THE NEEDLE'S EYE SOCIETY.

By T. L. McCready.

We will publish in each number of the Review a story having some special bearing upon social conditions. The following from the old *Standard* is in its way a classic. To many, of course, it will be familiar, but to a greater number of the readers of the Review it will be entirely new. The author was one of the associate editors of the *Standard*, whose writings did much to make that paper what it was. He left the *Standard* to go with Rev. Hugh O. Pentecost, at that time editor of the *Twentieth Century*, to improve upon what was termed "Henry George's plan" by a wonderful scheme in which rent was made to disappear, and with it, of course, the need of a single or any other tax. Mr. McCready's later writings in defense of this theory lost their wonderful logical grasp and charm of style, and exhibited a mental poverty which must have grieved the friends who admired him in the days of his splendid mental vigor.

"Dear Mrs. Titlow," said the archdeacon blandly, "you must not be discouraged. Such experiences come every day to those who work among the poor. They are providentially intended for our guidance, and not for our discouragement."

And the archdeacon sipped his tea. It was 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the tea drinkers' sacred hour, and Mrs. Titlow's tea was excellent.

"But, doctor," said the lady, half querulously, "it does seem so impossible to do anything for the poor creatures. It's so hard to do anything with them. Don't you know, when I go on one of my visiting rounds I feel just as though I were looking at something through a plate-glass window. I can see everything plainly enough, but when I reach out my hand to touch anything I find I can't get at it."

The archdeacon smiled benevolently. "You will get over that feeling after awhile," he said. "It probably comes from self-consciousness on your part. Keep on saying to yourself, 'These people are my friends,' and after a time you'll feel that they really are your friends. Then everything will be easy for you."

"Yes, but they're not my friends—that's just the trouble. I don't know why. I'm sure I feel interested enough in them, and friendly enough toward them. But when I give them good advice I can see that they haven't the slightest idea of following it. And I know they often tell me lies in answer to my questions. Now you know, doctor, that's not being friendly."

The archdeacon smiled again and finished his cup of tea before he spoke. "We must recognize the situation," he said, "and not expect too much. The poor are often very hard to deal with. They are prone to rebel against the decrees of Providence. They are not always as contented as they should be in the station to which it has pleased God to call them. They are often ignorant and thriftless. And as a rule they are sadly lacking in truthfulness. But all this, dear Mrs. Titlow' only makes it the more necessary that we should labor earnestly among them. In this scheme of God's wise providence, we have been set apart to be the stewards of his bounty. He might have so arranged the world that there should be no poor. But he knew better. 'The poor,' he tells us, 'ye have always with you.' They stimulate our benevolence. They keep our sympathies alive. And we, in turn, if we do our duty by them, will develop in them the virtues of thrift and temperance, and teach them to look with gratitude, not to us, but to the Father who loves all His children equally, and has appointed the wiser and better educated to dispense His bounty among the simple and untaught. Think how objectless your life would be if there were no poor for whose improvement you could labor. Think how wretched the lives of the poor would be if there were no people like you to visit and assist them. Keep up your district visiting, then, and let your poorer brothers and sisters see that, while you are not blind to their faults, you love them still, and want to be their friend."

The archdeacon put down his cup and rose to go. Mrs. Titlow was conscious of a sense of moral exaltation, as though she had just been to church.

"If you please, ma'am," said the housemaid, "there's a woman in the hall that wants to speak to you."

"A woman, Mary?" said Mrs. Titlow. "What woman? Didn't she give any name?"

"No, ma'am. I asked her what her name was, and what she wanted to see you for; and she said you wouldn't know her name, but she know you'd be glad to see her. I'd ha' sent her off, but I thought she might be one of them charity society women, and you might want to see her after all."

"Good gracious! Mary, you mustn't leave strange women sitting in the hall like that. Why, she may be robbing the drawing room at this moment! Run downstairs and say I'll be there in a minute, and don't leave her alone until I come."

When Mrs. Titlow descended she found the visitor seated on one of the straight-backed comfortless chairs that flanked the hatrack, while Mary, the housemaid, lingered near, making a pretense of doing something with a duster. Mrs. Titlow gave a gasp of relief. Not a thief after all. Probably some poor person come a-begging. That was the worst of this charitable work—that it led to unauthorized intrusions of this kind. Mrs. Titlow mentally decided to refer the woman to to the office of the Good Samaritan Society, where the secretary could investigate her case. It would never do to encourage visits from people of that kind.

As Mrs. Titlow drew near, the visitor rose and extended her hand. Mrs. Titlow involun-

tarily put out her own. The stranger grasped it, and held it with a gentle pressure. "You are the lady of the house?" she said.

"I am Mrs. Titlow." She made a slight effort to withdraw her hand, but without avail.

