

**A Girls' Prayer-Meeting in Japan.**

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

"The dear little girls," said the lady, in the letter just sent from Japan, "Take ten minutes out of their play-time To pray to the Saviour of man; To the Saviour who died to redeem them. Whose love sheds a light on their way. They cease from the pleasure of play-time For the pleasure of kneeling to pray."

"I heard this all read in a letter," said Rosa; "twas sent to mamma; And I thought of the dark-eyed and slender

Small maids in that country afar, Afar over blue-rounding waters, Where idols are worshipped in dread; I was glad that the dear little daughters Were coming to Jesus, instead

"Of bowing to Buddha, and of living Like slaves who have never a thought Beyond the swift hour of the present And the task they in meekness have wrought.

But I wondered how many of us girls, Whose mothers have taught them to pray, Ever think of a ten-minute meeting In the hour of our play-time so gay;

"Or go from the fun and the frolic To stand for a moment alone, And lift up a silent petition To him who is King on the throne, Who once was a child with his mother, And knows just how children can feel; Who is near us, our strong elder Brother, With grace all our sorrows to heal.

"Dear girls," said my sweet little Rosa, "Dear, precious young girls of Japan, I think you are teaching a lesson That we all ought to learn if we can. To find some time always for praying, No matter how cumbered with care; In working, in resting, obeying The Master, whose servants we are."

**GIVING.**

**THE OBLIGATION.**

Every one recognizes the obligation to give of our substance unto the Lord. The obligation grows out of the fact that we receive everything from him, and are only entrusted with what we have as his stewards, and are bound by all the considerations of dependence, responsibility, and gratitude to use it as he directs. It is our duty to give. It is commanded in the Word of God.

**THE MOTIVE.**

A person may give largely and yet be as intensely selfish as one who gives penuriously, the object of the gift being to win favour or applause. A person may give freely and yet be utterly lacking in true generosity, their liberality springing mainly, if not entirely, from indifference to the value of what they give. A person may give in a way that fosters pride, ambition, vanity, envy, or lust; and in this way the motive may make the seemingly virtuous act a crime. All true Christian giving should spring from a sense of obligation to God and a sincere desire to glorify him. When this motive prompts the act it becomes at once both the exponent of a noble character and a ministry of good to the giver as well as those who receive the gift.

**THE PLEASURE OF GIVING.**

Perhaps every one who has given anything from a proper motive understands from experience how true the saying is that it is better to give than to receive. It ministers a higher pleasure. It promotes a nobler feeling. It creates a keener sense of joy. It confers a richer reward. Every right-minded person experiences a happiness in making other people happy that is peculiar in its nature and unequalled in its moral helpfulness. God has ordained that it shall be so in the eternal order of things. Deluded thousands spend money in a myriad different ways, seeking happiness by gratifying selfish desires, who are disappointed in their search, and after a few fleeting sensations of inferior pleasure, find themselves tortured by ennui, their vitality impaired, their thirst increased by the salt waters of which they madly drink.

**A NOTABLE EXAMPLE OF GIVING.**

Moses and the children of Israel set us an example of how to build a church while they were camping in the wilderness. They wanted to erect a "tabernacle," a temporary and portable temple, in which to worship God. It was to be a magnificent pavilion, a costly and splendid tent. Such only was befitting the service of Jehovah. They didn't get up a festival, or have a show, or set an oyster supper, or have tableaux, or amateur theatricals, with Miriam as an

"eloquent" reciting the wonderful Red Sea Act. But "they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold; and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord." That is the way to build a church and to support it yet. There is no other right way. The people offered more than was needed, and Moses had to stop them from giving.

**THE WIDOW AND HER MITE.**

One day Jesus went into the temple and saw the people putting in their contributions; and many that were rich made large gifts, but a poor widow woman came along and put in two mites, which was all she had. Jesus called his disciples' attention to it, and told them that she had given more than all the rest. He commended her liberality. But it is a mistake to think he meant that everybody should do what the poor widow did; that every one should give all to the treasury of the church. Perhaps this poor woman had only herself to care for; perhaps would find employment to support herself, or already had. What Jesus did intend to teach was that the two mites of the widow, being her all, though it was as nothing compared with the larger gifts of the rich, was in the sight of God a really greater sum. God looked at the motive behind it. That was the measure of the gift. We are niggardly or liberal, not according to the amount we give, but according to our ability and the motive that prompts us.

