

The Rev. Go-Lightly

The Rev. Go-Lightly was a character puzzle. It was wonderful how so many varying traits were packed into his bigoted little person. A small, pompous being he was, as he strutted about with short mincing steps and with a word of reproof and a smile of commendation perched in curious combination upon his lips, one or the other being always ready to spring forth and assert itself accordingly as the occasion demanded. His eyes were of a pasty gray color and in them lingered a strange light that was prone to flash forth with all the ridiculous indignation that his puttering character had at its command or to shine with innocent horror and surprise at the mention of some unseemly word, expression or action, while the rest of his facial make-up was adjusted to correspond. There was nothing unusual about his nose or his mouth or his ears, or even his chin. They were all just ordinary. His face was broad, and all of the parts of which it was the whole could be controlled in such a manner as to contribute as readily to the framing of an expression of righteous indignation as one of sanctimonious gratification. The top of his head was covered with a sparse growth of brown hair, which was parted in the middle and neatly combed. His stature, as has already been hinted, was not gigantic, but his shoulders were broad and his physique of a sturdy character.

Such was the typography of the being that the Rev. Go-Lightly brought to town when he first sprang into notice as a minister of the gospel at Harrisville. He had hired an empty store-building and installed plank seats and a few other furnishings and from his pulpit he thundered forth promises and inducements to the sin-burdened souls of the village. By a process which invariably takes, but cannot be explained, when an itinerant preacher comes into a new field, he had gathered about him a small and faithful band of followers. Others came from curiosity, being attracted by the noise he made; for his voice generated by a pair of powerful and unharnessed lungs, often pierced through the night to the utmost confines of the village, as it perpetrated an outrage upon a gospel hymn or was drawn out in a fervent, blood-curdling "Amen."

The women, as is usually the case, were the first to be convinced by his logic and persuasiveness. And it might be said that they were practically the last; for most of the men stood sullenly aloof and said unpleasant things. To the women he had a sort of a charm of manner, not of culture or grace, but a smooth, persistent aggressiveness which they could not well resist without feeling that they were disregarding an obligation. His ideas of religion were often connected closely with pecuniary considerations, even to such a degree as to become strangely confused. His customary way of exhorting them was along such lines as these:

"Be not covetous of this world's goods, ladies. Lay not up treasures here on earth where moth doth corrupt and thieves break through and steal. Give of your abundance in the same measure as you would receive salvation. Give freely of your possessions to the church and a healing comforting grace will be yours."

He never allowed himself to be embarrassed by the loathsomeness with which he was invited to dine, but with calm dignity and consequence he would say the grace, eat ravenously, and monopolize the conversation. Sometimes when it was evident that no invitation was forthcoming, he would draw himself up to the fullest extent of his diminutive limit and brazenly exclaim:

"I am wearied with my assiduous labors, ladies, and my system craves nourishment."

Naturally his flock became disgusted, as his incursions were frequent, and even the women began to lose faith in him, as he came around with relentless regularity to dine. If a hint was given he was defiant, acknowledging the insult, but always staying. He never lost his self-possession, but with an expansive contortion of his features in which raised eye-brows and widely

open eyes, filled with both accusation and saintly forgiveness were employed, he would exclaim: "Forbear, ladies, forbear. Such talk is unseemly in my presence. They who regard not their pastor with due respect will wall in outer darkness."

The women, however, inconvenienced as they felt, invariably gave in and Rev. Go-Lightly enjoyed the fruits of his hard-earned victory.

Around town he was shunned and despised. As he strutted along with his Bible under his arm and sanctity written on his features, the small boys would follow after him, throwing clods and yelling:

"Hello, Rev. Go-Lightly. Won't you stay for dinner?"