"Dear Mrs. Titlow, I am delighted to know you," said the other sweetly. "I am making my first round of visits this morning, and I am so glad to have commenced with you. But come," this strange woman went on, with a final pressure of the lady's unresponsive hand, "we must not stand here like two strangers. Take me into the parlor, where we can sit down together, as dear friends ought to do."

Take her into the parlor, indeed? What could the woman mean? Mrs. Titlow could do nothing but stare at her. The stranger walked deliberately into the drawing room, and seated herself in the most comfortable easy chair. Mrs. Titlow followed in bewilderment, and remained standing.

"What a delightful chair," said the visitor. "So restful for the back. I could almost go to sleep in it. Ah! my dear, you rich people have a great deal to be thankful for, after all. Of course, it's sad that you should be so helpless and need so many people to work for you and wait on you. But you must fight against that sort of degradation, and think, meantime, how good God is to provide you with all these pleasant things. How much more of a burden your helplessness would be to you if you had no nice spacious house and no comfortable furniture in it. Have you ever thought of that, my dear, in your moments of discontent?"

Mrs. Titlow drew herself up. She was half afraid of this extraordinary female, but she felt it would never do to show her trepidation. "Did you want to see me about anything special?" she said. "If it's any charity business you can leave me your address, and I will see that a visitor calls on you. Or, perhaps, you had better go direct to the Good Samaritan office and see the secretary." Mrs. Titlow made this last suggestion with a faint hope that the stranger might take the hint and go at once. But the hope was disappointed. The stranger only settled herself more comfortably in the easy chair, and answered:

"See you about anything special? Why, of course it's something special, or I shouldn't intrude on you in this unceremonious fashion. And it is charity business, too, however you happened to guess it. You must know, I am a member of the Needle's Eye Society."

Mrs. Titlow felt more comfortable. Some sewing women's organization, no doubt, that had sent this queer delegate to solicit her patronage. "Yes," she said encouragingly, "and what sort of work is it you want to do?"

"Oh!" said the stranger, "I'm coming to that in a minute. But do sit down, won't you? Now I insist upon it"—as Mrs. Titlow remained standing—"you must sit down. I want you to feel that I am your friend; and how can I think you feel that, or talk to you as a friend should talk, if you persist in standing while I'm sitting in this comfortable chair. Now sit right down, or I won't say another word."

Mrs. Titlow sat down. As she did so, her suppressed indignation at the stranger's impertinence hardened into a resolution that the Needle's Eye Society should get mighty little sewing from her. Then the visitor went on:

"There! .Now we can have a comfortable talk together. Do you know"—with a little laugh—"it just occurs to me that I haven't introduced myself. That was stupid of me, wasn't it? How could I expect you to look on me as a friend when you didn't even know my name? I am Mrs. Jones—Sophronia Jones. I hope you will learn to call me Sophy. And what shall I learn to call you?"

"I don't think we need go into that, Mrs. Jones," said Mrs. Titlow, with mild haughtiness. "If you will be kind enough to state your business in as few words as possible I will be obliged."

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Jones, "how unsympathetic you rich folks are. I suppose it's one of the evils of your lot in life. If you only knew how much good it would do you to look on me as your friend, and to call me Sophy. But you'll do it by and by. God meant the rich and poor to be brothers and sisters, you know."

Mrs. Titlow felt a chill run down her backbone. This was the sort of thing she had brought upon herself by engaging in charitable work. She felt as though she would never want to go district visiting again.

"You see, dear," Mrs. Jones went on, "you must not think the poor are altogether selfish and heartless. Many of them are so, I know, but not all. Some of us have a keen sympathy for the rich, and long to do them good. It is dreadful, I know, to have all your pleasure in this world, and nothing to look forward to but hell fire in the next. It makes my heart—"

"Good God, woman!" cried Mrs. Titlow, fairly shocked into profanity, "whatever do you mean?"

"Is it possible," said Mrs. Jones, "that you haven't read your Bible? Don't you know that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God? You know Christ said that—the same Christ that promised you should always have the poor with you. But, my dear, we must not take the text too literally. It cannot mean that all the rich people will go to hell, but only that most of them must go there. There must be room for some of them in heaven. Oh, dear, dear Mrs. Titlow, how happy shall I be if I can bring you comfort, and make the future less terrible to you. Let me be your friend. I want to be your sister. Now, can't you call me Sophy?"

And really for a moment Mrs. Titlow almost felt as if she could call her Sophy, and find relief in doing it. For the woman's strength of earnestness carried conviction with it. She so evidently believed what she said, she was so full of tender sympathy and pity, that the rich woman's heart went out toward her for a space as to a refuge from an impending awful doom. Then Mrs. Titlow remembered the archdeacon, and her soul regained its balance. If the text about the needle's eye were to be so strictly interpreted, surely the archdeacon would have told her about it before this. So

she said nothing, though she looked at Mrs. Jones with a plainly startled glance.

