

The New Departure.

BY EMILY HUNTINGTON MILLER.

The First Church of Acadia was in debt. It was a case of too much steeple, too much frescoing, and too much organ, a case partly of necessity, since being the first Church it could not, in the very nature of things be the second, hence the steeple and the organ and the much frescoing; a case of pulling down barns and building greater or when there were no goods to bestow them, hence the debt.

Matters had gone from bad to worse until at last it was whispered at the Sewing Society that there was actually a mortgage on the Church, and every woman stood aghast with horror. They could comprehend debts; people paid their debts when they could, but they might move in good society without doing it; they were not unfamiliar with failures, but people had been known to fail, and yet wear better clothes than before; but a mortgage was like one of those awful compacts wherein a man signs himself over to the evil one, with the certainty that he may at anytime foreclose and fly away with him. Worst of all, a mortgage on the Church! It was undoubtedly the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel the prophet "standing where it ought not"—a sure sign of the last days.

Something must be done, something should be done; and with this determination burning in her heart, every woman went home. From that hour a noticeable solemnity brooded over the hearts and homes of Acadia. Meetings were called, committees met and separated, there were consultations in the synagogues and market-places, and as the faces of the women changed from a look of anxiety to one of confidence, the faces of the men began to brighten also. When a woman would she would, and already the brethren saw in prospect the mortgage lifted and the reproach rolled away from Zion.

"If they'll only persevere; great gains come of small savings," said Deacon Doubtful, but repented of his wisdom the next moment, when his wife decided against the plum pudding she was contemplating, concluding she might as well put the money into her mite-box, and give the Deacon a plain, wholesome dinner.

Nobody could say they did not persevere. They laid everybody under contribution, from the Lord High Mayor who paid taxes, to the Jones' baby who was brought up on a bottle. They saved in unheard of ways. Servant-girls were put on short allowance of waste paper for lighting fires; ancient bones were scrutinized, with an eye to possible soups; and the man who ventured to return his cup of coffee with "A little more sugar, my dear," was met with a look of reproach that withered the heart strings. More sugar when the Church was mortgaged! The man who could ask for it would have danced when Rome was burning. It was strongly suspected that Mrs. Greatheart herself took no sugar at all, and there were hints of cooking clubs that were secretly experimenting on sawdust pudding without eggs.

The savings, however, were nothing to the earnings. Every contrivance for enticing the coveted dollar from the pocket of the unwary and the wary was resorted to. Nothing was too hard or too high. Fairs, festivals, lunches, bazars, concerts, sociables, lawn-parties, pound-parties, parties where you were expected to talk, and parties where you paid for the privilege of talking; oyster suppers, strawberry suppers, everything in season and out of season, was made to minister to their gains. The brethren smiled upon them, sometimes with the far-off smile of lofty condescension and amiable toleration for feminine weakness; but still they smiled, and bought tickets and paid fees, and ate and

drank heroically, and winked at any addition to the grocer's bill, which might have been supposed to balance the gain to the Church fund.

The results were marvelous, and astonished even the women themselves, who shook hands over the footing of figures, laughed and cried, and went home brave for another year to work.

Next morning Mrs. Greatheart sat at her breakfast-table pale and exhausted; there were three little wrinkles between her eyes and a dozen gray hairs about her temples. Greatheart stirring his coffee in the vain hope of extracting a little more sweetness from the bottom of his cup, watched her compassionately.

"My dear," he asked gently, "how long is this thing to last?"

Mrs. Greatheart would have scorned to ask, "What thing?" There was for her but one object of thought, and she answered promptly, "As long as the debt lasts."

Greatheart sighed.

"Did it ever occur to you, my dear, that you might not last? You are growing perceptibly smaller; there are wrinkles in your forehead; you eat less than a healthy canary; you talk in your sleep of interest and mortgages and weekly payments. I believe another year will kill you."

Mrs. Greatheart smiled compassionately, as martyrs have smiled when adjured to give up their faith to escape torment.

"Greatheart," said she absently, "will you call at the office of the *Trumpet*, and leave this notice for our meeting of managers? I have a new plan that will eclipse all our former undertakings."

The meeting of managers was not enthusiastic. Mrs. Jones had the rheumatism. Mrs. Smith's baby was threatened with croup, Mrs. Smart had left a house full of visitors, and Miss Sally Volatile was going east for the winter. The few who were present listened to Mrs. Greatheart's new plan in ominous silence, and Mrs. Timorous fussed and fidgeted, and at last spoke:

"The fact is, ladies, I sometimes wonder if all of this pays. My husband says it doesn't, and he hasn't a particle of patience with the whole thing; so that I fairly dread to let him know of a fair or festival. He says it all comes out of the men anyhow, either in grocery bills or doctor bills, or buying things after we half kill ourselves to make them; and that any man would sooner pay five dollars out of his pocket than have his wife try to earn it when she has all she can do already. And he says a woman who wouldn't think she could give half a dollar, will bake a cake that costs seventy-five cents, and make herself sick doing it, and then expect her husband to pay fifty cents for a piece of it and a dish of ice-cream that some other woman donated, and of it all the Church gets about twenty-five cents, and he can't see where the profit comes in."

