

THE PRIVY

Two very proper ladies, excellent examples of middle Victorianism came one night to discuss a very delicate matter. It seemed that Brother Nelson whose house was on a corner lot with one street running in front and the other along the side, had recently built a new outhouse. The edifice in question had been situated at the side of the house so that the front of it was conveniently facing toward the house, all of which was very proper, but the back of it was near the fence bordering the side street.

It was not just the particular location of the privy which distressed Olga and Annie but certain other peculiar circumstances compounded the distress. For one thing the bottom part of the back of the outhouse, the part near the fence, was not boarded up. When Brother Nelson was occupying the chief seat his backside was exposed to those who happened to be walking along the street.

Each afternoon the ladies walked into town, returning in the early evening in time to prepare supper before the menfolks came in. Brother Nelson however, brought the day's work to an early finish, climaxing it with the most satisfying repose before supper. There he was, as regular as the coming of the evening itself, sitting in his new toilet when Olga and Annie passed on the way home.

Olga insisted that it was downright unseemly and something ought to be done about it. The suggestion that they walk along the far side of the street when passing by offered no relief from their distress and they passed it off as though it hadn't been worth the saying.

It was finally agreed that Father would talk to Brother Nelson and see what could be done about the matter. The ladies went away mumbling to each other about indecency and immodesty among some people who had never had suitable upbringing. Surely some sort of diabolical perversity had motivated the old Scandinavian to locate the unfinished monument in such a conspicuous place.

When Brother Nelson came to discuss the matter he bristled with indignation in spite of Father's tactfulness in saying what was required by the circumstance. He'd taken great pains to make it a work of art, had used only top grade lumber. and had put a fine finish on the front including a crescent moon cut in at the upper part of the door. Moreover, he suspected that it was probably out and out jealousy on the part of anyone who might be registering any complaints~since, if he did say it himself, it was undoubtedly one of the best in that part of the town.

"That's not what all the dither is about," Father said. "You've left the back part, of it next to the street unboarded.. Confound it. Man, where's your sense of decency?"

"Well now. unless somebody's snooping around looking for something to make gossip about there's no cause for such a fuss. I just plain run out of quality timber and can't get no more for a while. I aint about to use old barn boards to

finish it. If those folks who're so uppity about it will just bide their time it will be finished proper."

"Pshaw. it wouldn't be any great bother to board up the back with something make-do while you're waiting for the other timber to come in." Father hastened to add another persuasive note before Brother Nelson could break in with a word of protest. Chuckling at his own pun he said, "You wouldn't want us to have to make a privy council out of the high council would you?"

Even the old man saw the humor in that and was relaxed a bit long enough for Father to add the final clincher. "Besides, I understand that the Tingey boys have threatened to tip over any leaning or unfinished outhouses come Halloween. Better not take any chances."

On our next Sunday afternoon walk we just happened to stroll by the Nelson corner. Father smiled to himself as we noted in passing, enough unevenly sawed barn wood nailed in place to solve the problem.