**THE RICH YOUNG MAN.**

Jesus told a rich young man one day that if he would be perfect he must go and sell all he had and give it to the poor, and come and follow him. Jesus perhaps saw that it was the only way for this young man to be saved. He may have seen that this young man, sincere as he undoubtedly was then, would be ruined by his money; and if this was so, all would agree that it was best for him to sell all he had, give it to charitable purposes, and devote himself exclusively to the service of Jesus. But such a rule, if it were carried out generally, would make human society impossible. Or Jesus may have meant simply to test this young man as he did Abraham when he commanded him to offer up Isaac, his son, as a burnt sacrifice. Had he, like Abraham, promptly obeyed, it is very likely that Jesus would have checked him, and bade him use his fortune for the glory of God. One who is willing to give all at the command of God can be trusted to use all. One who is not willing to give all when God calls for it is safer without any.

**THE TENTH.**

The tenth of our increase belongs to God as our duty. If a man makes a hundred dollars, ten dollars belongs to God. If he makes a hundred bushels of corn, ten bushels belong to God. If he has a hundred sheep or hogs or cows, ten in every hundred belong to God. If we want to be happy and prosper, we must be obedient and live according to God's order. What an abundance there would be for the support of all the institutions and enterprises of the Church if Christians would bring the tithes into the treasury of the Lord! We would have thousands where we now have hundreds of dollars for the work of the kingdom. And yet giving does not beguile until we have paid the tenth. We owe the tenth: we don't give that. It belongs to God already. Nine parts are ours, given us by God. According as we love him and appreciate his goodness, and desire to carry forward his glorious kingdom on earth, we will give as he has prospered us. Some after they have paid the tenth are able to give large amounts to the cause of Christian benevolence, education, or missions; and the liberal soul shall be made fat.

**SYSTEMATIC GIVING.**

It is far better to give a regular part of our income, whether much or little, than to give simply according to impulse. Most people are able to give a weekly contribution, and that was Paul's plan. He wrote to the Corinthians: "Now concerning the collection for the saints. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." That looks as if Paul didn't like to take collections. If so, some of his modern successors share his sentiments. It is our opinion that much harm has been done to the spirit of liberality and the

whole matter of Christian giving in the church by emotional benevolence. Some stirring appeal has awakened a momentary impulse to give by arousing the sympathies of an audience in behalf of a good cause. This is all right, provided there is behind it the moral force of a conscience trained to systematic and regular benevolence.

**WESLEY'S FINANCIAL PLAN.**

We have not improved on many of Wesley's plans. We need to go back to him to learn something we never knew, or have forgotten. It was lucky for Wesley that he came so early. If he were here to-day, the probability is that we would turn him out of the Methodist Church; he was too advanced for us. He adopted the class-meeting, not, as many think, as an agency for spiritual culture, so much as a method of financial work. The leader was to see each member of his class, collect his weekly contribution, and give such advice as he might think proper on religious matters. Wesley's idea was to subdivide the membership into these small circles, with lay leaders, who should personally attend to the collections. Gradually "the penny a week and shilling a quarter" idea gave place to that of religious instruction, and the class-meeting became a school of spiritual culture unequalled by anything that Methodism has known since for promoting the religious life of its people. But the fundamental idea of the original class-meeting, as Mr. Wesley designed it, was systematic and regular benevolence.

**CHEERFUL GIVING.**

The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. To give grudgingly is to wound the Holy Spirit. It indicates a total lack of the true motive. Better not give at all than to give reluctantly. Remember Ananias and Sapphira. Do not trifle with the obligations of property. Beware of covetousness. It is idolatry, and no idolater can enter the kingdom of God.—Epworth Era.

**"AS WHITE AS SNOW."**

BY REV. EDWARD A. RAND.

"How fast it snows!" exclaimed a boy, standing in the door of the big red barn on the McDonald place.

John McDonald was looking out across the field by the grove, "a wide, level stretch of green in summer with the exception of a small, miry pond in the centre. Beyond the field was the green grove of spruce that gave the field its name.

"It snows faster and faster, faster and faster," said John.

As he spoke, the flakes seemed to grow as separate tufts of snow and also as a big whole coming down everywhere, everywhere, crowding faster, thicker, hanging a beautiful veil between the boy in the barn door and the green grove, hiding the latter altogether.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed John. It was a relief to him to watch the spectacle, for it diverted his thoughts from a subject that was necessary and that we must notice, and yet it gave him and gives any one else reflections of an unpleasant nature. He had taken a very sensible course—that of reflection upon his spiritual state. He saw that his life was unworthy before God, and how could he become better?

