the old way; I want you to take 'topics,' as they are called for the prayer meetings. For instance, Monday is prayer for the temperance work. Try all that day to be temperate in speech, in act, in indulgence of any kind that is hurtful to you. The next day is for Sunday schools: go and visit your scholars, such of you as are teachers, and try to feel that they have living souls to save. Wednesday is a day for fellowship meeting; we are cordially invited to attend a union meeting of this sort at Bantam. Few of us can go twenty-five miles to be with our brethren there; let us go and see those who have been cold to us for some reason, heal up our breaches of friendship, confess our shortcomings one to another, and act as if, in our Master's words, 'all ye are brethren.'"

"Thursday is the day to pray for the family relation; let us each try to be to our families on that day, in our measure, what the Lord is to His family, the church, remembering the words, 'Fathers, provoke not your children to anger.' Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. These are texts rarely commented upon, I have noticed, in our conference meetings. We are more apt to speak of the obedience due from children, and the submission and meekness our wives owe us, forgetting that duties are always reciprocal.

"Friday, the church is to be prayed for. Let us then each for himself try to act that day just as we think Christ, our great Exemplar, would have acted in our places. Let us try to prove to ourselves and the world about us that we have not taken upon us His name lightly or in vain.

"Saturday is prayer-day for the heathen and foreign missions. Brethren, you know and I know that there are heathen at our doors here: let every one of you who will take that day to preach the gospel to some one who does not hear it anywhere else. Perhaps you will find work that ye know not of lying in your midst. And let us all on Saturday evening meet here again, and choose some one brother to relate his experience of the week. You who are willing to try this method, please to rise.

Everybody rose except Amos Tucker, who never stirred, though his wife pulled at him, and whispered to him imploringly. He only shook his grizzled head and sat immovable.

"Let us sing the doxology," said Mr. Parkes; and it was sung with full fervor. The new idea had aroused the church fully; it was something fixed and positive to do; it was the lever-point Archimedes longed for, and each felt ready and strong to move a world.

Saturday night the Church assembled again. The cheerful eagerness was gone from their faces; they looked downcast, troubled, weary—as the pastor expected. When the box for ballots was passed about, each one tore a bit of paper from the sheet placed in the hymn-books for that purpose, and wrote on it a name.

The pastor said, after he had counted them: "Deacon Emmons, the lot has fallen on you."

"I'm sorry for't," said the deacon, rising up and taking off his overcoat. "I ha'n't got the best of records, Mr. Parkes, now I tell ye."

"That isn't what we want," said Mr. Parkes. "We want to know the whole experience of some one among us; and we know you will not tell us either more or less than what you did experience."

Deacon Emmons was a short, thick-set man, with a shrewd, kindly face and gray hair, who kept the village store, and had a well-earned reputation for honesty.

"Well, brethren," he said, "I dunno why I shouldn't tell it. I am pretty well ashamed of myself, no doubt; but I ought to be, and maybe I shall profit by what I found out these six days back. I'll tell you just as it comes."

"Monday, I looked about me to begin with. I'm amazing fond of coffee, and it a'n't good for me—the doctor says it a'n't; but, dear me, it does set a man up good, cold mornings, to have a cup of hot, sweet, tasty drink; and I haven't had the grit to refuse. I knew it made me had the folks call nervous, and I call cross, before night come; and I knew it fetched on spells of low spirits when our folks couldn't get a word out of me—not a good one anyway; so I thought I'd try on that to begin with. I tell you it come hard. I hanker after that drink of coffee dreadful. Seemed as though I couldn't eat my breakfast without it. I feel to pity a man that loves liquor more'n I ever did in my life before; but I feel sure they can stop it if they try, for I've stopped, and I'm a-goin' to stay stopped."

