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Work of Prairie Minister

The Story of the Week's Labours of a Pastor in a Country Town in Kansas—Household Duties and the Demands of His Calling Keep Him Busy Day and Night.

Western ministers, says a writer in the New York Post, earn their salaries, few know how fully. This is the story of the week's work of a pastor in a country town in central Kansas, his being one church out of nine in a village of 2,500 people. He told it to me himself.

At six o'clock Monday morning he opens his eyes, and remembering that this is wash day, tumbles out of bed. He is over forty years of age and knows well the routine of the ministry. Hurriedly donning his oldest suit of clothes, he starts a fire in the cook stove, puts on the wash boiler, pumps water, cuts wood, and is soon in the midst of his busy morning's work. Breakfast is despatched, the children are started for school, the washing machinery is started and the week's laundry is soon boiling and steaming in the suds. He must help in this work. His wife is not strong, and she is usually worn out with other duties of the day before.

His salary is often in arrears—he must dress well, keep his family, pay house rent and meet all the various expenses of life on seven hundred dollars—of course he must help with the house work. The luxury of a servant is unknown to him.

He toils amid steam and suds all the forenoon. Finally the wash is on the line. Then he takes a bath—not in a luxurious porcelain-lined tub, with streams of hot and cold water ready for use—but in a bedroom, with wash-bowl and crash towel. He eats a hastily prepared lunch, which goes by the name of dinner—and enters his study for a quiet hour. He has a number of papers laid away that he wants to read. Just as he gets settled down, a neighbor comes with the news that he called upon a few families just moved into town. "The children all have the measles."

A TIRESOME WALK.

The minister says aside his papers, perhaps with a suppressed sigh, walks three-quarters of a mile to the home of the new residents. Part of the way there is no sidewalk. In the summer it is dusty, and other times it is muddy.

He gets to the house and finds the people poor. The place is untidy, the chairs are sticky, the house is badly ventilated and the air of the sick room almost stifles him. He listens to the mother's story of how the children became ill one after another. There are no quarantine regulations in the town. The children sick and all huddled together; the well ones go to school, mingling there with other children, and spreading the disease. "Every one has to have it," is the common saying and everyone generally "gets it."

He talks with the mother, trying to cheer her up. He tries to talk with the sick children, but usually makes a failure.

On the way home he goes to another house to call on a sick sister of the church, and hears over again the story of her ailments. She tells him the kind of medicine she uses, and the various remedies suggested by others. The character of her doctor is discussed, and all the details of her illness are fully rehearsed. She may ask him to read a chapter out of the Bible. He reads one and offers a short prayer.

It is difficult sometimes to get away from these places. The watchmen and nurses take advantage of the minister's presence and go out to breathe. He fans the sick sister, speaks consolingly to her and finally goes home to supper. After supper he calls on the church treasurer and gets what there is in the treasury. By the time this is finished and the various church questions are talked over with the treasurer and his wife, it is time to attend some lodge meeting.

LODGE CHAPLAIN.

The Western country minister belongs to several lodges and is always elected chaplain, so it becomes necessary for him to be there. This keeps him out until after ten o'clock. By this time his family is retired. He goes into his study and once more tries to read his papers. He glances at them one by one, seldom reading more than the headlines, now and then cutting out a piece for his scrap-book. At perhaps 11:30 he retires, worn out and weary.

Tuesday morning he is up early. This evening he has a preaching appointment at another village several miles away. As soon as he can he goes into his study and selects a subject for the evening's sermon. He outlines it and by ten o'clock has it ready. It is not a carefully written discourse. In country places he cannot use a manuscript. It will not do. He must be prepared to preach "off hand." He has very little time to prepare, but when he preaches he must handle his subject as though he always knew it.

Next he takes up the Sunday-school lesson for next Sunday, for he is often called upon to teach a class or review the lesson for the school. He studies up the lesson well—in fact, he puts in more time and research upon it than he does upon his sermon.

It is noon. At the door comes a tall country boy.

"I was sent in to tell you," he solemnly begins, "that Miss Nevercome's baby has died, and they want you to preach the funeral."

"How far is it?"

"Only two miles and a half. It's at two o'clock."

The minister groans inwardly. "The baby's grandma was a member of our church back in Indiana."

AN ERRAND OF MERCY.

He promises to go, bolts a dinner, borrows a horse and buggy, dresses up, takes his Bible and his wife, and starts for the house of mourning. The services are conducted. He tries to soothe the grief-stricken father and mother with the comforts of the Gospel. He heads the procession to the wind-swept prairie cemetery, and takes leave of the friends who are moving sadly away from the open grave.

He hurries home, for he must leave on the 5:30 train for his meeting to-night. He rushes to the depot without supper. The train is thirty minutes late; then as they are leaving it is side-tracked by an east-bound stock train. He gets to the place just in time to begin services.

