

**THE WORKS OF  
EUGENE  
FIELD. VOL. IX**

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The Works of Eugene Field. Vol. IX by Eugene Field

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## INTRODUCTION

“IT is about impossible for a man to get rid of his Puritan grandfathers, and nobody who has ever had one has ever escaped his Puritan grandmother;” so said Eugene Field to me one sweet April day, when we talked together of the things of the spirit. It is one of his own confessions that he was fond of clergymen. Most preachers are supposed to be helplessly tied up with such a set of limitations that there are but a few jokes which they may tolerate, and a small number of delights into which they may enter. Doubtless many a cheerful soul likes to meet such of the clergy, in order that the worldling may feel the contrast of liberty with bondage, and demonstrate by bombardment of wit and humor, how intellec-

## INTRODUCTION

tually thin are the walls against which certain forms of skepticism and fun offend. Eugene Field did not belong to these. He called them "a tribe which do unseemly beset the saints." Nobody has ever had a more numerous or loving clientage of friendship among the ministers of this city than the author of "The Holy Cross" and "The Little Yaller Baby." Those of this number who were closest to the full-hearted singer know that beneath and within all his exquisite wit and ludicrous raillery — so often directed against the shallow formalist, or the unctuous hypocrite — there were an aspiration toward the divine, and a desire for what is often slightly called "religious conversation," as sincere as it was resistless within him. My own first remembrance of him brings back a conversation which ended in a prayer, and the last sight I had of him was when he said, only four days before his death, "Well, then, we will set the day soon and you will come out and baptize the children."

Some of the most humorous of his letters which have come under the observation of



## INTRODUCTION

his clerical friends, were addressed to the secretary of one of them. Some little business matters with regard to his readings and the like had acquainted him with a better kind of handwriting than he had been accustomed to receive from his pastor, and, noting the finely appended signature, "per \_\_\_\_\_," Field wrote a most effusively complimentary letter to his ministerial friend, congratulating him upon the fact that emanations from his office, or parochial study, were "now readable as far West as Buena Park." At length, nothing having appeared in writing by which he might discover that \_\_\_\_\_ was a lady of his own acquaintance, she whose valuable services he desired to recognize was made the recipient of a series of beautifully illuminated and daintily written letters, all of them quaintly begun, continued, and ended in ecclesiastical terminology, most of them having to do with affairs in which the two gentlemen only were primarily interested, the larger number of them addressed in English to "Brother \_\_\_\_\_," in care of the minister, and yet others directed in Latin:

## INTRODUCTION

Ad Fratrem — — —  
In curam, Sanctissimi patris — —, doctoris  
divinitatis,  
Apud Institutionem Armouriensem,  
CHICAGO,  
ILLINOIS.

{ Ab Eugenio Agro, }  
{ peccatore misere }

Even the mail-carrier appeared to know what fragrant humor escaped from the envelope.

Here is a specimen inclosure:

BROTHER — — : I am to read some of my things before the senior class of the Chicago University next Monday evening. As there is undoubtedly more or less jealousy between the presidents of the two south side institutions of learning, I take it upon myself to invite the lord bishop of Armourville, our holy père, to be present on that occasion in his pontifical robes and followed by all the dignitaries of his see, including yourself. The processional will occur at 8 o'clock sharp, and the recessional circa 9:30. Pax vobiscum. Salute the holy Father with a kiss, and believe me, dear brother,

Your fellow lamb in the old Adam,  
EUGENIO AGRO.

(A Lamb)  
SEAL

The First Wednesday after Pay day,  
September 11, 1895.

## INTRODUCTION

On an occasion of this lady's visit to the South-west, where Field's fancied association of cowboys and miners was formed, she was fortunate enough to obtain for the decoration of his library the rather extraordinary Indian blanket which often appears in the sketches of his loved workshop, and for the decoration of himself a very fine necktie made of the skin of a diamond-back rattlesnake. Some other friend had given his boys a "vociferant burro." After the presentation was made, though for two years he had met her socially and at the pastor's office, he wrote to the secretary, in acknowledgment, as follows:

DEAR BROTHER —: I thank you most heartily for the handsome specimens of heathen manufacture which you brought with you for me out of the land of Nod. Mrs. Field is quite charmed with the blanket, but I think I prefer the necktie; the Old Adam predominates in me, and this pelt of the serpent appeals with peculiar force to my appreciation of the vicious and the sinful. Nearly every morning I don that necktie and go out and twist the supersensitive tail of our intelligent imported burro until the profane beast burthens the air with his ribald protests. I shall ask the holy father—Père — to bring you with him when he comes again to pay a