DENTON JOURNAL.

1845. A Family Newspaper:—Devoted to Local and General Intelligence, Agriculture and Advertising.—Independent on all Subjects. Subscription, One Dollar per Annum, in Advance. 1910

VOL. 64. DENTON, MARYLAND, SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 1, 1910. NO. 49

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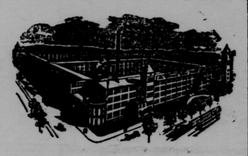

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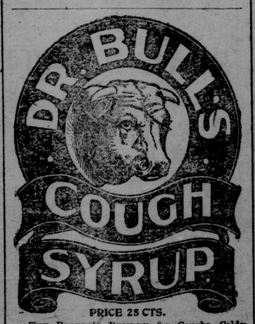

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THE FLOWERS ON HER BONNET

How a Pink Geranium Made Trouble In a Church Society.

By CLARISSA MACKIE.

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Mrs. Wixon paused outside the church door and waited until two other women joined her; then the three made their way slowly down the path and out into the dusty road, where their plodding feet left a white cloud of dust in their wake.

Mrs. Wixon was short and stout and red of face, with iron gray hair, surmounted by a rusty black velvet turban, above which waggled a worn ostrich feather. Her antiquated cape was rusty, as was the black silk skirt she trailed.

Miss Luella Barton was tall and of a sallow complexion. Her gown was of better material and perhaps in a

"I'D LIKE TO SPEAK A FEW WORDS MYSELF."

better state of preservation than that of her stout companion, but it was far from fresh or inviting.

Little Mrs. Peters skipped along beside the other women, a faded blue straw hat askew on her white hair. All three women wore exceedingly shabby shoes, and their garments seemed unsuitable for the hot June day. They had been the last ones to leave the church, and now they had the white, hot highway to themselves.

"Did you see it?" asked Mrs. Wixon breathlessly of her companions.

"I did," agreed Miss Barton acidly.

"And I," chirruped Mrs. Peters.

"I guess we'll have to call a special meeting, after all," murmured Mrs. Wixon, with a degree of relish in her tone.

"There ain't no use in having a society with rules to it if the rules ain't kept," snorted Miss Barton.

"My husband says a rule isn't a rule unless it is enforced," remarked Mrs. Peters importantly.

"We're going to enforce this one," said Mrs. Wixon decidedly. "Cornelia Rowland knows the rules of the Give It Up society of the First M. E. church just as well as you and me do. She knows she ought to wear her old bonnet, no matter how poor it looks, until the new organ is paid for."

"I guess it won't hurt Cornelia to give up buying flowers for her hat any more'n it does for me to wear my Cousin Emmeline's castoff clothes," commented Luella Barton gloomily.

"No, indeed," chimed in Mrs. Peters, "or for me to wear this awful bonnet. I ain't accustomed to wearing blue anyhow, and"—

"Tain't so much the wearing the clothes," interrupted Mrs. Wixon, tossing the thin feather majestically; "it's the principle of the thing. Here's Cornelia, one of the charter members of the society, coming out with pink flowers in her bonnet for the last two Sundays. She knew she was breaking the tenth rule, which says:

"'No member shall purchase any new garment or article of adornment for her person until the debt on the church organ has been fully met and paid,'" quoted Mrs. Peters eagerly.

"As I was about to say," remarked Mrs. Wixon in an injured tone.

"And there's still $50 due on the organ," commented Miss Barton as she took out a handkerchief saturated with Florida water and proceeded to dust her square shoulders energetically.

"I suppose it will be another year before we can have any new—that is, I suppose it will be another year before the debt will be paid," said Mrs. Peters moodily.

"Mary Peters, I do believe you are feeling bad because you can't go gallivanting around with pink flowers in your bonnet, too!" exclaimed Mrs. Wixon indignantly. "For my part," she continued virtuously, "I'm willing to wear my old clothes year in and year out for the Lord's sake."

"So am I," said Miss Barton. "I give $2 last winter that I was going to lay out on spring clothes."

"I guess I've done my share," whimpered Mrs. Peters angrily. "I guess I done all the cooking for the fair and give"—

"That ain't either here or there," interrupted Mrs. Wixon decidedly as she paused at her front gate. "The matter before the society will be this: Cornelia Rowland has bought new pink flowers for her bonnet and has wore 'em to church two Sundays. Last Sunday I spoke to her about it, and she said nothing and did nothing. Today she wore 'em again, and now we've got to take some action. That bunch of flowers never cost less than 50 cents!"

