

Family Reading.

WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY?

"Well, I shall decide on taking *this* dress. What does it signify though *it* is five or ten shillings dearer than the other? And this ribbon!—I cannot resist it, it is so pretty, and will look so well with the dress. I won't grudge it, although it is really too expensive. I must have gloves to match, too. I wonder how long these are to be three shillings a pair?—but one can't do without clean gloves, you know."

"Is it really time for another subscription? I could not have believed it was a year since I gave the last. I see most of the other ladies only give half-a-crown. I don't know why I should give five shillings. Besides, I cannot afford it. I dare say it is a very worthy object, but there are so many of them. I will give you another half-crown for the dying woman you were speaking to me about; and then you must not ask me for any more, for indeed I can't afford it."

"It rains, does it? Well, of course I shall have a cab. Stay at home!—certainly not. I promised to go, and my friends expect me; and what does rain or cab-hire signify compared with disappointing myself and them?"

"Well, friend, pardon me. You know it was only last night you declined going to the prayer-meeting because it was a wet evening. Our minister expected you and many others who were not present, and your vacant places, instead of a full congregation, saddened and disappointed him. Your fellow-worshippers also were chilled by your absence, and their social feelings depressed by the sight of so many empty pews; and, above all, you were missed by One who has engaged to be present in every meeting of his people. Was He not wounded last night, think you, in the house of his friends, when so many slighted and despised his presence and blessing, by suffering such a trifling matter to hinder them from gathering together in his name?"

"How late it is!—nearly midnight! Never mind; what does it signify now and then? What with good music and agreeable society, the evening has passed away so quickly I could not have believed it was much past ten."

"It is too bad of our minister to have kept us so long to-night. He promised not to detain us more than an hour, and it is very often nearly an hour and a half before we are dismissed. Half-past nine is far too late to be out! I believe I shall cease to attend if this is to be the way of it. I cannot afford to have an evening so broken up, especially when I am so much engaged as at present."

Reader! these are true, literal speeches, of so-called Christian people. Have you never heard any similar? Have you ever yourself spoken such? *What do they signify?* Much, very much. Are they not fearfully significant of a heart loving the world and the things of the world, far, far more than the things of God! Are they not significant of money, time, affections, freely bestowed on carnal self, the world's things and company, and grudgingly withheld, or more grudgingly given to God and to the cause of God? Are they not like little straws floating on the surface of the stream, deeply significant of the direction in which the current of the heart is flowing—*away from* God, *not towards* him? On-lookers clearly perceive this; the children of God with pain and grief—the world's children, quick to see through vain profession, with a sneer. What do such think of themselves? Are they never struck by the inconsistent nature of their own valuations—one value affixed to the world's things, another to the things of the sanctuary? Does it never give them a glimpse into the true state of their heart and affections? If their fellow-creatures see through them, how much more does the heart-searching God! They are trying to do an impossible thing—to serve God and mammon; and when the heart is so divided, we know it is really cleaving to *idols*, for the Lord will have nothing short of the *whole* heart. "Where the treasure is, there will the *heart* be also," and "out of the abundance of the