

## The Prospering of This or That.

(By Elizabeth Preston Allan, in 'Presbyterian Banner'.)

The wind blew gustily down the long main street of Hemsley village, flapping the signs that hung above store doors, overturning empty goods boxes piled up on the uneven pavement and raising clouds of dust from the unswept streets. The wind had the day pretty much to itself, and the few who were stumbling hither and thither against the gusts, evidently wished themselves under shelter.

Yet on that very day, disagreeable as it was, Miss Dora Guest went traipsing about for hours from house to house. Not that Miss Dora had any need to be abroad in the fierce gale; she belonged to the lap of prosperity; was, in fact, a rich girl spending a few months in Hemsley, for reasons which do not enter into this story.

But Miss Dora Guest was ever a busy-body in other people's matters, in a way not condemned by apostle or prophet, and to-day she was bringing to a triumphant conclusion a scheme for—

But let's follow her into this house on the corner, a house of pleasant aspect, set in a wide yard of now leafless trees. An old-fashioned knob (this was not yesterday, dear reader), pulled at a long wire, and faintly tinkled a bell in the distance. The maid who answered the bell was furtively wiping her hands on an apron redolent with kitchen odors.

'Mis' Dennis? Ya'as, marm, Miss Sally heah. Walk in de settin' room, please, marm; I gwine tell Miss Sally.'

Mrs. Dennis came down with cordial promptness to see her visitor, an indefinite number of little boys and girls preceding, accompanying and following her.

'Good news, Mrs. Dennis!' cried Miss Dora Guest; 'I have twelve ladies promised. Now let's talk of ways and means.'

If you are not too much disturbed, reader, by the clattering in and out of small Dennises, you will find that this city girl had, with praiseworthy skill and energy, gotten up a book club in Hemsley village, where a book club had never been known, and where many an active mind went hungry in such a mental famine.

As a postscript to this glimpse of Mrs. Dennis's interior, let me show you a note from Hemsley, dated a few months later, addressed to Miss Guest's city home. (Miss Dora has this epistle yet, though the paper is time-stained and the ink faded. Did I not say that this story was a bit of ancient history?)

'Dear Miss Dora: You would have been proud of yourself and of us if you had been present at the first meeting of our club. All twelve ladies came. Six others want to join! We were wise and witty; but please come back and see for yourself. Indeed, when I tell you that without a dissenting vote we chose to name ourselves "The Dora Guest Book Club," you can easily see that you will have to come back to stand sponsor to this thriving infant! This is perhaps not a very official way for the proud secretary of the D. G. B. C. to make this announcement, but how in the name of sense could you expect anything more formal from

Your attached friend,  
Sally F. Dennis.'

In Miss Guest's little inlaid desk this note lies bound by a silk thread to a few others marked, 'Things I have done—D. G.' But only a few weeks ago Miss Guest untied this little packet, took out Mrs. Dennis's dim writing and held it poised above her open grate.

'No,' she said to herself, withdrawing her hand, 'I will not burn it. After all, I hope that effort amounted to something. But what blind spinners we are!'

Before putting Mrs. Dennis's old note away again, Miss Dora wrote across the page, in black lines, which startlingly contrasted with the faded ink, 'Thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that.'

'There!' she said, thrusting the package back into the little desk; 'Solomon is always up to date!'

This relic of thirty years back had been put in peril by a recent visit of Miss Guest to Hemsley village; her first visit since the month she spent there in the latter sixties.

when she had so successfully launched a book club.

There were not many people in the village who remembered Miss Guest. (Hemsley had been through a boom, a bank failure and a big fire!) Those who knew her by name remembered a girlish figure, laughing eyes and a gay and charming alertness; they were dumb with surprise before this stout, oldish person, spectacled, sallow and white-headed. Had they changed as much as this, they asked themselves. They had, of course, but, fortunately, did not know it.

And the 'Dora Guest Book Club'? Even Mrs. Dennis, a grandmother now, and a quiet invalid, had forgotten the book club. With some effort she recalled the story of its existence. Oh, yes, it had been a pleasant thing, she remembered, while it lasted; but those enterprises soon die out, she said, resignedly.

Had Miss Guest's stay in Hemsley vanished then, like the morning cloud, leaving no abiding influence? Far from it! There was one who remembered Miss Guest in Hemsley; one who had cherished her in loving thought all these years, and who now came to take her hand in a warm clasp.

'You do not know me, Miss Guest?' She certainly did not.

'Thirty years ago,' said this busy, earnest, efficient pastor, 'you taught a class in our Sunday-school for an absent teacher; the lesson was on "The Good Shepherd," and one of your listeners never forgot the impression you made upon him of the love that seeks and saves. He wandered from God, fell into sin, suffered sin's bitter consequences and was most unhappy. But when he turned back it was the thought of the Good Shepherd that drew him to the Lord Jesus Christ! I was that little boy. God bless you, Miss Guest!'

'The Book Club was all very well,' said

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gray-haired Miss Dora, locking her desk lid on the mementoes of the past; 'the more book clubs the better; but there is no definite promise about "book clubs." While a single truth from God's word planted in the heart of a child cannot fail nor perish nor be cast away. Cannot! It is bound to "prosper in the thing whereto he sent it." Hereafter—as much hereafter as I have left on earth—I shall know what to count on.'

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