"Oh, dear!" he sighed, "the more I think about my sins, the bigger a sinner do I see myself to be, in my talking, in my thinking, in my acting. Oh, dear! It is not a pleasant thing to look at myself—and yet I ought to, I know."

Now, instead of those reflections, came this spectacle of a great multitude of tiny white wings flying down through the air.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" he said. And look! That old black bush is growing white! And the mud around the pond—that will be covered with white. And there is a heap of old weeds—why, the snow will cover them! Oh, look!"

He was watching this fairy-like scene of the descent of the snow upon the earth covering it and whitening it, when there flashed through his mind the minister's text the previous Sunday morning: "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

The watcher in the barn doorway kept saying to himself, "White as snow! White as snow! Yes, he—he can forgive everything! How the snow covers everything!"

And then a voice seemed to say, "Cannot God cover your sins? Stop thinking about them! Think of his mercy, think of the Saviour. Go to him!"

The voice was really memory speaking to him, memory calling back the minister's sermon. He had been so busy

thinking about his sins and how bad his heart looked, that he had forgotten the wise counsel in the sermon to think of God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ. That forgiveness covers the past—goes all over the past like the snow covering the field.

"I don't want to stay here," John now murmured, and turned away from the vision of the white snow-flakes. "I want to pray, and I will go!"

Here he looked up toward the roof of the big red barn.

"I will go up on the hay-mow and pray," he said.

He climbed the tall ladder leading up the side of the hay-mow, sought a corner away at one side, and there a troubled boy knelt down, and, looking toward the cross of the Saviour, yielded up his heart to him whose mercy comes down abundant as the winter flakes, and his word is: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow!"

**HOW A BEAUTIFUL HYMN WAS WRITTEN.**

One day Mr. Wesley was sitting by an open window, looking out over the bright and beautiful fields. Presently a little bird, sitting about in the sunshine, attracted his attention. Just then a hawk came sweeping down toward the little bird. The poor thing, very much frightened, was darting here and there, trying to find some place of refuge. In the bright sunny air, in the leafy trees of the green fields, there was no hiding-place from the fierce grasp of the hawk. But seeing an open window and a man sitting by it, the bird flew, in its extremity, toward it, and, with a beating heart and quivering wing, found refuge in Mr. Wesley's bosom. He sheltered it from the threatening danger and saved it from a cruel death.

Mr. Wesley was at that time suffering from severe trials, and was feeling the need of refuge in his own time of trouble, as much as did the trembling little bird that nestled so safely in his bosom. So he took up his pen and wrote that sweet hymn:

"Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high!"

That prayer grew into one of the most beautiful hymns in our language, and multitudes of people, when in sorrow and danger, have found comfort while they have said or sung the last lines of that hymn.

**A BRAVE MOTHER.**

Anna Campbell, a mountaineer, was a brave woman. A flood came down the Engadine from the melting of two hundred glaciers, carrying some twenty bridges along with it; when over the bridge of wood that in the narrow gorges separated the town from the pastor's house, Anna dared for her husband's sake to cross; and, the two side piers being just then swept away, she was left standing in the raging flood and storm, alone on the midmost. They heard her clear, musical voice singing, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit"; when suddenly remembering that she had the keys of the cupboard at her girdle, and the children would need their supper, she stopped her prayer and shouted, "There's the keys!" and threw them ashore, disappearing at the same moment down the ravine.

**THERE WAIN'T NOTHING.**

The following story of excessive zeal is told by a young minister who spent last summer in missionary work among the Green Mountains. The two maiden ladies with whom he boarded kept no horse, and were wont to rely upon the courtesy of neighbours to bring their mail from the post-office.

As the ladies and their boarders were sitting on the piazza one evening, a neighbour passed in the direction of the village, and one of the sisters called out, "Are you going to the village, Jonas?"

"Yes," replied Jonas, pulling up his horse; "can I do anything for you?"

"You might get our mail at the office, if would be so kind," said "Aunt Clara." Jonas drove on, but did not return from the village until after the household had retired. Shortly before midnight the whole house was aroused by a thumping at the door, and calls of "Clary,—Clary,—Aunt Clara!"

Aunt Clara arose hastily, lit a lamp, and slipping a wrapper over her night-robe, descended and unlocked the door.

"Why it's you, Jonas!" said Clara.

"What a turn you gave me!" "There wain't nothing," said Jonas, as he turned to go, full of the happy consciousness of duty performed.