

'Herrings For Nothing.'

On the coast of Lancashire, on a spot where the beach shelved gently down, I took my stand one Sabbath morning. I read as loudly as possible Isaiah lv., and then engaged in prayer. So prepared to speak for Jesus I looked round for the first time, and there were hundreds of people stopping to hear. I had to abandon the sermon I had prepared and to cast myself on the Lord for a word in season, and then I commenced as follows: 'I want you to think of a bitter east wind, a declining day, fast falling snow, and a short, muddy street in London, at the far east. Put these thoughts together and add to them a picture of a tall stout man in a rough great-coat, and with a large comforter around his neck, buffeting through the wind and storm. The darkness is coming rapidly as a man with a basket on his head turns the corner of the street, and there are two of us on opposite sides. He cries loudly as he goes, 'Herrings! three a penny! red herrings! good and cheap at three a penny!' So crying he passes along the street, crosses at its end and comes to where I am standing at the corner. Here he pauses, evidently wishing to fraternize with somebody, as a relief from the dull times and disappointed hopes of trade. I presume I appear a suitable object, as he comes close to me and commences conversation.

"Governor, what do you think of these 'ere herrings?" As he speaks I note that he has three in his hand, while the remaining stock are deftly balanced in the basket on his head. 'Don't you think they're good?' and he offers me the opportunity of testing them by scent, which I courteously but firmly declined; 'and don't you think they're cheap as well?' I assert my decided opinion that they are good and cheap. 'Then, look you, governor, why can't I sell 'em? Yer have I walked a mile and a half along this dismal place, offering these good and cheap uns; and nobody don't buy none!' 'I do not wonder at that,' I answer, 'the people have no work at all to do, and they are starving.' 'Ah! then, governor,' he rejoined, 'I've put my foot in it this time; I knew they was werry poor, but I thought, three a penny 'ud tempt them. But if they haven't the ha'pence they can't spend 'em, sure enough; so there's nothing for it but to carry 'em back, and try and sell 'em elsewhere.' 'How much will you take for the lot?' I inquired. 'Do you mean profit an' all, governor?' 'Yes.' 'Then I'll take four shillin,' and be glad to get 'em.' I put my hand in my pocket, produced that amount, and handed it to him. 'Right! governor, thank'ee! What'll I do with 'em?' he said, as he quickly transferred the coins to his own pocket. 'Go round this corner into the middle of the road, shout with all your might, 'Herrings for nothing' and give them to every man, woman and child that comes to you till your basket is emptied.' He hesitated as if there were something fraudulent in the transaction, but being told to return my money or do as I had required, he went into the middle of the adjoining street and went along shouting, 'Herrings for nothing! real good herrings for nothing!' I stood at the corner, unseen, to watch his progress; and speedily he neared the house where a tall woman I knew stood at the first floor window, looking out upon him. 'Here you are, missus,' he bawled, 'herrings for nothing! a fine chance for yer; come an' take 'em!' The woman shook her head unbelievably and left the window. 'Vot a fool!' said he; 'but they won't be all so. Herrings for nothing!' A little child came

out to look at him, and he called to her, 'Yer, my dear, take these in to your mother, tell her how cheap they are—herrings for nothing.' But the child was afraid of him and them, and ran indoors. So down the street, in the snowy slush and mud, went the cheap fish, the vender crying loudly as he went, 'Herrings for nothing!' Thus he reached the very end; and then returning to retrace his steps, he continued his double cry, as he came, 'Herrings for nothing!' and then in a lower but very audible key, 'Oh, you fools!' 'Well!' I said to him calmly, as he reached me at the corner, 'Well!' he repeated, 'if yer think so! When you gave me the money for herrings as yer didn't want, I thought you was training for a lunatic 'sylum! Now I thinks all the people round here are fit company for yer. But what'll I do with the herrings, if yer don't take 'em and they won't have 'em?'

