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The Deacon's Tenth

BY MARY S. CHAPMAN.

Ye see, the elder had preached a most powerful sermon on Christian givin', in which he took what I called purty strong ground. Among other things, he said we'd ought to do as much for our religion as the old Jews did for theirs, an while it was all right to lay up for a rainy day, an to get ahead if we honestly could, we should set apart at least one-tenth of our income as the Lord's money.

"Now, I think the elder went a leetle too far," says I to my wife, Huldy, as we was a drivin' home from meetin'. "Givin' is well enough, but I get a'most tired a hearin' these ministers forever a dingin' about it."

"Waal, Lyman," says Huldy, "why don't you try givin' a ten'h—try it for one year anyhow."

"My!" says I, "as if I didn't give more'n that now; it's two shillin's, an fifty cents, every time I turn around, to say nothin' o' the contributions to big objects. If I get home with a dollar in my pocket I think I'm a lucky fellow."

"Then, I'm sure," says Huldy, with that queer little smile o' hern that she sometimes has, "it'll be a real savin' to ye to go into systematically a givin' yer tenth."

Now, I hadn't any idee of doin' it, an' keepin' a reckonin' of what I contribute—in fact, I thought that verse about lettin' yer right hand know what yer left was a doin' was rather again it, but somehow Huldy had a cool way o' takin' things for granted, an' though the mildest of all women, she generally manages to carry her p'int.

Next mornin' I see her a makin' a book out o' some sheets o' paper, an' rulin' 'em off, and stitchin' on to 'em a pastboard kiver an' on the outside she writ in big letters that was as plain to read as printin'. "The Lord's Money." This she handed to me an' said nothin'.

That very week I got pay for my wheat; it was an uncommon good crop; it come to six hundred dollars. I was a settin' by the fire a countin' it up with some satisfaction, when Huldy jest stuck under my nose that book, "The Lord's money."

"What's that for, Huldy?" says I.

"Why, for the tenth," says she.

"Bless my soul!" says I, a wriglin' an' twistin', "that would be sixty dollars; I can't stan' that."

She didn't say anything, but set a watchin' me, an' I knew it warn't no use a dodgin' her, so I took six ten-dollar bills, all crisp an' new, an' laid 'em in a pile.

"Yis, yis," says I, a tryin' to sew my face into a smile, an' to act as if I'd been a calkerlatin' all the way through to give 'em.

Ye see there was on awful sight o' old Adam in me. I jest get there a begredgin' that money, I most wished the wheat hadn't come to so much. Then I happened to remember what the elder had said in his sermon—that it would be a mighty hard wrench on us at first to give a tenth—that when the fingers got crooked up a graspin' this world's goods 'twas hard to get 'em straightened out, but that when we'd become used to this way o' givin', we'd enjoy it an' be blessed in it as much as tu prayin' an' readin' the scriptures. A thinkin' on that sermon, I made up my mind I'd double my subscription for the elder's support, an' that would just take the sixty dollars.

As I harvested my crops an' sold 'em, I was astonished to see how the Lord's pile grew, an' I had to think it over middlin' sharp to know where to invest it so 'twould do most good, an' I was gettin' over the wrench a little until my interest became due. The year before old uncle Nat had died, an' most unexpectedly had left me five thousand dollars. If the legacy had dropped down from the skies I couldn't have been more surprised. Now I had three hundred a comin' in from it, and it most killed me to take thirty on't an' put it aside for the Lord. I couldn't help whinin'.

"Now, Huldy," says I, "don't ye believe the old Jews deducted their taxes afore they laid by their tenth?"

"I dunno," says she; "we might read up Leviticus an' Numbers an' Deuteronomy an' see."

"Bless my soul, Huldy," says I, "I'd rather pay the whole thirty dollars than wade through all them dull books. "An' then," says I, a thinkin' hard, "accordin' to what these agents that come around beggin' say, I s'pose it would be a good peconary speckerlation to give to the Lord. They tell about throwin' out crackers an' comin' back loaves, an' show how them is blessed in their basket an' in their store that bestow their goods on the poor. Anyhow, I've made up my mind to try it."

