

THE WOMAN WHO GAVE HERSELF.

ELIZABETH PAYSON PRENTISS beautifully expressed what many another one has felt, when she wrote, "A little room all of my own, and a regular hour morning and night all of my own, would enable me, I think, to say, 'Now let life do its worst!'"

Little Mrs. Lynfold, with a large family in a small house, and a pocket-book whose sides were never extended perceptibly by anything but newspaper clippings, often declared to herself that she would "give up and die" if it were not for that bolt on the inside of the attic storeroom door. She had bought that bolt and put it on herself unknown to anyone. In among the scrap-bags hanging from the rafters and the piles of trunks and boxes, there was a Bethel of one soul pressing its way heavenward. Not that she ever had a whole hour night or morning to herself. The most of her praying had to be done a-foot; and, like Aaron, she burned incense while she filled the lamps. But there were sometimes precious odd bits of time when she could kneel at the Master's feet, and "take unto her words." No one had ever discovered this sacred eyrie of the housemother, up three flights of stairs from the basement kitchen, where so much of her time had to be spent. Baby Ben knew about it, for he had oftentimes been deposited therein on a big comfortable when the weather was neither too warm nor too cold, and he kept the secret well, as his vocabulary consisted of only three words. It was not an attractive spot from an æsthetic standpoint, but the narrow window admitted light enough for the reading of a passage in the coarse-print Bible that always lay on the old wooden chair,—a rough altar, truly, with no cloth of gold, but angels ministered there many a time when the tempter fled in defeat. Mrs. Lynfold was thinking of this one quiet nook in life's turmoil as she hastened home from the afternoon meeting of the missionary auxiliary, for her soul was filled with unrest and discontent. She walked hurriedly, thankful that Aunt Abby was there, and that supper was ready to place on the table, except for fresh boiling water for the tea, and that she could have a few minutes in which to pour out her trouble before the Lord.

The boys yelled a welcome as she entered the yard, and bore down upon her like a pair of wild Apaches. She escaped from their embraces with her best hat over one ear, only to encounter small Bess at the front door in tears over a

broken doll; Katharyn in despair at the piano because of a difficult exercise; her eldest son, Kent, stranded in his Virgil, and waiting for mother, who had been a good Latin scholar in her day, to float him off; while the baby, perfectly contented until he emptied his best friend, almost sprang out of Aunt Abby's arms, crying lustily.

"Well, Helen," said Aunt Abby with a bit of a sigh, "it must seem good to a woman to be perfectly indispensable to some corner of the universe!"

The kindly word carried Mrs. Lynfold through the next two hours, and when the supper dishes were washed and the younger children were in bed she stole softly up to her little sanctum.

Mrs. Lynfold was an enthusiastic believer in foreign missions, but although her heart was large enough to endow a dozen orphanages and hospitals, she had felt that she could give only the "two cents a week and a prayer." In fact, her heaviest cross was that thin pocketbook. With all her thrift and industry and faculty for making something out of nothing, it was impossible for the Lynfolds to get ahead financially. Mr. Lynfold had a fair salary as a bookkeeper, but six vigorous children can make incredible inroads on the stock of butcher, baker and grocer, to say nothing of the shoemaker, and there were clothes for spring and fall, and always the rent to meet, and an occasional doctor's bill. The best they could do was to live in reasonable comfort and keep out of debt. That day at the missionary meeting Judge Wellford's widow had read an autograph letter from her very own Bible-woman,—a thrilling account of one day's work in the zenanas, where souls were turning eagerly toward the Light of the World. Mrs. Wellford read the letter with great satisfaction, and Mrs. Lynfold had listened with hot tears rising to her eyes. It seemed to her that one of the choicest privileges in the world was to employ a Bible-woman.

"Only thirty dollars a year!" Mrs. President was saying.

Mrs. Lynfold smiled a grim little smile. Thirty dollars was not as much for Mrs. Wellford as thirty cents was to the Lynfold exchequer! She thought of the new parlor carpet that must be considered, not in the subjective but in the imperative mood, for there were holes wearing through that no rug could possibly cover; of the alarming condition of the flour barrel (the scoop had touched bottom that very