

# Northern Messenger

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## The Butter Maker's Sacrifice; or, How the Parsonage was Built.

A SKETCH.

(Susan Hubbard Martin, in 'Ram's Horn.')

She had so little and she yearned to do so much. Out on the little ranch that yielded her a scanty living, her life was passed. Only on rare occasions could she go to church, for the little village, the sole link that connected her with a living, breathing world, lay many miles to the west. The way to it, led through sections of buffalo grass, sage brush and cac-

their close quarters that some one had charitably suggested building a parsonage. But how to raise the money? That was the question. There were not many that could give, and fewer still that were inclined.

Sitting in her pew that Sunday morning the slender gray haired woman heard the pastor's plea, and she longed to give her mite. But how? She thought about it as she drove home, along the dusty alkali road. She thought of it next morning as she churned, she thought of it as she moulded and stamped her fragrant butter. She had so little and her husband was blind. What could she give?

Her eyes glanced over the little room, so

The next Sunday morning the minister rose and faced his congregation. The Committee on raising money for the parsonage had about given up. The contributions had been meagre. Somehow the people would not take hold. There was a sudden hush as the minister stood before them, then he began to speak. In a few touching words he told of the little woman out on the plains. How she lived and toiled and—her husband was blind. Of her great longing to see a parsonage added to the little church, and how, out of her own scanty portion, she had given three pounds of butter as her contribution to the building fund.

'That means a good deal,' the minister added in a moved voice, to her—for—her husband is blind. It remains now for us to see what we can add to it.'

He sat down and there were tears in many eyes. Then a stout man in the rear of the church rose. The committee had not been able to touch him before.

'Put my name down for fifty dollars,' he said huskily.

Another man near by got up, 'My name for thirty-five,' he said, and so it went on until at the close of the business session, the minister held in his hand a paper with names attached, pledging sums to the amount of eight hundred dollars.

Out on the plains that Sunday morning the little butter maker sat with her Bible on her knee. The sun streamed in at the windows. The brown treeless prairies stretched to the right and to the left like an unbroken sea. Her hands were folded in her lap. It was Sunday, her one day of rest. Her thoughts were with the little congregation so many miles away.

'Only three pounds of butter,' she whispered dreamily. 'It was all I had to give, and I longed to do so much, but perhaps it will be pleasing and acceptable in God's sight.'

She did not know that God, through her humble offering, was working in the hearts of men that very moment; did not know that through her, the parsonage was an assured fact; did not know the blessing that was already hers.

On her next visit to the village, the minister told her the story. He wrung the little calloused hand with tears in his eyes.

'The parsonage is to be built,' he said happily, 'and—through you—through you.'

The little butter maker raised her eyes to the good man's face.

'Through me,' she repeated unbelievably; 'through me?'

'Yes,' replied the good man solemnly, 'though you.'

She drove home that afternoon in a tremor of exaltation. The alkali rose in the dust and choked her, the road was long and at the end of it were days of ceaseless toil, but she heeded nothing. God had made her offering good, and through her, so worn, so wearied with a long struggle, the parsonage was to be built.

She folded her work worn hands suddenly over the reins. 'Dear Father, I thank thee,' she whispered. 'Thou hast accepted the little that I had to give.'

The little cabin lay in the distance. She was going back to her hard life, but her soul was lifted up. Out there on the prairies all



### SHE TOLD HIM OF HER GREAT LONGING

tus, with now and then a patch of alkali gleaming whitely in the sun.

In the winter time came the snow and the chill blasts, and the wind that swept for days and days over the plains. In the summer time the earth lay parched and dry under the blistering sun.

She was a slender woman with hair prematurely white, but in whose face glowed a wonderful peace and sweetness, for, in the hardness and loneliness of her lot, she had found the great Helper 'whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light.' With her own frail strength she made the living, for her husband was blind. She was a butter maker, and out on the plains, in her humble little cabin, she fought, unaided, the battle for bread.

On her last visit to the little town one Sunday morning, as she had sat in the plain pew, the subject of a parsonage had been brought up. For years the pastors of this struggling little church had housed their families as best they could. The present pastor and his wife and little ones were now so badly crowded in

plain, so poor. There was nothing there. Then it rested upon the sweet tempting mass under her deft hand, 'I could give some butter as my share,' she thought with sudden inspiration. 'They could sell it. How much now can I spare? Blessed little butter maker, not any injustice to thyself. Still she thought, 'what does a little more self-denial, a little more of sacrifice, signify for such a cause? If only the good pastor can have a home for his little flock, I ought to be willing to do what I can. I will give three pounds of butter,' she decided with resolution. 'I want to do it and perhaps God will use it to his glory.'

On her next visit to the village, she sought out the pastor. He was a large man with a kindly, benignant face. Sitting opposite him in her shabby clothes, her worn hands folded in her lap, she told him of her great longing. Her longing to see a parsonage built. 'I can do so little,' she added tremulously, 'but I must do what I can. I have no money, but—here are three pounds of butter. Take it and put it into the parsonage fund.'