

Farmer Penniman's Dream.

"There's no need of a donation for Mr. Goodman," growled out Mr. Penniman, on his way home from church, after the notice of a proposed donation visit had been given; "he has salary enough without—six hundred dollars a year and a parsonage and garden spot—that's enough for any family to live on; why, it don't cost us near that, and we have six children, and they have only four. 'Twas real mean for Mr. Goodman to exchange, and get that man to give out the notice." And Mr. Penniman fretted away in the ear of his silent wife till they had nearly reached home, quite unmindful of the four children who, with wide open ears, were eagerly listening to every word.

Rev. Mr. Goodman was pastor of a little church in a small village of Maine—a Home Missionary church composed of farmers, with a few members in the village, where two other churches of different denominations were also endeavoring to live and thrive.

Four hundred dollars was the nominal salary of Mr. Goodman from the Home Missionary Society. Of the four hundred Mr. Penniman gave twenty-five dollars, usually in advance, "to get it off his mind," he said. If all the subscribers had followed his example it would have been better for the minister. But the last year's subscription was two hundred dollars in arrears, and the Home Missionary Treasury was empty.

It was mid-winter; the minister's credit and provisions were well nigh exhausted, and nothing had been said of the accustomed donation visit.

Driven almost to desperation, Mr. Goodman rode over to a neighboring city, where one of his classmates was preaching to a large, prosperous church, and laid the case before him.

"Let's exchange," said the sympathizing listener, when the story was told. "I'll give notice of a donation visit on my own responsibility." The exchange was made; and the notice was given, to the astonishment of every one, Mrs. Goodman included.

Mr. Penniman's family went into their large, warm kitchen, laid aside their wrappings, and sat down to a bountiful dinner prepared by the eldest daughter during their absence; and with the appearance of the hot mince pies began the discussion of the coming donation visit.

"Mother, may I go?" from a chorus of little voices, and comments from the older members of the family according to their moods.

"Well, I paid the whole of my subscription long ago," said Mr. Penniman, with a satisfied air, "and if the rest had done the same, there would be no excuse for having a donation visit."

"I don't believe Mr. Jones has paid a cent, and he's rich, too," said Clara, a bright little girl of eleven.

"No, nor Mr. White, nor Mr. Cook, nor even Deacon Slocum," added George, a stout lad of sixteen, who knew more, in his own estimation, than any man in the neighborhood. Mrs. Penniman and the eldest daughter, Mabel, said nothing.

"Mother, I heard my teacher tell the superintendent that if people would only give tithes now, as the Jews did, there would be no need of donation parties. What are tithes?" said Robert, the nine year old son.

"I will tell you all about it this afternoon. Finish your dinner now," was the reply.

An hour later, according to promise, the mother sat, Bible in hand, explaining to her younger children the Jewish law of benevolence. Clara and Robert were finding the references, and James and Minnie were asking numberless questions. Jacob's vision interested them greatly. Robert read the dreamer's morning vow, "Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." "That tithes means tenths. Does it mean a tenth of everything?" asked Robert.

"Turn to Leviticus, xxvii. chapter and 30th, 31st, and 32nd verses," was the mother's reply.

"Why, mother, it says cattle, too," exclaimed Robert in astonishment, "and a tenth of all their grain and their fruit! What! I guess my teacher was right; but does anybody do that now-a-days?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Penniman, "I have known several men in the city who conscientiously gave to the Lord one-tenth of their income, and some of them were far from rich."

"Why can't farmers do the same?" asked Clara.

"I suppose they might," replied the mother with a sigh. "Now turn to Malachi iii. 8-10."

"Let me read that," said Clara, and while she read her father said to himself, "That's all right; I am glad my wife is so faithful in teaching the children, especially in teaching them benevolence. I guess I have paid my tithes this year; twenty-five dollars for the minister, and as good as twenty-five for Chicago—fifty dollars. That's a tenth and more too, but I don't begrudge it, not a bit," and with a self-satisfied smile he fell asleep, and dreamed.

Half an hour passed, and the sleeper awoke with a start and a start. Rousing himself, he said to the children, "Run away now and crack some nuts; I want to talk with your mother." The children obeyed, and the mother sat with folded hands, and kept trying to prepare herself to listen patiently to more fearful finding.

"I have had such a fearful dream, Jennie," said Mr. Penniman, in a low, troubled voice; "a warning from God, I do believe. You are a better Christian than I am—let me tell you my dream, and I know you will help me do my duty."

Then, in words often choked with emotion, he told his dream, while tears rained down his wife's cheeks.

"The profound silence which followed was broken by the husband's voice solemnly repeating the vow of Jacob, henceforth to be his own vow: 'Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.'"

"Amen!" was the wife's joyful response. "Isn't it Sunday work to look over the books? It seems to me I shall feel better to have this matter all arranged to-day," said Mr. Penniman, after a few moments' thought.