He is tired, hungry and thirsty. But quite a crowd has gathered. He moves among them, greeting all as affably and pleasantly as he can. Soon the services open. He has to lead the singing, and finally begins his sermon. By this time he has forgotten hunger and weariness. He is enthused. He gets the splendid attention that is characteristic of country places. He seems to him that it is the best sermon he ever preached. He gives out a closing song and invites every one to come and seek a new life. At the close of the service every one comes up and shakes hands and says: "I enjoyed your sermon," but it is often said in such a perfunctory way that he doubts the truth of the statement.

Then, by the aid of a lantern, he is walked nearly a mile to a brother's house to stay over night. He sits in the parlor and talks with the family on religious topics, tells the children stories and finally is shown to bed. Sometimes he is asked if he has been to supper, but often not.

COMFORT OF THE "SPARE ROOM."

He is put to sleep in the "spare room." In winter it is a chilly place, in summer it is poorly ventilated, or may be infested with mosquitoes. His mind dwells on his sermon, and he cannot sleep for a long time. Before nature is satisfied with the quantity of rest, the family is stirring. The rattle of stove lids, the earthquake jar of the coffee grinder, the smell of frying potatoes, and the clamor of children's voices wake him up. He is weak and yearns for a light, dainty breakfast, but solid food—fit only for men who dig and shovel—is passed to him. But he gets through his meal and then has four hours left before train time.

He wants to begin work on his Sunday sermons, but there is no chance. He wanders about the little village. Some men tell him old jokes and stories that are hoary with age, but he is expected to laugh heartily and take a deep interest in each. After hearing all about the crops and the live stock, opinions are ventured on next year's politics and the probable outcome of the special session of Congress, the forenoon goes. Perhaps the church treasurer will hand him \$2.78, the amount of last evening's collection, with the comforting remark that "Two or three of the best-paying members were not there."

His railway fare will cost him a dollar, so the net profits of the trip will be \$1.78. The train is again behind time, and he gets home in the middle of the afternoon.

While waiting at the little depot he had prepared a prayer meeting topic for the evening. He eats another lunch at home and puts in the balance of the afternoon making calls. After supper the papers can be read. A short romp may be had with the children.

THE PRAYER MEETING.

The prayer meeting hour arrives. The meeting is held in the church parlors. Here a solemn-looking body of Christians assemble every Wednesday evening. The ubiquitous brother who never contributes anything towards the minister's salary is there; songs are sung, prayers are made, a Scripture lesson is read. The minister delivers a ten-minute sermon, etc. Then the meeting is declared "open," and several of those present give their testimony. The meeting closes at nine. The preacher puts out the lamps, locks up, and goes home too weary to think or study.

Thursday morning comes. He gets several letters at the post office. They need immediate answers. He is out of ink. This necessitates another trip to town. Here are two of the regulation, old-time, retired men of the town sitting on the shady side of the street, leaning on their canes, and always ready to talk. They take "turn about" relating some proxy tale that properly never ought to have been commenced and apparently has no end. Politeness

compels him to listen and lose a good half-hour's time. But the longest tale comes to an end and he breaks away, and hurries home to his work. He answers the letters, and has just opened his Bible to begin on his sermons, when the editor of the weekly paper calls, and wants all items of news among the members of his congregation. These are written out, most of them are two-line items, but they take time.

The editor is in no hurry, and before he leaves a young couple drives up in a buggy. It is the father and mother of the child whose funeral was conducted the other day. They want a nice obituary notice written for the paper, and want it to "end up with a piece of poetry." They also want it for "this week's paper sure." So he sits down and writes the notice. He has a number of books of poetry in his study; but it takes a good half-hour to find a verse suitable to "end up" with. By this time it is noon. Will the young couple stay to dinner? "Yes, thank you." A trip to the meat market becomes necessary. Dinner is later than usual. The young couple, like the editor, are in no hurry to start. Perhaps they leave by three o'clock, and he takes his letters uptown to the post office.

A LENGTHY VISIT.

Then he hears of a new family just moved in, members of his denomination. So he walks up there and introduces himself. An hour or two is spent on this visit.

He gets home about 5:30, warm and tired. By the time supper is called he has the framework of a sermon planned. After supper he must shave, for he is known, no country preacher can afford the luxury of the barber shop for two good reasons—it takes too

fixes himself up and starts out to make more calls. Every place visited demands some new subject of conversation. The Ladies'-Aid Society, the church papers, a new pulpit carpet—these are favorite topics. The choir leader submits new songs, the treasurer tells about delinquent members, teachers tell him about the difficulties in keeping their classes together; some of the members are sick, some are busy, others are not at home. Some have met with financial losses, some talk of selling out and moving away. He must laugh with some, sympathize with others, and be polite and agreeable to all.

