



“Within Greenacre’s Mystic Charm and Calm”

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“IT APPEARS A SINGULAR thing,” the journalist wrote, “that so many famous people could have been attracted to this little town up in Maine. . . . But as soon as one arrives at Greenacre and gets to know that wonderful woman, Miss Sarah Farmer, the life and the spirit of the Greenacre movement, wonder vanishes.”

We don’t know this reporter’s name, but he spent a day in Eliot during the second week of August, 1899, recording his impressions in a long news feature printed in the *Lewiston Saturday Journal* on the twelfth of the month: “Within Greenacre’s Mystic Charm and Calm: The Remarkable Colony of Ideals That Has Been Grafted Upon a Prosaic Maine Country Side.”

He watched a silent crowd under the main tent sit wrapt in meditation. He listened to the actor Joe Jefferson tell stories “like a boy, full of quips and larks and pranks.” And he took a walk with Sarah Farmer, “up the slope of the great hill that lay broad in the blaze of the sun.”

As they looked out over the glint of the distant river from the top of the hill, Miss Farmer spoke:

The foundation of our work here is constructiveness. We have no room for iconoclasts. Those are the only ones we bar. All others are welcome to come and express their views. All are listened to with respect and attention. If they bring us anything that seems good to us we accept it. If there is nothing that appeals to the rest there is no cavil, no supercilious criticism. At least it has harmed no one.

What he brings we take and build on to what we have already constructed as a bulwark of our faith in the good or as a superstructure of a higher ideal. But we do not tolerate here the man who seeks only to tear down. Some say that certain things are frauds, are delusions, are shams and that they should be exposed. But the attacking of any man’s cherished beliefs or ideals, faulty though they may be in our eyes, brings only mischief in its train. I have had some eminent men propose to come here and display their iconoclasm but I

have had to ask them to stay away until they could come in the constructive mood to bring us something as building material — not as battering ram. And I must tell you that some of them have come here and have been conquered by the Greenacre spirit.

The journalist continued: “Much did this true woman of the steadfast eye and purpose say to me as we sat there in the sunshine, but I will not venture to put into my words the expounding of her faith as she revealed it to me.”

“Go to Greenacre! If for a moment you can draw this gentle woman in gray from the throng that greets her whenever she appears on the grounds, and will ask her to tell you what there is in life for the heart that seeks further than cold creed, biased sect, Pharisaical doubtings and material grossness, then you will come down from the hill-tops of Greenacre with the blues in your heart transformed to a pink flush, in harmony with one of those magnificent Greenacre sunsets.”

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FOOTNOTE / ENDNOTE:

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