"How do you know?" asked Luella.

"I went into Miss Kline's millinery store and asked to see pink geranium flowers, and she showed me a bunch just like Cornelia's, and it had 50 cents."

"Did Cornelia buy hers there?" asked the other women eagerly.

"I asked Miss Kline, and she wouldn't say. She's terrible close mouthed, you know."

"I know," nodded Mrs. Peters sagely. "When is the meeting to be?"

"Tomorrow afternoon, here, to my house," said Mrs. Wixon, "and I hope you'll both come. All the other members will be here and Cornelia too."

"We'll come," said the other women, moving along the road.

"Goodby!" said the president of the Give It Up society as she panted up the graveled walk.

"Is that Cornelia ahead?" asked Mrs. Peters, peering nearsightedly up the road.

"Yes," replied Luella Barton grimly. "She's just going in her gate."

"Cornelia's terrible dressy," sighed Mrs. Peters. "I always liked Cornelia Rowland, but I always thought she was fond of clothes.'

"I've seen other people that's fond of clothes," sniffed Miss Barton, with a furtive glance at her friend.

"I suppose you mean me," retorted Mrs. Peters, with an offended laugh. "I don't care if I do like to look nice. My husband says I've looked so shabby the last year that he's ashamed to be seen with me on the street."

"I suppose that's why he spends so much time down to the postoffice," remarked Luella maliciously as she stalked into her front yard and closed the gate with a vicious snap.

Mrs. Peters did not reply. Her blue eyes grew watery, and her thin little nose turned a deep pink, but she did not weep. There were suppressed woe and anger in the look that followed Luella's gaunt form into the front door. Then Mary Peters trotted along home.

"Yes," said Mrs. Wixon, bustling about her small parlor hospitably the following afternoon; "we're all here except Cornelia Rowland herself. I expect she'll be here presently."

There was a murmur of approval among the assembled ladies who comprised the members of the Give It Up society. Seated about the stuffy little room they numbered about twenty-five in all. Without exception they were shabbily attired. Some were even slovenly in their dress, while many were neatly but poorly dressed; but, representing, as they did, a prosperous farming community, a stranger would have been surprised at the lack of taste or beauty in their garments. Even the younger women wore threadbare gowns.

"Here comes Cornelia," whispered Mrs. Peters from her seat in the front window.

There were a shifting of chairs and a buzzing undertone as the harsh bell clanged through the house.

Then Mrs. Wixon, with grave importance depicted on her round face, ushered into the room the erring member of the Give It Up society.

Cornelia Rowland was small and thin, with a straight back and a trim figure. She had meek brown eyes and soft brown hair parted over her smooth brow. Her skin was faded, with a few lines here and there. She wore a spotlessly clean white muslin dress, with a white ribbon belt, and her feet were shod with old fashioned black prunella gaiters. She wore no hat.

She nodded seriously to the assembled women and took a chair which Mrs. Nixon indicated. As she seated herself she found that she was confronting the members of the society, while Mrs. Wixon, as its president, was seated beside her in a huge Boston rocker.

They all rocked silently for a few seconds; then Mrs. Wixon got upon her feet and adjusted a pair of steel bowed spectacles upon her nose. The women were looking at Cornelia Rowland's fresh attire and whispering among themselves.

"Silence!" commanded Mrs. Wixon sharply. There was a rustle of protest among the members; then they settled themselves expectantly.

"We are gathered here this afternoon," continued the president gravely, "to consider the action of one of our members in breaking the tenth rule."

There was a murmur of approval.

"I will give in a few words the history of the Give It Up society, and then the members can agree upon whether Cornelia Rowland's behavior is becoming to a member."

"I guess I'd like to speak a few words for myself," said Cornelia Rowland, arising with unexpected spirit and fixing her mild eyes upon Mrs. Wixon's heated countenance.

"Anybody got any objection?" wheezed Mrs. Wixon, looking apprehensively about the room.

There was no answer, and Mrs. Wixon lurched into her chair, leaving the floor to Cornelia Rowland.

The latter faced the assembled women. There was an obstinate line about her pleasant mouth, and her soft eyes wore a look of new determination. She fanned herself with a black silk fan for a few moments before she began, and then she closed it with a little click.

"I am a member of the Give It Up society," she said earnestly. "I can recite all the rules forward and backward, and I've lived up to all of 'em forward and backward. I ain't never broke a rule."

There was a gasp of horror from the women.