"Well, come to dinner, there was another fight. I do set by pie the most of anything. I was latched up on pie, as you may say. Our folks always had as three times a day; and the doctor, he's been talkin' and talkin' to me about eatin' pie. I have the dyspepsy like everything, and it makes me useless by spells, and unreliable as a weather-cock. An' Doctor Drake he says there won't nothing help me but to diet. I was readin' the Bible that morning while I sat waiting for breakfast: for 'twas Monday, and wife was kind of set back with washin' and all, and I come across that part where it says that the bodies of Christians are temples of the Holy Ghost. Well, thinks I, we ought to take care of 'em if they be, and see that they're kep' clean and pleasant, like the church; and nobody can be clean nor pleasant that has dyspepsy. But, come to pie, I felt as though I couldn't; and, lo ye, I didn't. I eat a piece right against my conscience; facin' what I knew I ought to do. I went and done what I ought not to do. I tell ye my conscience made music of me considerable, and I said then I wouldn't never sneer at a drinkin' man no more when he tripped up. I'd feel for him and help him, for I just see how it was. So that day's practice giv' out; but it learnt me a good deal more'n I knew before."

"I started out next day to look up my Bible-class. They haven't really tended up to Sunday-school as they ought to along back; but I was busy here and there, and there didn't seem to be a real chance to get to it. Well, 'twould take the evenin' to tell it all; but I found one real sick, been a-bed for three weeks, and was so glad to see me that I felt fair ashamed. Seemed as though I heered the Lord for the first time sayin', 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.' Then another man's old mother says to me before he come in from the shed, says she, 'He's been a sayin' that if folks practised what they preached, you'd ha' come round to look him up afore now; but he reckoned you kinder looked down on mill hands. I'm awful glad you come.' Brethrin, so was I! I tell you that day's work done me good. I got a poor opinion of Josiah Emmons now, I tell ye; but I learned more about the Lord's wisdom than a month o' Sundays ever showed me."

A smile he could not repress passed over Mr. Parkes' earnest face. The deacon had forgotten all external issues in coming so close to the heart of things; but the smile passed as he said:

"Brother Emmons, do you remember what the Master said?—'If any man do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself.'"

"Well, it's so," answered the deacon; "it's so right along. Why, I never thought so much of my bible-class, nor took no sech int'rest in 'em, as I do today—nor since I begun to teach. I b'lieve they'll come more reg'lar now, too."

"Now come fellowship day. I thought that would all be plain sailin'; seemed as though I'd got warmed up till I felt pleasant towards everybody; so I went around seein' folks that was neighbors, and 'twas easy. But when I come home at noonspell, Philury says, says she, 'Square Tucker's black bull is into th' orchard a-tearin' round, and he's knocked two lengths o' fence down flat.' Well, the old Adam riz up then, you'd better b'lieve. That black bull has been a-breakin' into my lots ever since we got in th' aftermath; and it's Square Tucker's fence, and he don't make it bull-strong, as he'd oughter; and that orchard was a young one jest comin' to bear, and all the new wood crisp as cracklin' with frost. You'd b'lieve I didn't have much feller-feelin' with Amos Tucker. I jest put over to his house, and spoke up pretty free to him, when he looked up and says, says he, 'Fellowship-meetin' day, ain't it, Deacon?' I'd rather he'd ha' slapped my face. I felt as though I should like to slip behind the door. I see pretty distinct what sort of life I'd been living all the years I'd been a professor, when I couldn't hold on to my tongue and temper one day."

"Breth-e-ren," interrupted a slow, harsh voice, somewhat broken with emotion, "I'll tell the rest on't. Josiah Emmons come round like a man an' a christian right there. He asked me for to forgive him, and not to think 'twas the fault of his religion, because 'twas his'n and nothin' else. I think more of him today than I ever done before. I was one that wouldn't say I'd practise with the rest of ye. I thought 'twas everlastin' nonsense. I'd rather go to forty-nine prayer-meetin's than work at being good a week. I b'lieve my hope has been one of them that perish; it ha'n't worked, and I leave it behind today. I mean to begin honest, and it was secin' one honest Christian man fetched me round to't."

Amos Tucker sat down, and buried his grizzled head in his rough hands.

"Bless the Lord!" said the quavering tones of a still older man from a far corner

of the house, and many a glistening eye gave silent response.

"Go on, Brother Emmons," said the minister.

"Well, when next day come, I got up to make the fire, and my boy Joe had forgot the kindlin'. I'd opened my mouth to give him 'jesse,' when it come over me suddin that this was the day of prayer for the family relation. I thought I wouldn't say nothin'. I jest fetched in the kindlin' myself; and when the fire burnt up good, I called wife."