Mrs. Greatheart laughed.

"We have all heard that sort of talk. It sounds reasonable; but the trouble is, when you come to test them, the men will not take the five dollars out of their pockets, they always mean some other man's pocket. Of course, the money comes out of somebody; so do the profits in a grocery, or hardware store, or a bank. As for its being simply an exchange from one hand into the other, that is nonsense. The gain is a percentage on the skill and ingenuity and self-denying labor of the ladies, and I call it a shame for anybody to deny them the full credit of actual earning. The men give it indeed! I should like to see them earn an extra dollar in the way their wives do."

"Wouldn't it be funny," laughed Miss Sally. "Now, I crocheted those mats while I was rocking Jenny's baby to sleep, and I wanted desperately to read George Elliot."

And I took my lunch to school for two weeks to save time at noon to embroider those lambrequins. Yes, and begged the pieces besides."

"I made every stitch of that toilet set after the children were in bed," said Mrs. Dimple. My eyes used to get so tired that I saw cross-stitches all night, but it was lovely."

"Just fancy your husband running over of an evening to saw wood for a neighbor, or Mr. Jones working an hour every night at shoemaking, or Squire Buncombe taking orders for the grocery before he went to his office, or Colonel Wise shoveling paths on his way to lunch, and all for the sake of earning a little money for the Church, without trespassing on any other fund. They'd see the Church turned into a junk-shop first. I declare I have a great mind to propose to them to try it."

Mrs. Greatheart's eyes flashed ominously, and the meeting went into conclave, from which all reporters were excluded by dropping the curtains, closing the chimney, filling the key-hole with cotton, and stationing a savage dog upon the steps.

The next number of the *Trumpet* announced the fact that the ladies had retired from the field, and called a meeting of the brethren to consider the emergency.

The brethren were present in force, and commenced operations by appointing five committees: one to consult with the pastor; one to interview the architect; one to canvass the membership; one to prepare a statement for the official board, and one to correspond with Rev. Stunning in reference to securing his aid for some Sabbath. There was some talk about taking the five dollars out of their pockets, but most of them were painfully conscious that the five dollars was not there, and, for their lives, they could hit upon no expedient save the very one whose fallacy they had so clearly demonstrated to their wives; and Greatheart—moved, it is feared, by malice aforethought—actually proposed it.

"I do not see that it would be any harder for us than for them. You Brother Mead, could make your own fires and sweep your own office, and so save your janitor's fees; Brother Hill could do copying at home in the evening; Brother Dale could attend to jobs of varnishing and repairing, in his odd minutes; Brother Frost could raise vegetables in his back yard, and Brother Ward could rise an hour earlier and work at his old trade of type setting."

The brethren looked at each other and laughed feebly.

"That is the way our wives have earned money: by adding some productive industry to the regular labors of the day, and turning into the account the odd hours and minutes that usually pass for nothing in our lives. I see no reason why we should not do the same, and, if my proposition is accepted, I will immediately open an evening school in Choctaw for the benefit of the fund."

Still there was silence. At last old Matthew Steadfast arose from his corner, and said:

"Brethren, I didn't come here to talk, but while I kept still the fire burned. It never seemed to me like good economy to split wood with a razor when you had a good axe ready to your hand; it's a hard, slow way, and it spiles the razor. And it didn't look to me like good common sense to sweep up the crumbs as if they were so much gold dust, and throw away the whole loaf. Now, if I had my way in this Church, I'd agree to pay off the debt in two years, and have a good round sum left to send to the Leathens, and not a soul of you should be worried or overworked, or even know that you made any sacrifices."

"Brethren," continued the old man, coming out of the corner, and raising his earnestness, "you've heard me talk till you've got kind of tired of me and some of you think I'm a sort of a

fanatic about my ideas; but I tell you, brethren, when ideas have got the word of the Lord and the 'rithmetical to stand on, they'll bear a good many hard knocks. I won't be hard on ye, brethren, I won't say a word agin yer idols, or ask ye if ye don't think you could glorify the Lord Jesus better if ye should throw em to the moles and bats altogether. I know some of you would be 'mazin' bad off without 'em, and so I'll be forbearing with yer infirmities, but I want ye to consider a fair proposition."