On Friday evening a large class of young people assemble in the church, and he is delivering a course of lectures on "Old Testament History and Characters." So after making these calls he must hurry home and read over again several chapters of the Bible to fix freshly in his mind the evening's material for his lecture. This uses up Friday evening, but it is an important service. Its value lies in both the educational and social qualities of the young people of the church.

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ANOTHER ROUND OF CALLS.

The minister remembers that he



Pure white hat of chignon and fancy straw. The straw is used as a trimming aided by a heavy brush and white velvet ribbon.

much time and costs too much money. He has just put aside his razor when his wife enters.

"A couple to see you, dear; I think they want to get married."

A bashful youth and a blushing red-checked girl are waiting in the parlor. She is in white with roses in her hair; he is in what the village paper terms "conventional black."

The minister's wife comes in as a witness, and the twain are made one. "How much is it, parson?" asks the perspiring groom.

"Oh, what you please—we make no charge."

The youth brings to light three silver dollars, proffering them timidly. The fee goes to the witness, who adds it to a modest fund she is providing against the winter's need of a new cloak.

But this is Thursday night—a new offering lodge is in session, and he is the officiating chaplain again. He must hurry to reach the lodge room in time for the opening.

Friday morning dawns, when off comes both coat and vest, and he shuts himself in his study determined to prepare his Sunday sermons. The sheet of paper containing the framework that he has put together at odd times is taken up. The subject does not suit him, so a new one is selected. Soon he begins to work, he does not write—there is no time for that—a few notes are made on a sheet of paper. With an imaginary audience the sermon is delivered in a whisper, while he walks about his study.

TOO BUSY FOR DINNER.

Noon comes with the mind in a whirl. He needs no noonday meal, his mind is engrossed with this theme. But this glow usually wears off, and when he preaches that same sermon next Sunday morning it sounds to him decidedly commonplace.

Hastily eating his dinner, he goes back into the study and outlines an evening discourse on "Daniel in the Lion's Den," or some other sensational subject. Sermonizing is easy now. A half-dozen sermons can be prepared if necessary.

But he needs air and exercise, so he

The Days of Auld Lang Syne

Interesting Events of Ye Olden Times Gathered from The Planet's Issues of Half a Century Ago.

From The Planet's files from Jan. 26, 1860, to Feb. 9, 1860.

William Courtney advertises a saloon for sale.

The London Free Press is advertised in The Planet.

Joseph Pritchard, Chatham, advertises a hotel for rent.

W. McKenzie Ross is the agent for The Queen Insurance Co.

Dr. Ryerson visits Chatham and gives a lecture on Education.

Charles Jubenville advertises a farm near Wallaceburg, for rent.

Born.—In Chatham, on the 7th inst., the wife of Captain Robert McCorquodale, of a daughter.

Robert O'Hara, barrister, has his office in Miller & Barfoot's block, over Mr. Earl's store.

The extensive grist mills belonging to McKay, near Ottawa, were burned the loss being \$60,000.

A brigand has been captured in Sordina, who is known to have perpetrated sixty murders.

The first railway locomotive ever constructed in California has just been completed at one of the San Francisco iron foundries.

A meeting of the municipal council of the township of Harwich was held in the Bridge End Inn (Chas. Williams), Jos. McMichael, clerk.

Geo. Cooper, M. D., W. D. Eberts, Walter McCrea, John Mercer, John McKeough and others asked the council for a reduction in the prices of saloon licenses.

Buckle, the author of the History of Civilization in England has been sued for publishing blasphemous or anti-religious libel. His reference to Christianity in that book has been so construed.

Rev. Mr. Spurgeon's new tabernacle designed to seat on the ground floor 1,572, first gallery 791, upper gallery 684, total 3,037; standing room 2,860; altogether 5,897 persons. The estimated cost is \$75,000.

We are pleased to see in the last Canada Gazette the appointment of Thos. Chisholm Livingston, P. L. S., to be a Notary Public in Upper Canada. Mr. Livingston is an active, enterprising and deserving man.

At the school convention held in Brantford on the 18th inst., Dr. Ryerson, chief superintendent, being present, a resolution was carried in favor of petitioning the legislature for a Free School Act for the province.

Cheap bread.—The four pound loaf of bread is selling in Galt at 10 cents. This is good news to the poor and needy.—Galt Reporter.

The two pound loaf of bread is now selling in Chatham at 7 cents. How is this?

John E. Brooke has been removed from the agency of the Crown Lands Department for Kent and all the books and papers connected with his office have been transmitted to Quebec, where all correspondence concerning Crown Lands in this country will have in the meantime to be directed.

