

Brother Gardner On the Warpath

The President of the Limekiln Club Gives Sound Advice to Several Members.

Copyright, 1906, by McClure, Phillips & Co. M Trustee Pullback in de hall dis evenin' asked Brother Gardner as the routine business of the Limekiln club had been disposed of at the last meeting.



I AM TOLD YOU CONTEMPLATE READIN' SHAKESPEARE DIS WINTER.

president. "I am told dat you contemplate readin' Shakespeare dis winter?" "Yes, sah."

"I am told dat de object am to improve your mind?" "Yes, sah."

"Do you owe any back rent?" "Two months, I reckon."

"Have you got in your coal for de winter?" "N-no, sah."

"Have you got shoes and warm clothes fur your chill'en?" "Not yet, sah."

"Have you got an extra bushel of taters down cellar?" "Not jest yet."

"Brodder Pullback, lemme give you a tip. Shakespeare was a good man. He was a smart man. He used up a heap of ink and paper in writin'."

"Dar hain't no question but what if you or any odder cull'd man would sot down and read his books for six months you would improve your mind."

"But you hain't got time, Brodder Pullback. You has got to bustle fur bacon and taters and clothes and shoes and back rent. You has got to be right on de hump. You may git time to pick up somethin' by Laura Jean Libbey or Old Sleuth, but you won't go beyond dat."

"I shall keep an eye on you de comin' winter, and if I hear dat your chill'en can't go to school fur de want of shoes or dat you have put a mortgage on your cook stove I shall proceed to improve your mind in a way dat will make your heart ache fur six months to come."

"You may now sot down, and if Elder Penstock am wid us tonight he will please stand up."

The elder was there. During the last three months he had been debating with himself whether the earth or the sun moved, and he was figuring on a piece of paper when the voice of the president reached him.

"Brodder Penstock, you has been a member of dis club fur a good many years, and up to a few weeks ago I counted you among de level headed. What you been gettin' in your head about de sun movin'?"

"We am told dat de airth moves around de sun, hain't we?" queried the elder.

"I's heard some sich talk."

"But I don't believe dey kin prove it. I's been watchin' things, and I's almost believin' dat it's de sun dat does de movin'."

"Brodder Penstock, s'pose you should find out dat de airth moved around de sun for suah—what would happen?"

"Why—why—I dunno, sah."

"S'pose you should find out de odder way—what would happen?"

"Can't say, sah."

"No, I reckon you can't, but I'll tell you what'll happen if you don't drop dis sun business and go to work. I happen to know dat you am head ober heels in debt and libbin' mostly on dried apples, and unless you make a change you'll get de bounce from dis Limekiln club in a way to take de curl outer your hair. It's nuffin to you or me or to any odder cull'd man who has to work fur a libbin', whedder de sun or de world moves. What we want is to be on de move ourselves. We want to be movin' coal and codfish into our cabins, and we want to see de chill'en movin' right along to school every day."

"When our day's work am done, if any of us am fule 'nuff to go out and sit on de fence to see whedder de moon or de fence moves, dat's all right, but we hain't gwine to waste none of de daylight."

"Dat's all, Brodder Penstock, and now I have a word to say to Waydown Beebe."

"Brodder Beebe," said the president,

"You am one of de charter members of dis Limekiln club. You was one of de seven of us who met in a stable and organized it. You has held de office of secretary and treasurer and of keeper of de bar trap, and your record has been as white as two coats of whitewash. I's all along counted on you as a sensible man to back me up, but it seems dat I's to be disappointed in de end."

"Has I dun anything, sah?" asked the brother as he stepped on his own feet and appeared ill at ease.

"You has dun dis, sah: You has gone and let somebody make you believe dat all you need to get along in dis world am faith. You has been tellin' members of dis club dat faith will cure co's and bunyons and biles; dat it will knock out rheumatism and cure a lame back; dat it will make hair grow on a bald head and limber up a stiff knee; dat you kin sot right down and have faith, and de coal man, de grocer and de butcher will come around and supply you without cash. Have I stated de case correctly, Brodder Beebe?"

"Y-yes, sah."

"Well, I hain't gwine to say dat a man mustn't believe in dis or dat or dat be am wrong to believe in what I don't. I am simply gwine to give you a test. You believe you will be a member of dis club fur some years to come, don't you?"

"I does, sah."

"You have faith dat de next time you want to borrow a dollar of me I'll lend it to you, same as always?"

"I has, sah."

"Den lemme say dat right yere and now, by virtue of de power invested in me by article 47 of de constitution, I cross your name off de roll of membership, and should you come around and ax fur dat dollar dere will be a winter cyclone to tear down boss barns and cider mills. You am now at liberty to walk out and walk home."

"But I don't want to go home," pleaded Brother Beebe.

"What do you want to do?"

"I reckon I want to give up dat faith business."

"Oh, I see. Brodder Beebe, lemme say to you dat one of de easiest things in dis world is fur a man to make a fule o' hisself. He kin do it at twenty or be kin do it at sixty. De man who wants to go straight has got to hang on to hisself all de time. If a rich man wants to dabble in tomfool things it hain't so much hurt, but neither you nor me nor any odder man who works fur his libbin' kin afford to do it. A silver dollar in our pocket am worth more to us at de grocer's dan a hundred dollars in faith."

"If we start in Monday mawnin' black'n' stoves and puttin' on de whitewash we know dat when Saturday night comes we shall have de wherewithal to pay rent and buy food. If we start off on a schism or a tangent we may look fur de fish to be out and de table bare."

"Your name will be restored to membership, and I has a dollar yere to lend you, but don't do any me' monkeyin' wid de buzzsaw. It's got teef."

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