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TALES OF THE TOWN.

*"I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind
To blow on whom I please."*

DURING the course of a decidedly uninteresting sermon at St. Barnabas Church last Sunday, His Lordship the Bishop of Columbia took occasion to pay his respects to the press of this province. In commenting upon Bishop Perrin's remarks, my readers must pardon me if I use plain words. In the first place, it is a matter of surprise to me that His Lordship, who has only been in the province a few weeks, should have presumed to criticize an institution which it has taken half a century to develop, and that without the assistance of Bishop Perrin. This reminds me of the Englishmen who in early times used to visit Ireland for a few days and then return to England and publish books on the national characteristics of the Irish race. It was charged that the papers gave too much space to matters of a criminal nature, neglecting subjects of a religious character, and that where in England only a few lines would be devoted to reporting the downfall of a dissenting clergyman, here the papers gave columns. Is this statement borne out by the facts? A few years ago, I chanced to glance through an English paper (*Lloyd's Weekly*) and every page contained reports of revolting crimes, many of which we are not advanced enough in this country to commit. And this is only one English paper—I could name a dozen or so more in the same category as *Lloyd's*—I have no desire to speak of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Our daily papers, in chaste language, gave the details of a dreadful crime committed by a clergyman, and this, of course, brought forth the remarks of His Lordship. I am in a position to state that if the reporters had been animated with a desire to cater to the prurient minded portion of the community, they could have printed far more. I am not aware that the papers of this province are anxious to accept the sonambullistic press of England as their model. Our newspapers are conducted on lines exclusively their own, and are not indebted to England or the United States for the enterprise which they have displayed on more than one occasion. His Lordship would do well to turn his attention in the direction of reforming the gentlemen of the cloth, and their sons, and permit the press to work out its own salvation. It is bad form for a gentleman who has been so courteously treated to use his position as a minister of the gospel to fling mud at an honorable institution. Our experience with clergymen in this country, even those of the noble old Episcopal Church, has not been such as to inspire us with any great degree of respect for their remarks, and reluctantly I write

these things—aye, more in sorrow than in anger.

Far away from the din and bustle of the great city by the Golden Gate and cut off from the evil associations of the Pacific coast metropolis, stands the little town of Merced. The inhabitants of Merced are models of righteousness; they live but to do good. The parents are assiduous in their endeavors to point out to their children the rocks along the narrow path that leads to eternal happiness, and the children take heed lest they stumble and fall by the wayside. The sons are dutiful, and the daughters know no guile. But there is no Eden without its serpent. A year or so ago, it occurred to the good people of Merced that there was sad need of an awakening amongst the unregenerate. They saw that something would have to be done to reclaim the inhabitants from the lethargic state, as applied to religious matters, into which they had fallen. To accomplish the best results, the Methodists induced one Rev. A. R. Reams to journey from afar and conduct a series of revival meetings in the little John Wesley edifice down the street. And what a change he brought about! Hundreds were led to drink of the waters of life freely. The clergyman's wife nobly assisted her husband in the good work, and amongst others who lent a helping hand was pretty, bright-eyed Lucy Rucker. In fact Lucy developed such remarkable devotion that she was promoted and became organist of the John Wesley congregation. Whether or not this created envy amongst the other females of the choir is not a subject to be discussed in a church article like this. But Lucy was ambitious. She was amazed at the wonderful versatility of her spiritual adviser, and, like Eve, she was a little curious. She wanted to know how Methodist parsons put their sermons together. And her hereditary curiosity was gratified. The parson, as parsons sometimes do, ran a little short of ammunition (perhaps game was too plentiful) and entrusted his interesting parishoner with the task of rehabilitating a dozen or so sermons which had achieved wonderful results in a parish in which he had preached some fifteen years ago. Of course the parson and Lucy were thrown much together, so much in fact that his wife suspected that the relations between her liege lord and the pretty organist were not such as would be sanctioned by the laws of the great commonwealth of California. And she said so. Then began a series of quarrels between husband and wife. One half of the congregation swore by the shades of John Wesley that the parson was all right, while the other half were inclined to doubt. At length matters came to a climax, when Sunday two weeks ago, after exhorting his congregation to repent, he quietly got aboard a train with

Miss Rucker and came up to Victoria. Every one knows the rest. Parson Reams is pursuing his studies in religion under the tutelage of Warden Johns at the Provincial gaol, and Lucy Rucker is in the Refuge Home.

It has become customary to extend to women, and more especially young girls, who have strayed from the path of virtue, the offering of pity. In this I heartily concur. Very often a word kindly spoken has restored the poor creature, who in a moment of mental and physical weakness, has sacrificed the love and respect of her friends. Truly her pathway is beset with thorns, and it is the duty of every Christian man and woman to guide the blood-stained feet of the voyager along the road which leads not to moral annihilation. As a learned author points out, the putting of two signposts on the roadside bearing the inscriptions "to good," "to evil," and bidding the voyagers choose, is not enough; it is essential to tell them of the paths which lead from the evil way to the good, and mark you well, that the commencement of the good road be not too painful or seem impossible. Sometimes a bleeding soul only needs an encouraging hand to heal the wound. Lucy Rucker is an unsophisticated young girl. She trusted implicitly in her pastor. Like a wolf, he fastened his fangs upon her, and she "fell like the snow from heaven to hell." Good Christian women have taken her in charge. If she lends an ear to their advice she may become an excellent woman. But what should be done with the wolf who wilfully carried off the flower of the flock? From what I can learn he may not be amenable to the law. Will he be permitted to leap out of his cage and roam at large? Of course, here where his deeds are known, he will be pointed out as a black-hearted villain. Mothers of young girls will shudder as they pass him on the street. Fathers will shun him as they would a leper. The burglar who breaks into a bank is a hero in comparison with the villain who under the cloak of religion robs a young girl of her virtue.

Here is a clerical impostor, who has reasons to criticize the sensationalism of the press, as the sequel will show. Living in this city at the present time is a much-wanted and frequently married individual, whose record is well known nearly all over the world and whose peculiar modes of gaining a livelihood and keeping himself in wives has caused him to travel long distances frequently, not always either for the benefit of his health, which by the way keeps pretty good. The man's name might be Smith, but it is not. However, I shall call him, "Rev. Dr. Smith." He began his eventful career in Bruce County, Ontario, where he was educated for the ministry, and

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