

So the conversation drifted along and was certainly most interesting in its character. True to his promise he pointed out the trails round the whole field and about sunset started for home. The last the writer saw of his friend as he stalked off alone across the wide prairie was a wave of his right stump and flapping coat-sleeve as he disappeared over the brow of a hill. Whether he still remains buried in oblivion is a matter for conjecture, but surely if he still lives the present prohibition discussions should call him to his post of duty.

#### A BACKWOODS COLLECTION.

"Whoop! Hurrah!" cried the lusty treasurer, whirling around his head a formidable right fist, enclasping the offertory of the Sabbath's service of worship. "Here it is Mr. — your Reverence, and if the wish 's as good as the deed, it'd be a good bit bigger. Sixty-seven as far as I can make out." And the Rev. — (now Dr. and Prof.) aghast, with a mixture of reverence and geniality, took what was offered. This was after the benediction, of course, and was a far remove from the way in which the Episcopal priest receives the consecrated gifts. Indeed, it was "away back."

Every man's history and personality count positively in a small community and every coin tells in a small "collection." To what branch of numismatics a study of a church collection belongs who can tell? The manner of lifting—whether by hat or by hand, by a silver plate or by a pouch at the end of a pole—is of frivolous interest, presenting much less variety than the modes of raising the tunes. In a general way, however, the collection has a story to tell, revealed by its weight, complexion and amount. Every coin has its history and stands for human incidents, some of which can be traced in a small congregation. That twenty-five cent bit in the minister's pocket was put in by a man whose circumstances are accounted comfortable. He is the business man of the little community and a very obliging neighbor. He can easily put in his quarter and is not mean enough to do less, although taking no great responsibility on his shoulders for the good of his kind.

One of the few black pieces was put in by his little boy, who dropped it on the floor, unintentionally, six times during the sermon, thereby keeping himself awake and preventing Mrs. B's baby from crying any more than it did. "Idyllic season of childhood!" Another cent—no it is a penny—was contributed by a canny Scot who was taught by his great-grandmother that a copper is the proper thing for Sabbath plate collections. A coin of the same size in silver would have suited his need better—his need of liberality—and have represented more

adequately his share for the public good. There's a five-center by a good-natured fellow who never could keep money, and there's another, worn thin, without a particle of a letter on it, put in by an old, stooped lady, who works hard and uncomplaining, milking, cooking, washing, scrubbing year after year, for her 50 year old son, John, who never got married. Then there's a fair five by a moral, religious sort of fellow who lacks the faculty of "getting along" in the world, although he has a numerous progeny. His horse took sick on the way back from a trip to his father-in-law, away up the Jericho road, and after a night of empirical doctoring, had to be shot by a neighbor. The owner, who needed a horse badly, came to church with a contented mind, although his inability to substitute boots for profane shoe-packs was a frequent excuse for absence. There was a chewed-up five by a fellow who liked Scotch whiskey and tobacco, but believed in the church too. There was a bright ten by a man who had sold his yoke of oxen, noble beasts, for seventy dollars, the week before, the deal being by all odds his biggest for many months, perhaps a few years. There was a five, and there were three cents which had been carefully set aside during the week, but the greatest gift of all was an odd coin given by an old Scotchman with the heart of a child. He was merry, music-loving, clear and distinct in voice, intense and open in hearing and reverent in worship. He admitted staying away several Sabbaths because he had no collection. The plate passed before him seemed to judge him. There were hard times that season and a few didn't give anything. Sometimes the amount was as low as nineteen cents, while in good times it used to rise above two dollars. It was then that a shoutingly pious old man put on a quarter of a dollar and took off three ten-cent coins, honestly mistaking a ten for a five, twice, and assuredly ignorant of the negro rhyme:

"When you put a nickle on de plate  
Does you allus take a dime?"

Not with a mercenary eye did the minister view that collection, given in advance as the student's pocket money, and counting on his stipend, of course, but seeing in it, under somewhat primitive circumstances, an index of the financial condition, liberality and tone of the little flock.

#### VITALITY.

Vitality may be defined as the power to manifest life forces, be those forces manifested in the study, in the court-room, on the campus, on the street, between the plow-handles, behind the counter, on the judge's bench, on the platform, in the legislative chamber, in the social circle or wherever the