"Dear me," said she, "I've got such a headache, 'Shah, but I'll come in a minnit.' I didn't mind that; for women are always havin' aches, and I was jest a-goin' to say so, when I remembered the tex' about not bein' bitter against 'em, so I says:

"Philury, you lay a-bed. I expect Emmy and me can get the vittles today."

"I declare, she turned over and gave me sech a look! why, it struck right in. There was my wife, that had worked for and waited on me twenty-odd year, 'most scart because I spoke kinder feelin' to her. I sh'd always drawn herself, and then I milked the cow. When I came in, Philury was up tryin' the potatoes, and the tears a-shinin' on her white face. She didn't say nothin', she's kinder still, but she hadn't no need to. I felt a little meaner'n I did before. But 'twan't nothin' to my condition when I was goin', towards night, down the sullen stairs for some apples, so the children could have a roast, and I heered Joe up in the kitchen say to Emmy:

"I do b'lieve, Em, pa's goin' to die."

"Why, Josiah Emmons, how you talk!"

"Well, I do; he's so everlastin' pleasant an' good-natured. I can't but think that he's struck with death."

"I tell ye, brethren, I set right down on them sullen stairs and cried. I did, reely. Seemed as though the Lord had turned and looked at me just as he did at Peter. Why, there was my own children never see me act real fatherly and pretty in all their lives. I'd growled and scolded and prayed at 'em, and tried to litch 'em up; 'jest as the twig is bent the tree's inclined,' ye know; but I hadn't never thought that they'd got right and reason to expect I'd do my part as well as their'n. Seemed as though I was findin' out more about Josiah Emmons's shortcomin's than was real agreeable."

"Come around Friday, I got back to the store. I'd kind o' left it to the boys the early part of the week, and things was a little curtin'; but I did have sense not to tear around and use sharp words so much as common. I began to think 'twas gettin' easy to practice after five days, when in come Judge Herrick's wife after some curtin' calico. I had a han'some piece, all done with roses an' things, but there was a fault in the weavin'—every now and then a stain streak. She didn't notice it; but she was pleased with the figures on't, and said she'd take the whole piece. Well, just as I was wrappin' of it up, what Mr. Parkes here said about tryin' to act jest as the Lord would in our place, came across me. Why, I turned as red as a beet. I know I did. It made me all of a tremble. There was I, a doorkeeper in the tents of my God, as David says, really cheatin', and cheatin' a woman. I tell ye, brethren, I was all of a sweat."

"Mis' Herricks," says I, "I don't b'lieve you've looked real close at this goods; 'tain't thorough wove," says I. "So she didn't take it; but what fetched me was to think how many things I'd done such mean, unreliable little things to turn a penny, and all the time sayin' and prayin' that I wanted to be like Christ. I kep' a-trippin' of myself up all day jest in the ordinary business; and I was a peg lower down when night come than I was a Thursday. I'd rather, as far as the hard work is concerned, lay a mile of four-foot stone wall, than undertake to do a man's livin' christian duty for twelve workin' hours; and the better of that is, it's because I ain't used to it, and I ought to be."

"So this mornin' come round, and I felt a mite more cheery. 'Twas missionary mornin', and seemed as if 'twas a sight easier to preach than to practise. I thought I'd begin to old Mis' Vedder's. So I put a testament in my pocket, and knocked to her door. Says I, 'Good mornin', ma'am,' and then I stopped. Words seemed to hang, somehow. I didn't want to pop right out that I'd come over to try'n convert her folks. I hemmed and swallowed a little, and finally I said, says I, 'We don't see you to meenin' very frequent, Mis' Vedder.' "No, you don't!" says she, as quick as a wink. 'I stay to home, and mind my business.'"

"Well, we should like to hev you come along with us and do ye good," says I, sort of conciliatin'.

"Look a here, Deacon!" she snapped, "I've lived alongside of you fifteen years, and you knowed I never went to meetin'; we a'n't a pious lot, and you knowed it; we're poorer'n death and uglier'n sin. Jim, he drinks and swears, and Malviny dono her letters. She knows a heap she hadn't ought to, besides. Now what are you a-comin' here today for, I'd like to know, and talkin' so glib about meetin'? Go to meetin'! I'll go or come jest as I please, for all you. Now get out o' this!"