One young man in particular had an aversion to Rev. Go-Lightly. He was the son of the banker of the place and led a fast life. His dissolute habits were a subject of public gossip. He had no shame in exhibiting his depravity openly and it was a common sight to see him reeling down the street, and unless some comrade conducted him speedily to some less public place he never failed to make a dismal show of himself. He was quarrelsome and disagreeable. Everybody prophesied that Joe Harkness would come to a bad end, and there was nothing to indicate that such would not be the case. Rev. Go-Lightly often took him to task for his iniquities and pointed out to him the destination toward which he was tending—a place with a torrid climate and of exquisite tortures.

Rev. Go-Lightly was interviewing a lady member of his flock in the post-office one day, when a conflict of unusual severity occurred. He was on a punitive expedition and perceiving her, at once opened his campaign.

"Here is a pamphlet, madam," he explained, "which sets forth the needs and necessities of the church in the foreign fields of work, and I trust that you will be able to contribute something to this noble and worthy purpose."

"I'll do what I can," was the tart reply.

"And," resumed Rev. Go-Lightly, "no doubt you will strive to give something next Sunday to the collection for the benefit of the pastor?"

The lady thought she would try. "And perhaps you will be able to give—"

"Well why don't you ask her to take you home," interrupted a voice at his elbow.

Rev. Go-Lightly turned with offended pomp, and found himself gazing into the sneering countenance of Joe Harkness.

Puffing indignantly, he exclaimed:

"Speak not so, thou Godless man, in this lady's presence. He who insults the pastor of the church insults the holy church herself."

Harkness did not reply, but started to push roughly past Rev. Go-Lightly, who stood between him and his mail box. But the Rev. Go-Lightly stood firm. With a mild aggressiveness he resisted, standing there with his shoulders drawn up and his chest inflated, with pompous decision written in the set expression of his mouth. He made no attempt to shove the other man, but he merely braced his shoulders and stood firm. Harkness was non-plussed and his face flashed angrily.

"Get out of my way, you old hypocrite," he cried, "or I'll knock you down and walk over your carcass."

"You ungodly man of wrath," replied Rev. Go-Lightly, "how dare you presume to heap such maledictions upon a holy man. I will fight in the holy cause and smite you even as David smote the heathen giant."

He doubled up his fists, inflated his cheeks and stood ready. Harkness started back in surprise. He had expected to run over and abuse this despicable preacher, but this was a different man. He hesitated, cast a glance at Rev. Go-Lightly, who stood solidly braced awaiting him, and then slunk away. In the minds of all who witnessed the affair, respect for the Rev. Go-Lightly was greatly increased.

Harkness did not forget the affair. After service the next Sunday evening Rev. Go-Lightly was walking home, wrapped in deep meditation, when he felt a touch at his elbow. Looking up he recognized Joe Harkness.

"Good evening, Mr. Go-Lightly!" said the latter pleasantly. "Fine evening!"

Rev. Go-Lightly may have been surprised at the friendliness of this greeting but he did not show it, but simply answered:

"A most delightful evening, such as the shepherds enjoyed as they watched their flocks on the hills of Palestine."

Harkness, not caring to converse along those lines, said rather abruptly:

"Do you know, Rev. Go-Lightly, that I regret my action of the other day in the postoffice? And I want to offer a free and sincere apology?"

Rev. Go-Lightly took the proffered hand and shaking it warmly, said:

"I am glad to see you, my dear young man, so willing to acknowledge your transgression. There is nothing more beautiful or noble in the character of a man than such a spirit of willingness to acknowledge error. I can freely forgive what was spoken in haste."

Harkness smiled. "If the hour is

not too late," he said politely. "I would like to have you accompany me to the rooms of a friend of mine and enjoy a little social time."

