

The Adventure of the 5th St. Church.

How Perkins Boomed a Town. By Ellis Parker Butler.

AFTER that Glaubus affair I did not see Perkins for nearly a year. He was spending his money somewhere, but I knew he would turn up when it was gone, and one day he entered my office, hard up but enthusiastic.

"Ah," I said, as soon as I saw the glow in his eyes, "you have another good thing. Am I in it?"

"In it?" he cried. "Of course, you're in it. Does Perkins of Portland ever forget his friend? Never! Sooner will the public forget that 'Pratt's Hats Air the Hair,' as made immortal by Perkins the Great! Sooner will the world forget that 'Dill's Pills Cure All Ills,' as taught by Perkins!"

"Is it a very good thing, this time?" I asked.

"Good thing?" he asked. "Say! Is the soul a good thing? Is a man's right hand a good thing? You know it! Well, then, Perkins has fathomed the soul of the great U.S.A. He has studied the American man. He has watched the American woman. He has discovered the mighty lever that heaves this glorious nation onward in its triumphant course."

"I know," I said, "you are going to start a correspondence school of some sort."

Perkins sniffed contemptuously.

"Wait!" he cried, imperiously. "See the old world crumbling to decay! See the U.S.A. flying to the front in a gold painted horseless band wagon! Why? Why does America triumph? What is the cause and symbol of her success?"

What is mightier than the sword, than then pen, than the Gatling gun? What is it that is in every hand in America; that opens the good things of the world for rich and poor; for young and old, for one and all?"

"The ballot box," I ventured.

Perkins took something from his trousers' pocket and waved it in the air. I saw it glitter in the sunlight before he threw it on my desk. I picked it up and examined it. Then I looked at Perkins.

"Perkins," I said, "this is a can-opener."

He stood with folded arms and nodded his head slowly.

"Can-opener yes!" he said. "Wealth opener; progress-opener." He put one hand behind his ear and glanced at the ceiling. "Listen!" he said. "What do you hear? From Portland Maine, to Portland, Oregon; from the palms of Florida to the pines of Alaska cans! Tin cans! Tin cans being opened!"

He looked down at me and smiled.

"The backyards of Massachusetts are full of old tin cans," he exclaimed. The garbage wagons of New York are crowded with old tin cans; the plains of Texas are dotted with old tin cans. The towns and cities of America are full of

stores, and the stores are full of cans. The tin can rules America! Take away the tin can and America sinks to the level of Europe! Why has not Europe sunk clear out of sight. Because America sends canned stuff to their hungry hordes!"

He leaned forward and, taking the can-opener from my hand, stood it upright against my inkstand. Then he stood back and waved his hand at it.

"Behold!" he cried. "The emblem of American genius!"

"Well," I said, "what are you going to sell, cans or can-openers?"

He leaned over me and whispered:—

"Neither, my boy. We are going to give can-openers away, free gratis!"

"They ought to go well at that price," I suggested.

"One nickel-plated Perkins Can-opener free with every can of our goods. At all grocers," said Perkins, ignoring my remark.

Well, then," I said, for I caught his idea, "what are we going to put in the cans?"

"What do people put in cans now?" asked Perkins.

I thought for a moment.

"Oh!" I said, "tomatoes and peaches, and corn, sardines, and salmon, and—"

"Yes!" Perkins broke in, "and codfish, and cod-liver oil, and kerosene oil, and cotton-seed oil, and axle grease and pie! Everything! But what don't they put in cans?"

I couldn't think of a thing. I told Perkins so. He smiled and made a large circle in the air with his right forefinger.

"Cheese!" he said. "Did you ever see a canned cheese?"

I tried to remember that I had, but I couldn't. I remembered potted cheese, in nice little stone pots, and in pretty little glass pots.

Perkins sneered.

"Yes," he said; "and how did you open it?"

"The lids unscrewed," I said.

Perkins waved away the little stone pots and the little glass pots.

"No good!" he cried. "They don't appeal to the great American person. I see," he said, screwing up one eye—"I see the great American person. It has a nickel-plated, patent Perkins Can-opener in its hand. It goes into its grocer's shop. It asks for cheese. The grocer shows it plain cheese by the slice. No sir! He shows it potted cheese. No sir! What the great American person wants is cheese that has to be opened with a can-opener. Good cheese, in patent germ-proof, air-tight, water-tight, skipper-tight cans, with a label in eight colors. Full cream, full weight, full cans; picture of a nice, clean cow and red-cheeked dairy-maid in short skirts on front of the label and eight recipes for welsh rabbits on the back."

He paused to let this soak into me, and then continued:—

"Individual cheese! Why make cheese the size of a dishpan? Because grandpa did? Why not make them small? Perkins' Reliable Full Cream Cheese, just the right size for family use, twenty-five cents a can, with a nickel-plated Perkins Can-opener free with each can. At all grocers?"

That was the beginning of the Fifth Street Church, as you shall see.

We bought a tract of land well outside of Chicago, and to make it sound well on our labels we named it Cloverdale. This was Perkins' idea. He wanted a name that would harmonize with the clean cow and the rosy milk-maid on our label.

We owned our own cows, and built our own dairy and cheese factory and made first-class cheese. As each cheese was just the right size to fit in a can, and as the rind would protect the cheese anyway, it was not important to have very durable cans, so we used a can that was all cardboard, except the top and bottom. Perkins insisted on having the top and bottom of tin, so that the purchaser could have something to open with a can-opener, and he was right. It appealed to the public.

The Perkins cheese made a hit, or at least the Perkins advertising matter did. We boomed it by all the legiti-

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