"'We'll try again together,' I replied; 'I will come with you this time, and we'll both shout.' Into the road we both went; and he shouted once more, and for the last time, 'Herrings for nothing!' Then I called out loudly. They heard the voice and they knew it well; and they came out at once, in twos and threes and sixes, men, women and children, all striving to reach the welcome food. As fast as I could give them from the basket I handed three to each eager applicant, until all were speedily disposed of. When the basket was empty the hungry crowd who had none was far greater than those that had been supplied; but they were too late; there was no more 'Herrings for nothing.' Foremost among the disappointed was a tall woman of a bitter tongue who began vehemently, 'Why haven't I got any? Ain't I as good as they? Ain't my children as hungry as theirs? Why haven't I got any?' Before I had time to reply, the vender stretched out his arm toward her, saying, 'Why, governor, that's the very women as I offered 'em to first, and she turned up her nose at 'em.' 'I didn't,' she rejoined passionately; 'I didn't,' believe you meant it!' 'Yer goes without for yer unbelief,' he replied. 'Good-night, and thankee, governor.'

'As I told the story on the sea beach, the crowd gathered and increased and looked at each other; first smiled and then laughed outright. It was my time then, and I said, 'You cannot help laughing at the quaint story, which is strictly true. But are you sure you would not have done as they did? Nay, are you sure you are not ten thousand times worse than they? Their unbelief only cost them a hungry stomach; but what may your unbelief cost you?—God—not man—God has sent his messengers to you repeatedly for many years to offer pardon for nothing! peace for nothing! salvation for nothing!' He has sent to your houses, your homes, your hearts, the most loving and tender offers that even an Almighty God could frame; and what have you replied? Have you taken the trouble to reply at all? Have you turned away in fear like the little child? Many have heard a voice they believed; and they have received the gifts of God. Will you not come to God by Jesus now before it is forever too late? He is waiting, watching, pleading for you! There is salvation, full, free, eternal, utmost, complete redemption—all for nothing, 'without money and without price.'"

'Though we had no place to retire to, it was good to walk up and down the beach, showing the way of God more perfectly to some who were attracted and impressed by this commencement of a sermon by the sea.'—H.E.B. in an 'English Leaflet.'

The Ants of Samoa.

A missionary in Samoa, writes of the difficulty which the white ants make for house builders in that island. He says:

'We like our house and its position very much. The house is certainly substantial, and the natives have put a good roof on. It has, however, one very serious fault; it swarms with white ants. Although the walls were whitewashed just before we came, they began to assume the appearance of a railway map of England with the ant tracks. We have tried everything we can think of, but nothing seems to get rid of them. Unfortunately the stone walls have wooden posts inside, and there the ants have their nests and cannot be got at. The carpenter at work here says that nothing short of burning the house down would get rid of them. To give you some idea of their depredations, I will tell you that I brought from Sydney a new pair of doors for the study. Before putting them up, I had the door-posts and all the wood-work and some of the masonry taken down and soaked in kerosene, and then painted with arsenical paste. In less than a week after the doors were put up I pushed my thumb right into one of them. I have had a book-case made for my study. It was put up one afternoon; the next morning there were two ant-tracks about eighteen inches long inside one of the cupboards. All that we can do is to watch carefully, and directly we see the beginning of a track, drop some powdered arsenic into it; that seems to check them for a time at least.'

They Count Up.

A pastor one day visited one of his parishioners, a poor woman who lived in one small room and made a living by her needle. He says:

'She put three dollars into my hand and said, 'There is my contribution to the church fund.' 'But you are not able to give so much.' 'Oh, yes,' she replied, 'I have learned how to give now.'

"How is that?" I asked. 'Do you remember,' she answered, 'that sermon three months ago, when you told us that you did not believe one of your people was so poor but that if he loved Christ, he could find some way of showing that love by his gifts? Well, I went home and had a good cry over that sermon. I said to myself, 'My minister don't know how poor I am, or he never could have said that;' but from crying I at last got to praying, and, when I told Jesus all about it, I seemed to get an answer in my heart that dried up all tears.'

'What was the answer,' I asked, deeply moved by her recital.

Only this: 'If you cannot give as other people do, give like a little child.' and I have been doing it ever since. When I have a penny over from my sugar or loaf of bread, I lay it aside for Jesus, and so I have gathered it all in pennies. Since I began to give to the Lord, I have always had more money in the house for myself, and it is wonderful how the work comes pouring in; so many are coming to see me that I never knew before. It used to be I could not pay my rent without borrowing something, but it is so no more. The dear Lord is so kind."

He concluded by saying that this poor woman in five months brought fifteen dollars, all saved in a nice little box he had given her, and in twelve months twenty-one dollars. He says: 'I need hardly add that she apparently grew more in Christian character in that one year than in all the previous years of her connection with the church.'—Pacific Methodist.