"I've calculated that there are, at least, twenty men in this Church who smoke who could get along just as comfortably with one less cigar a day in fact, wouldn't really know the difference—and there's a clear income of over a thousand dollars a year just from those twenty men. Then there are at least twenty more who smoke cheaper cigars who might do the same thing at a saving of over seven hundred more. No hard work, you see, brethren; nobody's comforts taken away so far. Then I am sure there are thirty families in this Church who could save a dollar a week from their table expenses, and never miss it. Why, it's only a matter of a loaf of cake and a couple of pies less, and a plainer sauce for a pudding, or even no desert at all for a couple of days. There are plenty of families that could cut off five times as much, and be all the better off for it; but I'll only ask for the dollar a week, and there you have fifteen hundred more from just these thirty families. Now it does 'pear to me, brethren, it wouldn't be so hard on the women folks as wearin' out their souls and bodies making fol-de-rols, and trying to sell 'em to folks that don't want 'em. Then there are fifty people who could save five dollars every year from their own and their children's garments, just by putting in a little less cloth or a little less trimming, or saving a few cents a yard on the goods, and nobody on earth be the wiser, unless they happened to think that their children looked less like French dolls, and more as if they might be related to little ones the Lord Jesus took in his arms. Why brethren, I hope it isn't sacrilegious, but I've sometimes thought the Lord wouldn't have dared to touch one of the little creatures they call children nowadays, with their Jewels and flouncies and furbelows."

"But I was talking about saving brethren, and here you have \$250 more and you haven't begun to touch this matter of dress. Add to this twenty people who spend on amusements and entertainments for themselves and their families an average of a dollar a month, that they could profitably dispense with, and you have a total of over \$4,000 a year that this Church might apply toward the payment of its debt without laying the smallest burden upon any of its members, but simply by gleaning a little from its luxuries and indulgences. I tell you brethren, I'm just amazed when I think about it. There it is all figured out, and nobody can say it isn't a moderate showing of the case, but you'll all go away shaking your heads over the debt, and if you remember anything I've said, it will be the \$250 the women folks might save on their dress, and not the \$3,000 for cigars and high dinners. Human nature, brethren, is perverse and perplexin."

The old man paused to wipe his forehead, and the five committees looked at each other. "It is worth trying," said the chairman, "and we might appoint a committee."

"Let us have no more committees," said Father Steadfast, "they'll be like that mixed multitude that went up to fight the Israelites, and turned every man his sword against his fellow until they made an end of each other. If the pastor will present this matter to the Church on Sunday, I'll undertake to put a mite box in every household, and then let the people give

day by day with thanksgiving in their hearts as the Jews of old did."

The brethren wavered a little, but finally decided to commend the plan for trial, and Father Steadfast instantly pledged five of the official board to give up the one cigar per day.

On the following Sabbath the pastor presented the subject in such a plain, forcible manner, that every one present was convinced of its reasonableness, and Father Steadfast followed up the work by a lay sermon in every family where he established his mite-box. When people really turned their attention to it, they found a multitude of things that were not in any way essential to their comfort, and day by day the enthusiasm to increase the fund grew stronger.

"We have no desert or cake except on Sunday," said Mrs. Smart; "and really we do not miss it. I lay aside a dollar a week on account of it, but I am sure it saves us as much more. Then, since my husband has become accustomed to one cigar less a day, he finds he can spare two about as well, and we devote the cost of the second one to books. Just think of a new book every week or two, and we scarcely ever felt able to buy one before."

"I made my baby's dresses with plain hems and tucks," said Mrs. Dimple, "and really he looks sweeter than ever. I got two dresses for the price of one, and so I felt that I could afford to hire them made, and had set my heart on a couple of lovely sashes for him, but dear me! what is the use? Sashes are only a bother to a baby, so I put that \$5 into the box with a clear conscience."

The First Church of Acadia is out of debt, and has adopted the savings plan as the easiest and best method for meeting its regular benevolences. The women are radiant with satisfaction, the brethren congratulate themselves that *we* did it, and Father Steadfast rises above all clouds of care on the wings of his rejoicing soul. —*New York Advocate*.

Alaska's Big River.

Alaska explorers report one of the largest rivers in the world, the Yukon as navigable for steamers, and at 500 miles from its mouth it receives a very large navigable tributary. The basin formed by the confluence is twenty-four miles wide. The Yukon is nearly as large as our Mississippi. Indians are everywhere, and the war between tribes is a fixed institution. Snow is on the ground for six months, and without roads dog sledges find good traveling. Game abounds, and Indians have an easy life. From seven to nine dogs make a team, the odd one being the leader. The driver has to watch this dog. If it gets the scent of game it is off, and the whole team is demoralized. Off they scamper through the woods and thickets, upsetting the load, smashing the sled, tearing the harness, and giving the boss days of hunting to restore the status quo. So vast a country, traversed by navigable waters, will soon tempt restless and speculative adventurers to explore it. Yankee wit will not fail to find profitable sources of commerce. *Ex.*

Justice and Prayer.

"One hour of justice," said Mohammed, "is worth seventy years of prayer." But that is not the wise work of a prophet or even of a philosopher: it is the snap-judgment of an enthusiast. There is no true prayer that does not make way for justice; no man truly prays who does not seek to be made more just. Seventy years of genuine prayer will produce a great many hours of justice. —*Sunday Afternoon*.

—Begin with modesty, if you would end with honor.