"Now, Lyman Tubbs, don't ye go into this tenth business with no such worldly motives. If ye do ye'll be worse than Ananias and Sapphira, who was stuck dead at once. Not but that the Lord has said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' and 'prove me not here-with,' but if ye undertake to drive a sharp bargain with Him, ye'll find out that He'll git ahead of ye every time. No, He's given us all we have, and I'm thinkin' he'll ask

us some mighty close questions about the way we've used it."

Huldy don't very often preach, but when she did her sermons were what I call p'inted.

Time passed on, an' I got used to givin' my tenth. I didn't squirm over it as I did; in fact, I got kinder raised, an' to feelin' liberal. I didn't sell so much as a turkey without puttin' aside tithes of it.

It happened in the summer that my wife's cousin Silas an' his family came to see us, an' I supposed he'd never heard o', sech a thing; but Silas says, says he "I've done it ever since I was converted. I airn two dollars a day, an' every Saturday night I jest lay aside one dollar and twenty cents, an' I pray over it; it's sacred; it's the Lord's money."

"Don't ye take yer livin' out o' it first?"

"Yer what?" says Silas, amazed. "It's jest so much I airn, an' the ability to airn it comes from the Lord, an' I joyfully give back to him the little part."

"But," says I, "ain't that kinder resky? Ye might be took sick, or yer work give out; I should be a little fear-some."

"These are the promises," says Silas; "My God shall supply all your needs," an' "Lo, I am with you." They are all yea an' amen."

Waal, if I didn't feel small after that. I had simply given a tenth of all I'd sold an' grumbled over it at that, an' there were all those broad acres that had fed us, an' those big trees in the woods that had kept us warm—blessin's upon blessin's that I hadn't counted, an' here was Silas with nothin' but his hands, an' yet so willin' hearted an' doing so much. When I carried him an' his folks back to the city I jest filled my wagon box full o' things, an' felt as if I was a givin' directly to the Lord.

One day the elder an' his family was over to our house, an' we was a talkin'. His son Fred was a playin' with my Thomas—they was awful good friends—an' says the elder, "If I had as much money as you have, Deacon Tubbs, I'd send Thomas to school, an' ask the Lord to make a minister o' him."

"Bless the Lord!" thought I, "that's the last thing I want him to be." Ye see I had other things for my boy, but I said nothin'.

My next neighbor, old Mr. Hodges, has a son who went to the city an' studied law, an' got to be a judge, an' comes home in his big carriage once in a while to visit the old folks, his wife an' children dressed to fits, an' seein' them I had a natural hankerin' for Thomas to turn out like that. I was a sayin' this to Huldy when the elder's folks was gone.

"Now, Lyman Tubbs," says she, a lookin' at me with them great earnest eyes o' hers, "would you really like to have our Thomas jest like old Mr. Hodges son—a breaking the Sabbath, he an' his boys, a shootin' ducks an' a drinkin' an' a playin' cards? Be you a deacon an' a member of the church, an' not feel as if 'twas bigger business to persuade men to forsake their sins and to love the Lord Jesus-Christ?"

Ever since Silas was here my mind has been dreadfully took up with somethin' he was a tellin' me. He said some good Christian men had hired rooms in the worst part o' the city an' made them bright an' attractive, an' was a singin' hymns an' a preachin' to the folks, all without money an' without price, an' some sech work as this is what I'd been a wishin' my boy could do, an' jest then Thomas came in an' stood beside his mother. He had the same hair as hers an' the same brown eyes, an' somethin' told me that if he took to preachin' he'd be one of the convincin' sort, for I must say that nobody's words ever took hold of an old sinner like me as Huldy's does.

Well, my tenth money grew; half the time I didn't know what to do with it. I was over to the elder's one day an' he was a tellin' me of a school near by which he thought would be a good place to send our Thomas—he'd noticed how crazy the boy was for books an' learnin', an' the minister said he'd a cousin a livin' jest out o' the village that would take good care o' Thomas, an' board him, an' he'd be under good Christian influence.

"What do you say, Huldy?" says I, as soon as I'd got home.

"I'd like him to go," says she, "an' for the elder's boy to go with him."