Mrs. Penniman brought the books, in which her husband kept a full record of all the farm products.

"Now, Jennie," said he, "take a piece of paper, and as I call off the yield you take out the tenths, and we will estimate the value and see how much we fall short."

Table with 2 columns: Item and Value. Items include Wheat, Potatoes, Oats, Corn, Apples, Beans, Turnips, Pork, and Hay.

The amount of tithes is \$97.05 said Mrs. Penniman, and deducting the \$50.00 already paid here and for Chicago leaves \$47.05

"Yes, that is correct," remarked Mr. Penniman, looking over the figures; "now, how shall we arrange the rest? Let us see. We will give the minister one barrel of pork—\$10.00 and the tithes of turnips, beans and potatoes which will amount to \$11.25 \$21.25

This sum deducted from the \$47.05 leaves \$25.80

a little more than the price of two tons of hay, as we valued it. But we have not tithed our cattle yet; we have ten cows, you know—shall they 'pass under the rod?' asked the husband with a meaning smile.

"Yes, certainly," was the earnest reply. "Well, then, one cow—you shall say which one—and two tons of hay to feed her on. There are a good many things we cannot tithe this year, so I will take a good large grist, and you may take what you like from the house, and next year we will be more exact," said Mr. Penniman in a tone of great satisfaction.

"A good deal to give away," said Mrs. Penniman, doubtfully, for in her heart she feared her husband would repent his liberality when the excitement of his dream had passed away.

"Why, Jennie, you are not sorry the Lord made the tenths so large are you?" he said, half reproachfully. "Nine-tenths are left for us to use without doubt or reproach. How blind I have been all my life!" he added, with a sigh.

"Father, George says it is milking-time," called out little Clara, looking in at the door.

"Yes, I'll come," answered the father visiting. "Jennie, which cow shall I give," he asked, turning to his wife.

"Give the best to the Lord," was her reply.

"Mabel, come here a few minutes," said Mrs. Penniman to her eldest daughter, a young lady of nineteen, when the door had closed on the father and the two boys. In a few words the mother related what had transpired within the last hour; and the daughter listened with clasped hands and glistening eyes.

"Oh, mother, I am so glad!" she exclaimed. "Giving a tenth has always seemed right since I read God's own law to the Jews. He must know best. If the Jews were commanded to give tithes, surely, with our greater blessings, a tenth of our income is the very least we ought to think of presenting to the Lord as a thank-offering. It seems a great deal because God gives us so much."

"Well, my dear, you and I must look up our tithes to-morrow," said Mrs. Penniman with a smile.

The day of the donation visit came at last.

"George, I guess we'll take over our loads this morning," said Mr. Penniman while they were doing the chores at the barn. "You may fasten Brindle's rope to the back of that load of hay, and let her eat while you help me load up the other sleigh; then you may harness the old horse, I will take the colts, and we will go over together."

"Why, father, what are you going to do with old Brindle?" asked the astonished boy.

"Give her to the minister; we have nine cows left," was the reply.

The two went to the house and proceeded to load up the "big sleigh" which stood before the door. A barrel of pork, potatoes, turnips, beans, and "a monstrous grist," the children said, and away the two drove to the parsonage.

"Why, Mr. Penniman, haven't you made a mistake? What does all this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Goodman, running out of the house without his hat, as they drove through the great gate. "What does it all mean?"

"Only the tithes," replied Mr. Penniman, laughing.

"Here's your hat, father," said little Henry Goodman, holding up the missing article.

"Thank you, my son, now run into the house."

"Where shall I put your cow?" asked Mr. Penniman.

"My cow! Why Mr. Penniman, you can't afford—"

"Got nine left," interrupted Mr. Penniman. "Drive on, George, we'll find a place."

The little barn was a rickety, old affair, but Brindle was soon tied in one corner of the stable, and Mr. Penniman and his son stowed away the hay as best they could in the bay and shaky loft. The boards on the side were some of them hanging by one nail, but George said the roof looked as if it would not leak, and he would drive a few nails in those boards before night.

Then came the unloading of the second sleigh, amid exclamations of wonder and delight from Mr. and Mrs. Goodman and the children, and such a time as they all had preparing the sum of a nipped collar for such an unexpected supply of vegetables. Then the pork barrel was, with much labor, lifted and pushed and twisted down the narrow stairway and stowed away back as far as possible "to make room for the rest that might come," Mr. Penniman said.

Two empty barrels were filled to overflowing with the best of flour, the bran and shorts for the cow found a place in some old barrels in the wood-shed, and Mr. Penniman and George drove home delighted.

"What has happened to Mr. Penniman?" asked Mr. Goodman after they had gone. "Is he going crazy?"