"I ain't never broke a rule," repeated Cornelia energetically. "Now, the Give It Up society was formed for the purpose of paying for the new organ. Nobody asked the ladies of the church to give up wearing any respectable clothes and going around looking like ragpickers' wives in order that the First M. E. church should have a new organ." Cornelia fixed an accusing eye upon Mrs. Wixon's startled countenance. "That organ could have been paid for if it was needed in the regular way by fairs and suppers and the like. But no; somebody with the idea of getting a martyr's crown organized this society, with the result that Upper Village has got the reputation of having the shabbiest looking lot of women in Suffolk county."

There was a shrinking of feet under chairs and a concealing of worn sleeves.

"I guess in times of the members of the choir belong to this society?"

"No," piped Mrs. Peters, with a newly awakened sense of injury. "Catch them fine ladies a-wearing any old clothes for the Lord's sake!"

"I don't believe in churches a-buying organs and things they can't afford. When they can raise the money for a new organ or such without throwing the whole congregation into the poorhouse, it's time to have it. In the meantime the Lord will harken to the old melodeon until the church can afford an organ. But the Methodist church has bought the organ. The choir wanted it, and the minister wanted it, and the congregation wanted it, and now they've got it, and we're working hand and foot and eyelash a-trying to pay for it!" Cornelia's voice took on a dramatic quality, and the women listened eagerly.

"We said we'd pay for it, and we will do what we promised, and I say to all of you that while you're wearing these terrible old garments you might as well be clean and tidy about it and"—

"But that ain't explaining about the pink geraniums in your hat," interrupted Luella Barton sourly.

"That's so. If you ladies will follow me to my house I will explain about the pink flowers," replied Cornelia amiably.

There was some protest at this sudden adjournment of the meeting, but presently they all trailed down the road toward the small brown house where Cornelia Rowland lived by herself. Cornelia led the way with head erect and white skirts billowing in the breeze.

She led the way into the house and through the hall to the sunny sitting room. When they were all inside she left the room and returned with a small black bonnet in her hand.

"This is the bonnet," she said dryly, "that has caused all the trouble."

"Yes, yes, but you've taken the flowers off, Cornelia Rowland!" cried old Mrs. Beers fiercely.

"Look here," said Cornelia, turning to the widow. "This is where I get the flowers for my bonnet every Sunday, and they're a mite sweeter than any you can buy."

She indicated a large potted geranium which was covered with great pink, spicy blossoms.

There was a dead silence while the women stared first at Cornelia, then at the geranium and finally at the bonnet.

"I want to know!" ejaculated Mrs. Peters admiringly. "I guess I can do that myself and have a new flower every Sunday."

"I know you are all looking at my white dress," continued Cornelia pleasantly, "but if you'll look at it closely you will see it is made from the white muslin curtains that used to hang in my best bedroom. I had plen-

"THEY'RE A MITE SWEETER THAN YOU CAN BUY."

ty of curtains, but no dress, and so I used them for that." She smoothed down the crisp folds thoughtfully and then looked at her guests with a bright smile.

"And now, ladies, you will see that in wearing the pink flowers in my bonnet I was not breaking a rule of the society."

"That's so," they agreed heartily, casting accusing glances at the unhappy president.

"And I want you all to stay and have tea with me," continued Cornelia, "and we'll plan an entertainment so's to pay off the church debt this summer. Then we can all have something decent to wear next winter."

So the members of the Give It Up society of the Methodist church sat down amicably together and ate of the delicious cooking of Cornelia Rowland, while the pink geranium graced the center of the table and shed beauty and perfume over all.

Thought Once Was Enough.

The Sunday school lesson was from that Scripture which teaches that if your brother strikes you on the cheek you should turn the other also and endure even for seventy times seven. Johnny had listened to his teacher very attentively while she emphasized this fact, and after the lesson the superintendent rose to make a few remarks.

"Now, boys," she said, "how many times ought another boy to strike you before you hit him back?"

"Just about once!" promptly answered Johnny.—Judge.

A Bismarck Story.

Lord Ampthill once found Bismarck reading Andersen's story on the "Ugly Duckling," which relates how a duck hatched a swan's egg and how the cygnet was jeered at by his putative brethren, the ducklings, until one day a troop of lordly swans floating down the river saluted him as one of their race. "Ah," observed Bismarck, "it was a long time before my poor mother could be persuaded that in hatching me she had not produced a goose."

The Sacrifice.

Mrs. Richleigh (scornfully)—I wish you had more brains, Ferdinand, instead of so much money. Ferdinand (unmoved)—I did once, dear, but it took all of them to get the money.—Puck.

