

How Much Owest Thou?

BY MRS. L. E. ALLEN.

WAYBACK through the mists and the shadows,
Where cycles and cycles of time,
With centuries coming and going,
Make history grand and sublime;
Comes forth this question of questions,
From out of the book of God's Word,
Comes forth with a solemn, sad meaning,
"How much owest thou to my Lord?"

O man, with life's care and its burdens,
So heavy and wearing to bear;
O woman, whose sorrows are weaving
The silver threads into thy hair;
How much owest thou for the mercies
That mingle their sweetness with all?
How much for the faith and the courage
That saved thee from many a fall?

O thou who hast won for thy keeping
Rare treasures of silver and gold;
And wist not the unrighteous mammon
Was waiting thy life to enfold;
Came never a questioning spirit,
Was never a silent voice heard,
That said to thy soul as a warning,
"How much owest thou to my Lord?"

Thou, too, who hast treasures of knowledge,
And God-given talents to use,
Where all of life's gifts and its graces,
Are offered from which thou canst choose;
Is the dark world made brighter and better
Because of thy deeds and thy word?
If not, O seeker of knowledge!
"How much owest thou to my Lord?"

O youth, at the threshold of manhood,
With power to be and to do;
With hope like a star hanging o'er thee
And lighting thy life's path all through;
For all that thy future may promise,
Where faithfulness brings its reward;
For victory over temptation,
"How much owest thou to my Lord?"

O maiden, with face like the morning,
With voice than the robin's more sweet,
God gives thee the power of wooing
And winning sad souls to his feet.
While now the glad angels are waiting,
Some beautiful act to record,
They bend to thy soul with a whisper,
"How much owest thou to my Lord?"

How much owe we all, when far nations
In darkness are longing for day?
And close by our doors are the needy,
How can we turn coldly away?
Time, money, and talents are given,
And light shining out of God's Word,
Illumines the page where is written,
"How much owest thou to my Lord?"

A Snake Story.

BY LIZZIE T. LARKIN.

"HURRAH, Uncle Ben! Tell us a story," shouted three merry boys, as they rushed into Uncle Ben's sitting-room.

"By what authority," said their uncle, "do you rush into my room and demand a story, or my life, is it, boys? At any rate, I suppose, my life will be of little worth until I do tell you one, so here goes."

"Oh! good, good," shouted the boys. "Mother has ordered us in out of the rain, and there's really nothing to do in the house, and nobody to help us."

"Well, gather round," said Uncle Ben; and the boys obeyed—in their rush to see who could get closest, nearly upsetting quiet little Jennie, who had been sitting on a stool at her uncle's knee when they came in.

"What shall it be about?"

"A snake story—a good rousing snake story," said the boys. "You've seen so much of Western

life, you must know an abundance of good snake stories."

"And what would my little Jennie like?" said Uncle Ben; "for we mustn't forget her!"

"I'd like to hear about birds or flowers," said Jennie.

"Well, we'll put it to vote," said the good uncle. "All those in favour of snakes please say Aye."

The boys shouted "Aye" almost loud enough for town-meeting.

"Contrary minds, No." A dead silence.

"I guess I won't vote," said little Jennie. "I can have my story some other time."

"Now," said Uncle Ben, "I'm going to tell you about a strange kind of snake with more than one head."

"A double-headed snake!" said Hal. "That would be a curiosity. I saw a double-headed calf the last time I was in Boston."

"Did he eat with both heads?" said Jennie.

"He didn't eat at all—he was stuffed."

"Oh! I didn't know," said Jennie.

"Didn't know that calves and folks don't eat when they are stuffed?" said comical Tom. "Why, I found that out last Thanksgiving."

"Oh, stop!" said Jimmie; "I want to hear about the snake. Where does this double-headed snake live?"

In parts of British America, where the Indians are found; in the United States, in some African regions, in Europe, in some parts of Asia, and even on the Islands of the Sea.

"Well, I should think it was pretty common," said Hal; "and yet I never saw it nor heard of it before."

