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OUR HOME CLUB

The Rural Minister

There are some persons who—like
the dyspeptic millionaire—are envied
when they really are deserving of sym-
pathy. The pastor of a rural church
is of this class. He seems to have a
"soft" job with good pay, ample lei-
sure, holidays and so forth. He labors
among his flock of horny-handed til-
lers of Mother Earth by the exercise
of his intellect, which would seem in-
finitely less laborious than with the
plow and facilities to enjoy the won-
drous beauties of Nature surrounding
him; he is apparently loved and re-
spected by all. And yet the average
rural minister has a most thankless
job. Usually a man of no small in-
tellectual attainments, he is found
working away in an obscure settle-
ment, giving the best years of his life
and the ripeness of his scholastic
achievements for a stipend that would
be the essence of a joke among his
brothers of the cloth in the large city
churches.

Yet by many persons connected with
a church the parson is regarded merely
as a hired man. He must at all
times be under the thumb of the
managers. He must not dare to use
a free hand in introducing reforms
and improvements into church schemes
and programmes. Whilst outwardly the
recipient of servile respect, he is
nevertheless the most scandalized of
men. His appearance, his enuncia-
tion, his family affairs, how his wife
dresses, and the precocity of his
children form the thesis of many a
Sabbath after-dinner gossip. Then,
again, he stands practically isolated.
True, he has the apparent support of
a few sanctimonious, long-winded
"elders," but as these gentry usually
usurp the minister's functions on the
slightest pretext they are sometimes
intolerable.

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

When on a Sabbath evening as he
presides at a Young People's Guild
service, sees the rows of vacant pews,
and hears a curly six-foot farm lad
read, in a muffled monotone, a dull,
stodgy homily clipped from a weekly
journal, he must sometimes experi-
ence a longing, a desire to see some
young red-blooded Torrey or Gipsy
Smith spring from the mediocrity be-
fore him and there, in burning words
and sentences, pour forth anew the
story of Hope and Love and Life, in-
stilling in the youthful earnestness and
enthusiasm into the stolidly minded
audience and imbuing them with a
desire to help, to go out into the
world, even their own little world, and
bring in the fallen, the indifferent,
and the scouler.

A great deal has been said of the
rural clergyman; how he must enter
into the social and industrial life of
his flock as well as being the spiritual
adviser. This would not necessarily
imply his toiling in the fields or con-
ducting a miniature dairy farm on his
lot, but rather to cultivate a genuine
interest in the noble profession prac-
tised around him. The popular minis-
ter is not one who looks down upon
the laborer in the field or entertains
ill-concealed contempt for farm work-
ers in general. For whatever the
faults of a congregation may be, a
pastor who assumes an attitude of
superiority or aloofness is not deserv-
ing of sympathy.

LAND A HAND

To him is given the privilege of
being the guiding hand of the com-
munity, the man at the helm, and
with ordinary response from his pa-
rishioners he can accomplish much, but
when seas are rough and gales threa-

ten to wrench the tiller from his grasp
he needs help. Then it is that the
young man on whom Sabbath School
and home teaching have not leant too
—who possesses something of the fire
that made famous the names of Gen-
eral Booth, of Moody and Sankey and
Alexander—can step up saying "Here
am I!"

"I'm proud to live in the service of
the Lord.

"And I'm bound to die in His army."
Where, then, are the young men
filled with enthusiasm, with love of
their fellow-beings, who can put aside
personal pleasures and range them-
selves by the side of the lone man in
the pulpit? Duty is strength;
strength to open new vistas for work,
to infuse new ideas, new life into ev-
ery man; to change a preoccupied,
apathetic congregation not into bigot-
ed, self-righteous "unco guides," but
to a live brigade of broad-minded,
worthy followers of the Man of Gal-
ilee—Nephew Frank.

Homesick

The city 's all so different, mother,
not a soul I see
Has any thought or smile or word, or
even cares for me;
Their voices are all silent, mother—
don't know how to greet
Like all our good old neighbours that a
body used to meet!
Their faces are so different, mother,
not a smile or grin,
An' nary a one to peer at you an' ask
a body in;
It's nothin' like the country, mother—
things are built so high
They shut out every breath of air an'
every patch of sky!

It's noisy—O, so noisy—mother, yet
upon the air
There ain't a tree-top singin' nor a
cowbell anywhere;
There ain't no fields nor meadows,
nuther, where a boy can be
An' see you 'round the springhouse
like I allus used to see,
An' hear your voice a-singin', mother,
wafted sweetly 'eross;
I reckon in the city that your singin'
would get lost,
Or wasted on the people, mother,
'cause they live alone,
And never know the beauty of a
simple, homely song.

There ain't no chimney corner,
mother, where a boy can go
An' watch the kettle boilin' up an'
hear it singin' low.
Of all the little fancies, mother, that
a boy can see,
Of all the things he'd like to do an'
all he'd like to be—
The fascinatin' pitchers, mother, in
the risin' steam,
Laid out in all the glory of his boy-
hood's wildest dream;
There's nary a one brings comfort,
mother, as you brought to me,
No arms t' reach around me an'
to give me sympathy.

The city 's all so different, mother,
yet they say that I
Will muddle get the knack of it an'
like it himself;
An' that's what I'm afraid of, mother,
'fraid that afterwhile
I'll be like folks around me here, who
never speak nor smile—
Afraid I'll be forgetful, mother, of
my boyhood's spell,
Of neighbours' folks an' places that I
used t' love so well;
I'm afraid I'll get uncheerful, mother,
when I get the knack,
An' come t' think it over, don't you
think I'd best come back?
—John D. Wells in the Buffalo News.

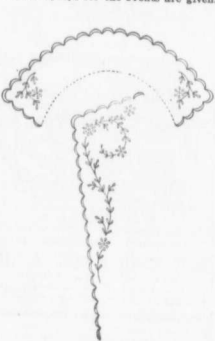
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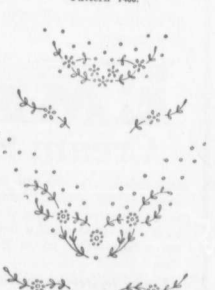
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