

RECEIVING AND GIVING.

"Did you know, dear, that Mrs. Pierson has been sick for three or four days?"

"No; I had heard nothing of it."

"I thought you hadn't, or you would have said something about it. I have been told that she has been complaining a good deal because her pastor has not called on her in her illness."

"Why, how could I visit her when no one told me she was sick?" said the Rev. Mr. Florence, with a slight flush. "No doubt she sent word to her physician as soon as she was taken ill, but left her pastor to learn of it by accident; and now finds fault with him because he is not omniscient. I fear Mrs. Pierson is given to such inconsistency of conduct."

"Oh, yes, of course," agreed the minister's wife. "She is known as one of the chronic grumblers of the church. Her reputation is well established in that respect. In our Aid Society she is always getting her feelings lacerated, always thinking of herself, and often threatening to drop her name from our roll when things don't go her own way, though she hasn't done so yet."

"Is she willing to work when asked to?"

"No, she is always too busy, or not well enough. Yet when she is not placed on the most important committees or given the most prominent official position, she complains of being slighted. But never mind, dear," added Mrs. Florence, checking herself, "there are such people everywhere. One must bear with them, I suppose," with a sigh. "All of us have our besetting sins. We must do Mrs. Pierson all the good we can."

"You are a kind-hearted, sympathetic little woman," said the clergyman, stooping and printing a warm kiss on his wife's forehead; "always trying to overlook troublesome people's faults. Well, you are actuated by the true principle, the principle of the Gospel. I must go to see Mrs. Pierson at once, although I am far in arrears with my other work. She may be

seriously ill," and he went to the wardrobe for his hat, overcoat, and gloves.

When he entered Mrs. Pierson's sick room he found her sitting up in a comfortable chair, convalescent, though looking slightly pale. Her indisposition had evidently not been very serious or of long continuance. She looked up at her pastor a little reproachfully, and the words with which she greeted him, as he took her hand, were these:

"Why, Brother Florence, you are almost a stranger! I thought you had forsaken us. I am afraid you are not a very good shepherd; you don't look as carefully as you ought after your sheep."

Mr. Florence was stung by this ungracious salutation, and felt the blood mounting to his temples, but he was a Christian gentleman, and restrained the impulse that prompted him to answer in a tone of rebuke. He merely said:

"Had I known of your illness I should have come at once. If you needed me, you should have sent for me as you did for your physician. It was only by an accident that I learned a half-hour ago that you were sick."

"Is that possible?" sighed the invalid, drawing her face in such a woe-begone way that she looked the very picture of neglected virtue. "Well, if you didn't hear of it before, I'll have to excuse you. But it just shows how selfish people are that they did not inform you sooner of my suffering condition. Here I've been sick for nearly a week—and I thought I should die the first few days—and yet no one in the church thought enough of me to send my pastor word. O dear! how selfish people are!"

"Did you instruct anyone to tell any of my people of your indisposition?" inquired Mr. Florence, looking at her a little keenly.

"No, of course not," the sick woman rejoined. "What's the use of belonging to a church if the members never keep track of one? I never was so neglected in my life. Would you believe me, Mr. Florence? Not one of your members has

called on me since I was taken with this sickness—not one!" and her dark eyes flashed angrily. "Can you expect me to remain in a church where I have been treated with such shameful neglect? I think I shall withdraw from Harrison street church as soon as I am well—if I ever get well—and go where people are more thoughtful of others."

Had she been in a debilitated condition Mr. Florence would have borne all this abuse of his faithful people meekly and uncomplainingly; but her vehement speech proved that she had a good deal of vital energy, and would be in no danger of sustaining injury by listening to a little plain speaking.

The time had come to do that. He would strike while the iron was hot. Abuse of himself he would not have resented, but he could not silently give ear to such a tirade against his true and loyal people. For their sake, and the sake of the poor morbid woman before him, he resolved to tell the unvarnished truth, even at the risk of displeasing her.

"Mrs. Pierson," he said, in the clear, firm tone of which he was master, "you are doing injustice to your fellow-members, who, I feel persuaded, had not learned of your illness. All of them are busy people, and cannot spare the time to run into your house every day or two merely to inquire after your health, and you ought not to expect it of them. If you wanted them to come you should have conveyed the intelligence to them in some way. Besides, within the last few months there have been at least a dozen of my people on the sick list, one of them quite dangerously ill. Let me ask, Mrs. Pierson, how many of these have you called on?"

"Why—ahem!—ahem!" coughed the woman. "I haven't called on any of them. The fact is, I've been too busy, I couldn't; and then I didn't know they were sick."

"Did you make any effort to find out?" catechised the clergyman.

"Well, no; I didn't."

"Then why do you complain of neglect when you have yourself been so neglectful of others? There is Mrs. Batinger, for example, who has been a confirmed invalid for two years, and is now at the point of death. She only lives four blocks from here. Have you ever called on her?"

"I—I—believe not—"

"Besides," pursued Mr. Florence, having gotten started, "two months ago my own children were dangerously ill with the scarlet fever. Many of my parishioners came to the gate—we would not permit them to enter the house lest the disease should be spread—and made kindly inquiries and offered their help. Did you come near us during that trying period?"

"Oh, no!—I was afraid that I and my children might take the disease."

"Yes; all along you have been thinking of yourself, and not of others; you have been expecting to receive sympathy and help, but have withheld your own. If you neglect others they will forget you. That is human nature. Be kind and thoughtful of others, and, as a rule, they will pay you back in kind. I fear you have forgotten the precept of our Saviour, when he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive;' or, perhaps, you have reversed it."

The poor woman burst into tears, but I fear they were globules of self-pity rather than of repentance; for she murmured and sniffed: "It is very unkind of my pastor to lecture me in this way, and that when I'm sick, too! O dear! O dear!"

"I did not mean to be unkind," responded Mr. Florence, soothingly; "I spoke for your own good, as you will see by-and-by if you will remember my words."

With a brief prayer he quitted the house. His plain speaking was not without effect. Sooner than he had hoped it bore excellent fruitage. Six months later Mrs. Pierson was heard to say: "I never had so many kind friends as I have now, and it all comes because I have moved out of the land of 'Receive' into the paradise of 'Give.'"—*N. Y. Advocate.*



A CORONER'S INQUEST.