"Perhaps you know more about it than you think," said their uncle. "I'll go on now, and say that this snake has not only two heads, but a dozen or more; and one strange thing about it is, he has the power, when first seen, to keep all the heads out of sight but one—and you'd think him just as harmless as one of those little green snakes the boys used to pick up when I went to school, to frighten the girls with. And then, when one begins to look at this snake, it fascinates or charms him so that he keeps on looking; then puts out his hand and strokes the reptile, as one would stroke a kitten; and then, before he is aware almost, it gives a spring, and goes right down his throat."

"O Uncle Ben! that's a little too tough," said Jimmie. "This goes beyond what folks call 'fish stories,' if it does come from you."

"But it is true, nevertheless," replied his uncle.

"What becomes of the other heads, uncle?" said little Jennie. "If they are really fastened on to the snake they must go down, too."

"Well, you are right," was the quick reply; "they generally do, and the result is, the man has a nest of snakes in his stomach, that bite and gnaw and torment him so that he wants to be drinking all the time to still the pain and longing he feels; and the worst of it all is, the only stuff that will satisfy him poisons his blood and his brain, leads him to abuse and ill-treat his dearest friends, and ruins him—body and soul."

"Oh!" said Hal, "I begin to see, uncle. I do know something about this old double-headed, treble-headed, I-don't-know-how-many-headed snake, and I've seen some of his heads, too, I guess. Isn't his name Intemperance?"

"Who can give a better name, or, rather, a more appropriate one?" said Uncle Ben.

"Alcohol!" shouted the children.

"And what is the name of the little, innocent-looking head he shows first, which young men—and even boys and girls—think so harmless that they will let it run down their throats?"

"Ale! lager-beer! wine!" came the answer.

"Isn't there one a little more innocent-looking than either of these?"

"Cider!" said little Jennie.

"Yes, you are right," said Uncle Ben. "Strange, none of you boys thought of cider! I wonder why. And didn't I say true: once that innocent-looking little viper in the stomach, the whole vile troop follow, as a general thing?"

"I rather guess so," said Hal, rather reluctantly.

"How is it, boys? Are you going to be willing to run the risk of having a nest of vipers in your stomachs, for the sake of the taste of a little sweet cider? Oh, boys! I rather think, by something I saw the other day, that you need a little special enlightenment on this subject, and you don't realize that you are in danger through your love for cider. I don't know but I had to lose my health, and come all this distance, to show my sister's boys that their feet are standing on slippery places, and to help them get on to a better foundation."

Father Taylor.

FATHER TAYLOR, the famous Boston preacher, who found his life-work among sailors, was himself a sailor in his youth. After his conversion he was at one time taken prisoner, with his shipmates, by a British man-of-war, and as they did not enjoy the ministrations of their chaplain, they urged young Taylor to act in that capacity. His career began in this way:—

Sitting down with one of his shipmates, he asked him to read passages from the Bible. As he read, Taylor listened for a word that would suggest a sermon. He was a prisoner, and felt it; a patriot, and felt it; a Christian, and felt it. The fellow-prisoner and patriot—possibly fellow-Christian also—opened and read from the Ecclesiastes. He struck on this passage:—

"Better is a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king."

"Stop!" cried Taylor; "read that again."

"That will do!" he exclaims. "Give me the chapter and verse."

Chapter and verse were given, and the young man sat brooding his sermon. The hour came, and the audience. The youth began, blundering and tangled, but with the root of the matter in him; which root speedily broke forth into rich blossoms and fruit. As he rushed on the river of his speech, and described the old and foolish king, with burning words of sarcasm and illustration, they all trembled for themselves and their youthful preacher. The king their fathers had fought for eight weary years, from whom they had wrested their independence, was then—though an idiot—"old and foolish," waging war against the sons of their fathers, and holding him and his associates fast in his cruel chains. He blazed in similes, describing such a character. He fired broadside after broadside of wit and madness into the sinking craft. Seeing the peril in which his epithets were placing him, he cried out:—

"You think I mean King George. I don't; I mean the devil!"

This hit was worse than all that preceded it, and set him down at once for being as adroit as he was bold. The officers could have found no fault with such a retreat, and the prisoners exulted in its tact and point.

He was instantly voted their chaplain, and a note was sent to the commandant, asking the privilege of having their own praying and preaching done by their fellow-captive, which was granted.

Thus he began his life-work among his brothers of the sea, in the hold of a prison-vessel, himself a prisoner.