"Why, she come at me with a broomstick! There wasn't no need on't; what she said was enough. I hadn't never asked her nor her'n to so much as think of goodness before."

"Then I went to another place jest like that—I won't call no more names; and sure enough there was ten children in rags, the hull on 'em, and the man half drunk. He giv' it to me, too; and I don't wonder. I'd never lifted a hand to serve nor save 'em before in all these years. I'd said consider'ble about the heathen in foreign parts, and give some little for to convert 'em; and I looked right over the heads of them that was next door. Seemed as if I could hear Him say, 'These ought ye to have done, and not have left the other undone. I couldn't face another soul today, brethren. I come home, and here I be. I've been searched through and through, and found wantin'. God be merciful to me a sinner!'"

He dropped into his seat, and bowed his head; and many another bent too. It was plain that the deacon's experience was not the only one among the brethren.

Mr. Parkes rose, and prayed as he had never prayed before; the week of practice had fired his heart too. And it began a memorable year for the church in Sugar Hollow; not a year of excitement or enthusiasm, but one when they heard their Lord saying as to Israel of old, "Go for-

ward," and they obeyed His voice. The Sunday school flourished; the church services were fully attended; every good thing was helped on its way; and peace reigned in their homes and hearts, imperfect, perhaps, as new growths are, but still an offshoot of the peace past understanding.

And another year they will keep another week of practice, by common consent.

## The April "Book Buyer."

Within the last few years Eugene Field, of the Chicago *Daily News*, has acquired a national reputation as a wit and as a master of humorous satire; and lately his two books, one of verse and the other of prose, have called wide attention to the serious side of his rare literary talent. Mr. Field is the subject of the engraved portrait and of an authorized sketch, intimate and instructive, of his life, written by Charles H. Dennis, of Chicago. Every one who has laughed over his witty pictures of western "culture," or who has felt the pathos of one of his delicate poems, will be interested in both the sketch and the portrait, which are printed in the April *Book Buyer*. The account of Mr. Field's parentage and education explains adequately his strongly developed literary taste. Arlo Bates sends an entertaining budget of bookish gossip from Boston, and J. Ashby-Sterry chats pleasantly on similar topics in London. There is an unusually large and readable collection of questions and answers about books and authors in the department edited by Rossiter Johnson. The illustrations, reviews of new books, readings, literary notes and other regular features of the *Book Buyer* keep the reader fully informed as to what is doing in the book world.—Charles Scribner's Sons, New York: 10 cents a copy, \$1.00 a year.

## How They Reimbursed Him.

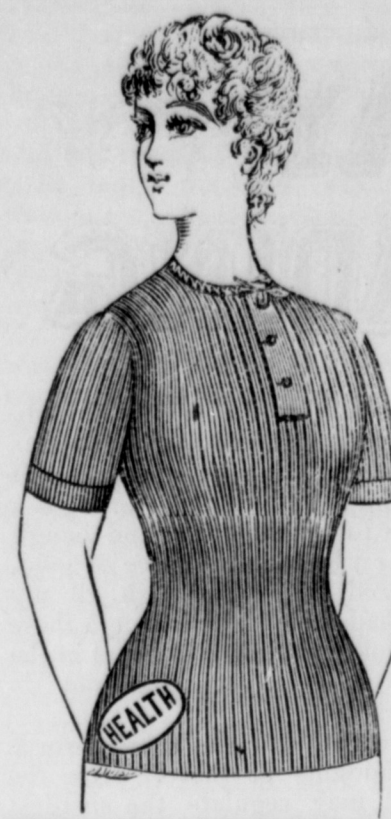
A few years ago an old and trusted cashier of one of the Rothschilds' establishments went to his employers and told them that during the thirty years of his service with them he had managed to save the sum of 250,000 francs and desired to go into business for himself. While the firm regretted to lose so faithful a man, they bade him good luck. The cashier began to speculate, and in a very short time returned to his old employers asking for reinstatement and telling them he had been "wiped out." He was given his old position and was advanced one year's salary. One day one of the Rothschilds took their old servant aside and told him to invest what he had in certain securities. The old man did so, and the stocks went booming upward. The banker had instructed the brokers to send prices skyward. Finally the old cashier was told to sell. He sold, and his profits were exactly the 250,000 francs he had lost. Prices settled down to their old point and the Rothschilds charged up a loss of that amount to themselves. They knew their employe was too proud to accept a gift, and they took this means to reimburse him.—*Globe-Democrat*.