Rev. Go-Lightly consented, though rather reluctantly. His companion conducted him to a large open doorway in the bank building and ascending the stairs they soon found themselves in a nicely furnished room. As they entered Rev. Go-Lightly perceived four young men seated around the stove. The formality of an introduction having been gone through with, Rev. Go-Lightly proceeded to make himself at home. The company were in a happy mood, and at times he was taken aback by their rough talk. Finally there was a lull in the buzz of voices, and Harkness produced a bottle from the inner recess of the closet. About the bottle he grouped six tumbler in a circle. Handing one of them to the Rev. Go-Lightly he filled it as he held it, although the reverend gentleman took it doubtfully, in spite of the fact that his eye for an instant twinkled covetously, then filling the five others, he cried:

"Let us drink to the health of Rev. Go-Lightly!"

The others spring to their feet, and each grasping a glass the down-pour commenced. Rev. Go-Lightly alone refrained. Standing with his glass poised in his outstretched palm, he said:

"I wish it distinctly understood, gentlemen, that I drink only that I may not interfere with the good cheer, for although I am not averse to partaking of a little stimulant upon occasions, I never drink to excess."

His loathsomeness to interfere with the good cheer was carried out to the extent of four or five glasses. But although the effects were plainly visible upon the rest of the company, it was not so with him. He sat at his ease, conversing reservedly, overlooking all the rough talk and taking an interest in all that savored of politeness and decency.

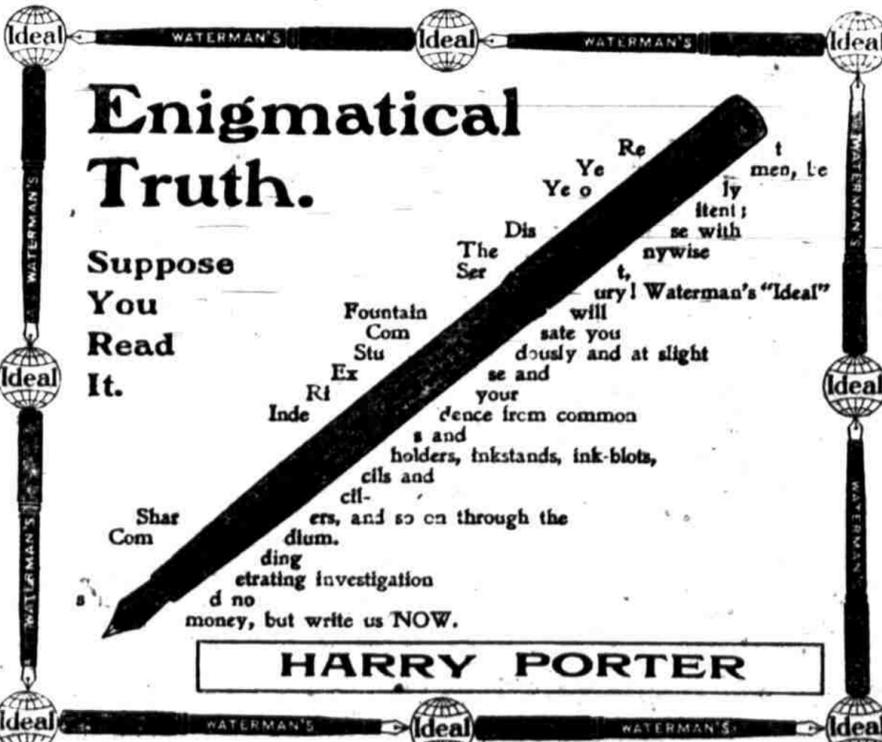
Harkness coolly produced a deck of cards and they drew up their chairs to the table, all except Rev. Go-Lightly. He sat regarding the proceeding doubtfully. Upon being urged he said:

"Gentlemen, I am not opposed to card-playing, but I have never received instruction in the game; hence I cannot join you, though much would I like to."

"O, come on," cried Harkness, "and learn!" The others joined in, and being vociferously exhorted, Rev. Go-Lightly drew his chair up to the table.

The tried poker first. After long and labored explanations, Rev. Go-Lightly seemed to understand the

A Game of Hearts for Valentine's Day but Here a Game of Pens



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