

man, on the problem "*Who paid these missionaries?*" "The poor beggars can't pay them out there," he said half aloud, bethinking him of several subsidies he had been forced to send out to his own lad in early days. The farmers have enough to do to provide for themselves. And then think of a missionary with a circuit to travel of 3,000 miles, and perhaps only meeting 300 people, poor cow-boys and hired hands, most of them. It was a new thought to him, that the Great Missionary Societies had the *vast fields of British Colonies to labour in.*

Then his thoughts took another turn. He reflected how useful his son would have been to him in England. That led him to think of his business, and the events of the week. There had been a shipment of small arms to the West Coast of Africa. He recollected seeing the iron-bound packages lowered on to the trolley as he stood on the dock quay, and as he thought of these consignments his mind wandered away to sea once more, accompanying the cargo ship across the great grey ocean.

Again the missionary appeared (how persistent this missionary was), this time discoursing to a crowd of rough sailors in the dingy between decks of the barque. Anon, he was at the Coast of Africa. He saw the long low hills, the sandy beach, the breaking surf, the stunted palms, and the wattle huts. In his imagination he was ashore now. He saw the drunken sailors inciting the poor savages to drink. He saw the guns and the fire water of civilized Europe in the African kraal. Then once more the missionary appeared, and Mr. Portley began to realize what the difficulty must be of preaching a gospel of peace with the tokens of war at his elbow. He thought of the hardships of a missionaries' life; of the dysentery, the malaria, the fever, the thousand insect pests, the perils of wild beasts and wilder men—and then he thought of the 6d. he had given to the missionary cause; and something almost akin to shame began to suffuse his face. He wished he hadn't sent that 6d. Sixpence wouldn't go very far in the Mission field. *And how very great that field was!* India! Fancy India with its millions, and China too; he knew something about China for his firm had dealings with a house in Hong Kong. Why, they said that there were 400 millions in China, and if all the missionaries out there were planted down in parishes like clergymen at home, each one would have to evangelize a district containing a million souls at least, and all heathens to, brought up in it. Why the idea was perfectly preposterous! Were the Societies asleep?—why didn't they send out more men? "Just think," he said to himself, "of a business undermanned like that." But—and here his conscience began to whisper, perhaps he was to blame. Had he even given to the Mission cause? He remembered drop-

ping halfpence into the box, when he was a tiny boy, and he had given a sixpence now and then since, that was all. He really must send something if only as conscience money. His old uncle made all his money in India. Some of his savings had found their way to Mr. Portley's pocket. "Ah! there were fortunes to be made in those days," he said meditatively—"England has had her millions out of those old Indian principalities. I wonder how many missionaries are out there now? Quite a handful I suppose; and yet we owe those Hindoos a big debt of Gospel teaching in return for all the money we have had of them and the opium we have made them smoke. I'll speak to our firm, and ask them to subscribe, for they've made many a thousand in India in their time. It is perfectly surprising how blind rich people are to their duties. Our house ought to give a hundred at least." But at this point, conscience began to whisper. "And you too, Mr. Portley. Do you owe nothing to the Lord? What would Christian England have been, if the Church of old had cared as little for the Foreign Missions' field as you?" Conscience was getting quite troublesome! Mr. Portley felt actually and genuinely ashamed of that sixpence.

But at this particular moment, his daughter returned with her bright Sunday face, and a bundle of missionary papers. All that afternoon Mr. Portley sat indoors and read with an interest he had never felt before. What a mighty work it was! this work of the S.P.G., and then the refrain of the old missionary hymn began to run through his brain:

"Can we, whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high,

Can we to men benighted the lamp of life deny?"

The familiar words deepened the impression already working on his mind. The greatness of England's obligation rose up before him for mercies in the past and the enormous responsibility resting on her Church to fulfil Christ's command to preach the Gospel to every creature. And when, that evening a thought sneaked into his mind suggested doubtless by something he had read, that charity began at home, and there was plenty for English money to do in English slums—he met it manfully, for his conscience was awake; and he saw for the first time the meaning of that misused adage, for England's home is wherever her children dwell. Mr. Portley went to Church that evening, and when the bag came round, the coin he dropped in was gold. It was Mr. Portley's conscience money.

THE best way to stir up a sluggish parish or mission is to make it feel its obligation to the heathen world. One act of faith which costs a Christian an effort and a sacrifice for Christ's sake will bring a sense of strength and ability previously unsuspected.