## The Mother.

I. It was April, blossoming spring, They buried me, when the birds did sing; Earth, in clammy wedding ears, They banded my bed with a black, damp girth. Under the damp and under the mould, I kenne'd my breasts were clammy and cold. Out from the red beams, slanting and bright, I kenne'd my cheeks were sunken and white. I was a dream, and the world was a dream, And yet I kenne'd all things that seem. I was a dream, and the world was a dream, But you cannot bury a red sunbeam. For though in the under-grave's doom night I lay all silent and stark and white, Yet over my head I seemed to know The murmurous moods of wind and snow. The snows that wasted, the winds that blew, The rays that slanted, the clouds that drew. The water-ghosts up from lakes below, And the little flower-souls in earth that grow. Under earth, in the grave's stark night, I felt the stars and the moon's pale light. I felt the winds of ocean and land That whispered the blossoms soft and bland. Though they had buried me dark and low My soul with the season's seemed to grow.

## II.

I was a bride in my sickness sore I was a bride nine months and more. From throes of pain they buried me low, For death had finished a mother's woe. But under the sod, in the grave's dread doom, I dreamed of my baby in glimmer and gloom. I dreamed of my babe, and I kenne'd that his rest Was broken in wallings on my dead breast. I dreamed that a rose-leaf hand did cling: Oh, you cannot bury a mother in spring. When the winds are soft and the blossoms are red She could not sleep in her cold earth-bed. I dreamed of my babe for a day and a night, And then I rose in my grave-clothes white. I rose like a flower from my damp earth-bed To the world of sorrowing overhead. Men would have called me a thing of harm, But dreams of my babe made me rosy and warm. I felt my breasts swell under my shroud; No stars shone white, no winds were loud; But I stole me past the graveyard wall, For the voice of my baby seemed to call. And I kenne'd me a voice, though my lips were dumb, Hush, baby, hush! for mother is come. I passed the streets to my husband's home; The chamber stairs in a dream I climb. I heard the sound of each sleeper's breath, Light waves that break on the shore of death. I listened a space at my chamber door, Then stole like a moon-ray over its floor. My babe was asleep on a stranger's arm, "O baby, my baby, the grave is so warm. "Though dark and so deep, for mother is there! O come with me from the pain and care! "O come with me from the anguish of earth, Where the bed is banded with a blossoming girth. "Where the pillow is soft and the rest is long, And mother will crown you a slumber-song. "A slumber song that will charm your eyes To a sleep that never in earth-song lies! "The loves of earth your being can spare, But never the grave, for mother is there. I nestled him soft to my throbbing breast, And stole me back to my long, long rest. And here I lie with him under the stars, Dead to earth, its peace and its wars: Dead to its hates, its hopes and its harms, So long as he cradles up soft in my arms. And heaven may open its shimmering doors, And saints make music on pearly floors, And hell may yawn to its infinite sea, But they never can take my baby from me. For so much a part of my soul he hath grown That God doth know of it high on His throne. And here I lie with him under the flowers That sun-winds rock through the billowy hours, With the night airs that steal from the murmuring sea. Bringing sweet peace to my baby and me, William Wilfred Campbell in *Harper's Magazine*.



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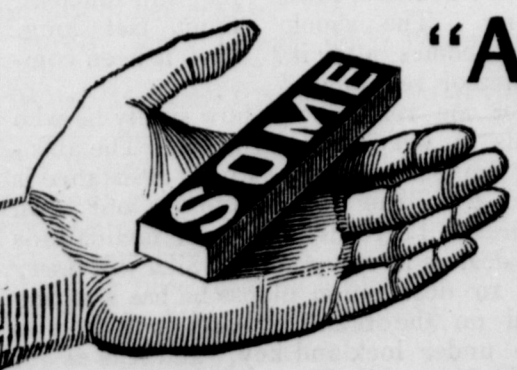
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