"Ah, well," said Mrs. Jones, "we'll be friends some day. And now I must tell you about our society. Its objects are to induce the poor to cast the mantle of their charity over the rich, and to teach the rich that the poor want to be their friends and to divide their inheritance of eternal glory with them. We poor folks don't want to keep the promise of heaven all to ourselves. We feel as if we were, after a fashion, only stewards of God's bounty, because we want to widen the needle's eye to make it possible for the camel to pass through, and for the rich man to enter the kingdom. And we have arranged to visit among the rich, each one of us in a certain district—to listen to their stories, to investigate the manner of their lives, to find out those among them who are deserving of charity, and to show them that we are indeed their brothers and sisters, more lucky than they are, to be sure, but just the same flesh and blood. And now that you know just what brings me here, try and confide in me. Tell me all about yourself and your family. What is your husband's business? Is he honest in it? Does he treat you kindly? What are your own besetting faults? You see I'm ready to hear your whole story."

"Archdeacon Ramsay-Brown!" announced Mary, throwing wide the drawing room door. Mrs. Titlow gave a great gasp of thankfulness. To her surprise Mrs. Jones rose up and greeted the newcomer with effusion. "My dear archdeacon," she said, "I've been studying the texts, and I understand them all. It's just as you said—the rich and poor are brothers and sisters, and meant to be each other's dearest friends. Look at me and Mrs. Titlow. We love each other dearly. And we've organized our society——"

"Yes, yes, I know," said the archdeacon. Then, with a movement of apology to Mrs. Titlow, he led the representative of the Needle's Eye Society apart and spoke to her earnestly for a few minutes. "You really think so, doctor?" said Mrs. Jones aloud, at last.

"I really do. You know you must not force your friendship upon your richer sisters. They might think you were inclined to patronize them."

"All right," said Mrs. Jones. "Then I'll say good-by to Mrs. Titlow for the present. But, remember, dear, that I want to be your friend, and if you find yourself in need of charity don't hesitate to send for me."

The archdeacon showed the visitor to the door and returned. "A sad case," he said in pitying tone, "a truly sad case. Of course you saw that she was crazy. I'll have her sent to the asylum on Blackwell's Island tomorrow."

A WRONG WAY TO DO A RIGHT THING.

A mortgage tax law enacted in Wisconsin reduces the taxation of mortgaged real estate to the owner's equity in it, and provides that the mortgagor and the mortgagee may agree as to who shall pay the taxes on the mortgage.

DEATH OF ALBERT L. JOHNSON.

As we go to press the sad news reaches us of the death of Albert L. Johnson, brother of Tom L., and late head of the Nassau Electric Railroad, of Brooklyn. Mr. Johnson was a prominent figure in the railroad world, and possessed many of the qualities that have made his brother a man of national prominence. He was pushing, energetic, and brave as a lion. That he shared the same theories of social reform that his brother holds there was no doubt, but he was a man of business affairs, and not given to speculation as to the future of social reform. What he saw he saw with great clearness, and it was not easy to deceive him.

The progressive street railway interests suffer a distinct loss in his death. His plans would have revolutionized freight and passenger rates, and would have compelled the reorganization of half the railroad companies in the country. But his plans will certainly be carried out by others, for he has pointed the way, and he has done so with wonderful clearness and directness.

Mayor Johnson was with him when the end came, as was also his mother, his wife, and his four children. From every part of the world single taxers will extend their sympathy to the sorrowing group beside the waters at Fort Hamilton, where lies all that is mortal of the late railroad magnate.

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REV. HARRIS R. COOLEY.

The most interesting appointment by Mayor Johnson thus far is that of Rev. Harris R. Cooley, his pastor for many years, to be director of charities. Few men are better fitted for such a place in a great city with a large foreign and indigent population. Since his student days Mr. Cooley has made a special study of sociological questions and he is considered an authority on the subject of municipal government. His investigations in this line began during his father's superintendency of the Bethel, one of Cleveland's oldest and most useful charities, which gave him an opportunity to become acquainted with the city's charitable work. Since that time Mr. Cooley has made several trips abroad with the especial object of observing social conditions. On one of those trips he spent some time in Oxford and London investigating social settlement and Salvation Army work. Mr. Cooley is now president of the Cleveland Council of Sociology. During his investigation he has become an advocate of municipal ownership and the principle of the single tax and has published two addresses in advocacy of the latter. He is sure to be a strong factor for good and one upon whose judgment the Mayor will largely depend.