FUN THAT FAILED.

Mark Twain's Burlesque of Emerson, Longfellow and Holmes.

IT SHOCKED THE IMMORTALS.

W. D. Howells' Description of the Dismal Effect of the Humorist's Attempt to Make Game of the Dignified Literary Trio at the Boston Dinner.

In his memories of Mark Twain in Harper's W. D. Howells tells of the dinner in Boston when Mark Twain, with fatal effect, made game of Emerson, Longfellow and Holmes:

"He believed he had been particularly fortunate in his notion for the speech of that evening, and he had worked it out in joyous self reliance. It was the notion of three tramps, three deadbeats, visiting a California mining camp and imposing themselves upon the innocent miners as respectively Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes. The humor of the conception must prosper or must fail according to the mood of the hearer, but Clemens felt sure of compelling this to sympathy, and he looked forward to an unparalleled triumph.

"But there were two things that he had not taken into account. One was the species of religious veneration in which these men were held by those nearest them. They were men of extraordinary dignity, of the thing called presence for want of some clearer word, so that no one could well approach them in a personally light or trifling spirit. I do not suppose that anybody more truly valued them or more piously loved them than Clemens himself, but the intoxication of his fancy carried him beyond the bounds of that regard and emboldened him to the other thing which he had not taken into account—namely, the immense hazard of working his fancy out before their faces and expecting them to enter into the delight of it. If neither Emerson nor Longfellow nor Holmes had been there the scheme might possibly have carried, but even this is doubtful.

"I was the hapless president, fulfilling the abhorred function of calling people to their feet and making them speak. When I came to Clemens I introduced him with the cordial admiration I had for him as one of my greatest contributors and dearest friends. Here, I said, in sum, was a humorist who never left you hanging your head for having enjoyed his joke, and then the amazing mistake, the bewildering blunder, the cruel catastrophe was upon us. I believe that after the scope of the burlesque made itself clear there was no one there, including the burlesquer himself, who was not smitten with a desolating dismay. There fell a silence, weighing many tons to the square inch, which deepened from moment to moment and was broken only by the hysterical and blood curdling laughter of a single guest, whose name shall not be handed down to infamy. Nobody knew whether to look at the speaker or down at his plate. I chose my plate as the least affliction, and so I do not know how Clemens looked, except when I stole a glance at him and saw him standing solitary amid his appalled and appalling listeners, with his joke dead on his hands. From a first glance at the great three whom his jest had made its theme, I was aware of Longfellow sitting upright and regarding the humorist with an air of pensive puzzle, of Holmes busily writing on his menu with a well feigned effect of preoccupation, and of Emerson holding his elbows and listening with a sort of Jovian oblivion of this nether world in that lapse of memory which saved him in those later years from so much bother. Clemens must have dragged his joke to the climax and left it there, but I cannot say this from any sense of the fact. Of what happened afterward at the table where the immense, the wholly innocent, the truly unimagined affront was offered, I have no longer the least remembrance. I next remember being in a room of the hotel where Clemens was not to sleep, but to toss in despair and Charles Dudley Warner's saying in the gloom, 'Well, Mark! You're a funny fellow.' It was as well as anything he could have said, but Clemens seemed unable to accept the tribute.

"I stayed the night with him, and the next morning after a haggard breakfast we drove about, and he made some purchases of bric-a-brac for his house in Hartford, with a soul as far away from bric-a-brac as ever the soul of man was. He went home by an early train, and he lost no time in writing back to the three divine personalities which he had so involuntarily seemed to flout. They all wrote back to him, making it as light for him as they could. I have heard that Emerson was a good deal mystified and in his sublime forgetfulness asked, 'Who was this gentleman who appeared to think he had offered him some sort of annoyance?' But I am not sure that this is accurate. What I am sure of is that Longfellow a few days after in my study stopped before a photograph of Clemens and said, 'Ah, he is a wag!' and nothing more. Holmes told me, with deep emotion, such as a brother humorist might well feel, that he had not lost an instant in replying to Clemens' letter and assuring him that there had not been the least offense and entreating him never to think of the matter again. 'He said that he was a fool, but he was God's fool.' Holmes quoted from the letter with a true sense of the pathos and humor of the self abasement."

Conceited.

Nell—Polly says her fiance is awfully conceited. Belle—In what way? Nell—He has never once told her that he is unworthy of her.—Philadelphia Record.

A Philosopher.

"Pa, what is a philosopher?"

"A philosopher, my boy, is one who tells other people that their troubles don't amount to much."—Detroit Free Press.