Sure enough he should, an' that would be a use for the rest of my tenth, an' Thomas an' Fred was awful good friends; they was like David an' Jonathan, an' what do you think, there was a revival that jest like a big wave struck that school, an' in fact, the whole community, an' both the boys were converted, an' you can't think how I felt, so glad about it, an' kinder streaked, too, for I knew it warn't none o' my doin'; I'd been sech a poor good-for-nothin' Christian all my life, it was enough to set my Thomas agin' the Lord.

We got the good news on Saturday mornin' an' in

the afternoon was the covenant meetin'. It was jest about a year from the time that Huldy handed me the "Lord's Money" book. I remember how I got up in the meetin' then and talked, not because I'd anything to say, but bein' deacon, I felt as if I ought to, an' told the brethren I hadn't made no progress, an' all that—jest what I commonly said. How could I talk that way when I'd had a year o' sech uncommon blessin, an' with Huldy beside me a cryin' for joy because our Thomas had been converted. No I couldn't keep from breakin' down, an' thankin' the Lord for his goodness to me an' mine, an' I knew that givin' my tenth, though it had come so begredgin'ly, had been a help to me. I warn't sech a small, waspish critter as I was afore.

The next year I was man enough to divide my tenth with Huldy, an' sech good times as we had investin' it. Now, Huldy was great on what we call the "Inasmuch charities"—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one o' the least o' these," etc. She was always a findin' some bed-ridden old woman to help, or crippled child, or some other case o' need, while I couldn't hardly sleep o' nights a thinkin' o' the great West, with the foreigners a comin' into it, an' of the poor freedmen of the South, or o' the great heathen world that needs the gospel. We'd spend hours an' hours a talkin' it over, an' as we did so we'd get nearer to each other, an' I trust nearer the Lord.

It's now been a good many years that we've been a tryin' this tenth business, an' I wouldn't go back to the old helter-skelter way o' givin' for anythin'.

Huldy has jest been to the city to see the children, an' she came home with her face all aglow. Our Thomas an' the minister's Fred, who married our Mary, have gone into business together, an' are doin' first rate; but that isn't the best of it, they've started a mission in the wickedest part o' the city, and Huldy said it did her old soul good to hear those young voices a tellin' them poor ignorant ones of the love of Jesus, an' to see 'em a listenin' an' a comin' into the kingdom.

As I'm a closin' I've got this much to tell you: if you want to be a happy Christian you must let your prayin' an' praisin' an' givin' go together, an' I will say that Huldy never did a better thing for me than when she gave me the "Lord's Money" book.

Concerning Obedience and Punishment.

BY B. Q. R.

"Doris, will you please go down stairs and get me a glass of water?"

"O mamma! I've just got my dolly ready for a bath."

"All right!" said Nell, pleasantly, "I'll get it myself."

I searched my sister's face in vain for a suggestion of sarcasm, and, not approving of her placidity, said to the child,—

"I'm surprised, Doris, that you wouldn't do that for your dear mother."

"I do lots of things," was her reply.

"Yes, you do, darling," said her mother. "Auntie hasn't been here long enough to see how helpful you are."

"You see," said Nell, turning to me, "I draw a decided line between commands and requests. If I tell Doris to do a thing, I expect her to do it. If I ask a favor of her, she should, in my opinion, have the privilege of refusing. She rarely does refuse, as you will have the opportunity of seeing. It is easy to ask too much of these willing little hands and feet. By turning their help into a burden, I could make the children ungracious."

"Then you do believe in obedience?" I asked.

"Most certainly. I am sufficiently old-fashioned to think it does not hurt a child to mind. He thus learns to respect rightful authority. I like prompt obedience, too, without question or explanation of the reasonableness of the command. A child should be taught to trust to his parents' judgment in all matters. If explanations are to be given, let them come after obedience, I say, not before. One reason only do I follow my children; this is the right thing; we must do the right."

I here recalled two of the mottoes on the nursery walls. "Do right, and fear nothing," and this from the Brownies,—

"Do only what is right,
And keep your heart light."

But Nell was talking:—

"My belief is that a child's character becomes stronger by each act of obedience to proper authority, that it is better for him to renounce a wrong act than to be forcibly detained from continuing it."

Just at this moment came Frank, with a large volume in his arms. Nell said quickly: "Frank, that is one of papa's nice books. Go and put it in the other room."

He did not move.

"Go at once and put the book away," she repeated.