

## HOW MR. STRINGENT BECAME LIBERAL.

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The spendthrift and the miser are both covetous. The difference is, that the former covets that he may spend quickly, and the latter that he may hoard and never spend. The one wishes to be thought rich; the other to conceal his property, and to be thought poorer than he is. It is easy for the one to part with his property, and to give away requires no sacrifice; it is hard for the other to use enough of his gains to make himself comfortable. Both traits increase with years, and it is very seldom that any one is ever known to pass from one extreme to the other.—Religious principle sometimes comes in and makes the spendthrift become careful, and it sometimes even opens the hand of the covetous, so that he becomes comparatively liberal.

Mr. Stringent was now over sixty years old—very old, I should have called, when I was a child. He was “brought up” in the thrifty, yet economical New England way. His father was a small, snug farmer: but as his wants were but few, he was called “well to do in the world,” which, I suppose, means, “well to do *for* this world.” His children received a fair education in the red school house on Parker’s Hill, and were always among the best scholars. No better cows, and no better sheep, were owned in those parts, than those owned by old Mr. Stringent. His maxim was “to keep what you have got, and get all that you can get.” This maxim he inculcated most faithfully into the minds of his children. In process of time old Stringent died, and, fortunately, such men carry nothing with them. The children grew up, and were scattered abroad, and I have nothing to say about them, except that they were all keen to gain this world. I am to speak of the youngest son, Simon, who took “the old place,” *i.e.*, the farm, agreeing to pay off his brothers and sisters their shares as fast as he could earn it.

And now Simon, in his youth, was married and settled at “Graigg’s Valley,” as the farm was called. He had to support himself and young family, and yearly pay

a good round sum towards his debt.—Early and late he toiled. Carefully and anxiously he saved everything possible.—His expenses were the lowest possible; everything went to “the debt.” And if there was anything which Simon dreaded more than another, it was a call for charity, or as he termed it, “the everlasting contribution box;” the announcement that “a collection would be taken up next Sabbath,” would invariably make him unwell and unable to attend church. Indeed, so delicate was his constitution that once in a while, when he had been caught, he was sure to have the nose-bleed, and to be compelled to go out before the box could get to him. But years passed on, and his habits grew strong, and his debts grew feeble, until at the end of fifteen years he had paid off every debt, and owned a twenty-thousand dollar farm, free from every incumbrance.

But now a new chapter in his life was to be experienced. There was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people. Very many sang the new song. Very many rejoiced in the new hope of life eternal. Several of the children of Simon were among the newborn children of light. Simon was the last to become interested. He was the last to feel his sins; and he struggled and resisted a long, long time before he yielded to the demands and conditions of Christ. Then he was very slow to take up the crosses, as they lay in his path. He was afraid to commit himself. He was slow to erect the altar of prayer in his house. He was slow to confess Christ before the world. But he battled all these difficulties and overcame them, because he really had Christian principle in his soul. But now he met a difficulty which seemed insurmountable—unexpected, and very trying. He found that now his brethren, and his Bible, took it for granted that he would be liberal.—How could he, who had never given away a dollar a year, be expected to give tens and even hundreds? How hard to understand the christian fact—that “none of us liveth to himself!” He tried to convince himself that a man’s first duty is to provide for his own family; and conscience told him that he had been doing nothing else all his life. He tried to satisfy