The celebration of the 101st anniversary of Burns' birthday passed off in Chatham in a highly creditable manner. A public dinner was held at Peter McKerrall's hotel, Chatham North, at which a goodly number sat down to a substantial lunch. After the regular toasts had been disposed of, volunteer toasts—interspersed with song and sentiment—were freely indulged in till arriving at the "Wee Sma' hours beyond the twal," the party dispersed.

A proposal has been brought before the British Stock Exchange by Mr. Galt, with every prospect of success, for consolidating the public debt of Canada and paying it all off in 50 years by installments. By this project where the province now pays 6 pounds interest for every 100 pounds it will only pay 5 pounds 12 shillings on every 112 pounds, so that the saving will be equal to 275,000 pounds per year.

Warden of Essex.—At a meeting of the municipal council of the county of Essex on Tuesday last, we are pleased to learn that John O'Connor, Esq., was elected to the office of warden for 1860. Mr. O'Connor, most of our readers will recollect, is the gentleman, who at the last Assize Court in Chatham, so generously and successfully undertook the defense of young Frenchman, who was undoubtedly the victim of conspiracy, and who most assuredly would have been sentenced to several years imprisonment in the penitentiary had

it not been for the timely aid gratuitously rendered by the legal gentleman above referred to.

An English botanist discovered by examination 7600 seeds in a pint of clover seed, 1200 in a pint of Congress seed, 39,440 in a pint of broad clover seed and 2500 in a pint of Dutch clover seed. In a pint of black mustard he counted over 8000 seeds and in a simple specimen of Charlock 4000, the seed of a single plant of common dock produced 4700 little docks. The white daisy has over 400 seeds in each flower and sometimes fifty flowers from one root.

DEBAUCHERY SAPS ARMY'S STRENGTH

A Harbin correspondent of Leslie's Weekly tells a story of Russian debauchery at the front—

"In the face of the great tasks that must be performed to win the war, it was most amazing to see how persistently the Russian, from the general down to the lowest non-commissioned officer, at New Chwang (whence I lately came to Harbin), continued to pursue the even tenor of the way of the military route. Nor was the champagne bottle and the vodka glass the only or the worst feature of this neglected phase of the situation. At the moment when the town, with its utterly insufficient defenses, was threatened by any of a half dozen Japanese army divisions, the leading Russian merchant informed me that the consignment of military stores that had arrived recently contained quantities of perfumery, scented soaps and ladies' toilet articles, bonbons, garters, fans and other paraphernalia dear to the heart of the demi-monde."

"The curse of Manchuria is and has been this demi-monde. It is responsible for nine-tenths of the crime in the far east, and indirectly for the other tenth. Where these social vultures come from is a mystery, but wherever there is a war they scent the cannon from afar and fly to it with unerring instinct, be it in the tropics of Africa or the frozen plains of Siberia."

"None of the officers at New Chwang would credit the seriousness of the situation at Port Arthur until they heard of the arrival at Liao Yang, most noted of the chamonettes. If before they were dissatisfied with New Chwang, in spite of its clubs, billiard tables and the many opportunities for loot, they became doubly so with visions of the seven gay establishments, which rumor had it these unwilling refugees from Port Arthur have established at Liao Yang. There, fortified behind the execrable stuff that is dignified by the name of champagne in the east, the soldiers of the czar may, to the popping of corks and bursts of female laughter, safely defy those detestable little monkeys of the M. Kado."

A bottle and a woman would tempt any of them from his post, and the misfortune they lament is that New Chwang affords so little temptation.

"Here in Harbin, where the leisureliness of the war preparation is, if anything, exaggerated; the elite and the higher demi-monde have congregated in numbers. An instance of the absence of any morality whatever, as well as of what we call the essential dignity of military position, came under the observation of the French correspondents at Harbin in the crowded dining room of the largest hotel. A general of cavalry introduced his entire staff of assistants to a woman than whom there was no more notorious in the Manchurian capital. The French journalists, who were supposed to enjoy the special friendship of these high authorities, could scarcely conceal their disgust. As for the other foreigners present at the spectacle, they made no effort to do so."

"Amateur dramatic performances concerts for the real society occur at Harbin every night; and for the other kind there are cafes chantants with companies of singing girls and the vile stuff named champagne. At the best Harbin is a rough town. Before the military took hold of it murders were a nightly occurrence on the principal thoroughfares, and no one thought of going unarmed. The murders have indeed ceased, but in their place have come the scandal and enervation of the life usually found at the base of supplies. Daily the life grows more reckless."

"Meanwhile the Japanese advance and the chamonettes are driven before them. A greater improvement in the morale of the Russians than now seems possible must take place before they can win battles."

A man, somehow, balks when it comes to bestowing flattery on his wife.

The people who are unable to make a living are most expert at making excuses.

A little misunderstanding between two friends often makes quite a difference.

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