

PRACTISING THE SERMON.

In a story about the mission among the Ojibway Indians, Mrs. Helen C. Weeks relates this incident in the *Youth's Companion* :—

One trouble still remained, even among the converts, for, with very few exceptions, the women and children stole, continuously, every small article on which eyes had to be on the watch to prevent the disappearance of the thread, or scissors, they could lay their hands ; and when they entered the "teachers" houses, all or any of the little things one ordinarily leaves about.

An evil at any time, it was doubly so then, when every thing must be brought on the backs of men, and supplies could only come once or twice a year. So when at last the only remaining auger disappeared from the mill where they had been working, and the keg of nails was found to have been skilfully tapped, Mr. Ayre determined to make a personal application in the sermon he was preparing for the next Sunday, and accordingly urged, even harder than usual, that as many should come as the room would hold.

Sunday came ; a fair spring day, and not only were the women and children in their usual places, but all around the room squatted the older men ; chiefs, and braves, and old hunters, fresh paint on their faces, hair shining with fish oil, the gayest blankets and finest bead-work, and all with the pipe they would have smoked steadily, had not Mr. Ayre made special request that they would not. Many of the women had by this time learned to sing the hymns which had been translated into Ojibway ; and as they joined with the missionaries in the sweet old tunes, the Indians listened with great satisfaction.

A little, a very little stir was perceptible, as Mr. Ayre slowly and solemnly gave out his text, "Thou shalt not steal."

Every eye was fixed steadily on him as he went on, telling them, in the simplest and most intelligible words he could use, of the guilt and meanness of taking what is not one's own, and how fully the Bible showed them the wrong of such a course.

"You are honest with one another,"

he said, "whether you are Christians or not. I go by your lodges and see them left with only a pine bough across the door, and yet all respect that sign, and would be ashamed to steal from the one who had left it unguarded. You teach your children not to steal from one another.

"Why, then, do you steal from us ? We came among you only to do you good. We have left our homes and our own kindred behind us. We are alone here with you, trying to show you the right way to heaven, trying to make you do as the Great Spirit wishes. Some of you are really His children and wish to obey Him, but do you do this when you take from us the little we have ? Is there not some one here this very day, who has stolen, perhaps often ?"

Looking about as he spoke, Mr. Ayre paused a moment, never dreaming an answer would be given, but simply stopping to give his words more effect, when right before him, up rose the old chief, Ma-dwa-ga-non-ind, tall and stately, and, wrapping his blanket closer about him, said, slowly,—

"Who is there here who has not stolen ? Let my children speak to the teacher, if there is one who has not, or let them tell what they have taken ?"

There was a murmur through the whole assembly. Then an old woman near the door stood, up and in her cracked and shaking voice, said,—

"I have stolen many times, but everything is now gone. Here, though, is one needle I took yesterday, when my hand had no thought in it ;" and coming forward, she laid the needle on Mr. Ayre's desk, while he with difficulty kept from smiling. Then came a buzz of confession.

"I have taken a gimlet." "I have many times stolen thread and pins." "I have taken away, at night, the young peas and beans." "I have taken the auger, but shall bring it back to-morrow."

"Now you are nearer right, my friends," said Mr. Ayre, at last, when there was silence. "Bring back what you have taken, and resolve never to steal again. The Great Spirit forgives all who repent of wrong-doing, and try to do better, and He will forgive you."

"Ho ! ho !" said all, together, their