"I asked him what it all meant, and he said he had a dream last Sunday which he would tell me sometime," replied her husband.

"The result of his dreaming will bless us all the year," said Mrs. Goodman gratefully.

"Mother is that cow to be our very own, always?" asked one of the children.

"Yes. We all thank Mr. Penniman very much, and I am sure none of us will forget to thank Him who put the thought of this great kindness into Mr. Penniman's heart."

The afternoon and evening passed off as usual on such occasions, with one exception. The Penniman children had all tithed their nuts, popcorn and the money in their savings banks, and brought their gift to the children at the parsonage, and child-like, Robert told the story to a group of listening children, and some of larger growth.

"We are all tithed," said he; "George gave his tithes in money—mother and Mabel brought butter and eggs and dried apples, and over so many cans of fruit, and father tithed everything in the cellar, and even tithed old Brindle, too."

"What is tithing? I don't know what you are talking about," said Willie Greene, the merchant's son.

"Why the Bible says folks must give to the Lord one-tenth of all they can raise on the farm," replied Robert. "Clara and I read it there last Sunday, and that is just what we have been doing at our house. We have just begun, but we mean to keep on doing so all the time. I tell you, Henry Goodman, you'll get lots of eggs and chickens before summer is out, and I shouldn't wonder if you should get now and then a harvest apple. I have one tree that's all my own."

"The boy of yours has been telling quite a long story to the children about the tithing done at your house," remarked Mr. Stevens to Mr. Penniman when they went out after supper to attend to their teams. "Haven't you changed your mind lately?" he asked.

"Yes, I have most essentially," replied Penniman, "but it is a long story; come to prayer meeting to-morrow evening, and you shall hear all about it."

Twenty minutes later everybody in the house knew that Mr. Penniman would explain the reason for the change in his feelings and practice at the next prayer-meeting, and everyone had resolved to go to-morrow evening—not long to wait.

"Are you going to prayer-meeting to-night to hear Penniman tell his dream?" asked Mr. Greene, the merchant, of the first customer who made his appearance the next morning.

"Yes. I want to hear what he will say; it seems silly, though, to talk about a dream doing such wonders, for his donation was large for any one, and certainly wonderful for him."

"A dream!" sneered Mr. Greene, brushing his coat-sleeve; "conscience more likely."

"I don't know about that," was the reply; Mr. Penniman is close, but he is honest, and true to his word—always pays when and what he agrees to pay; his subscription is always paid in advance if possible."

So passed the day; in every house, and in every shop and store the subject of tithing was thoroughly discussed, always concluding with a wise shake of the head and the sage remark: "The Pennimans won't hold out long. No farmer can afford to give away one-tenth of what he raises, cattle and all." But they went to the prayer-meeting, and for once the cold cheerless little church was packed full.

Mr. Goodman opened the meeting as usual, and then remarked:—"Brethren and friends, I know you are all anxious to hear the message which Brother Penniman brings us to-night, and we will listen to him now."

Slowly Mr. Penniman rose to his feet and looked around on the congregation. His face was dusky pale, and his lips quivered for a moment. Then, in a calm, distinct tone, he said:

"My first duty to-night is confession. I have frequently said, in the presence of many of you, my brethren, that our minister's salary was amply sufficient to support his family without donation parties; that he must be extravagant, or he would not get into debt. Now, that was all wrong; I am sorry for it, and ashamed of it. In the first place, the statement was not true, though I did not intend to falsify. I made the mistake which we farmers are apt to make; we only reckon our money outlay, and count as nothing what we consume."

"Yesterday I took my books and deducted the amount of family supplies I had sold from the amount produced on my farm last year, and I was surprised. Now, I only wonder how, with the closest economy, our pastor's family could live comfortably on his salary and our donations too. But if my assertion had been true to the letter, it was no business of mine how he spent the money he had honestly earned, any more than it is how any other man spends the money he earns. The only question for me, as a member of this church, to decide is whether Mr. Goodman's labors among us are worth the salary which we agree to pay. If so, my portion of his salary is to be paid promptly and fully, like any other debt, and he and his family let to the expenditure of the money, well and faithfully earned, without remark or hindrance. This shall always be my course toward him and every other pastor hereafter."

"Last Sunday I sat in my easy chair, listening to my wife and children as they read and conversed about the Jewish law of tithing, till I fell asleep with the very comfortable feeling that, for myself, I had brought all the tithes into the score house—and I really believed it."

"I dreamed that I went to the anticipated donation visit with my family, and carried about my usual donation—a bushel of flour, a bag of potatoes, a few pounds of pork, and a bag of apples—and I thought I had done well for I was very sure the minister did not need even that with his salary."

"The evening passed as usual, we farmers talking of the crops of last year, and discussing our plans for the coming season. I was well satisfied to find, by comparison, how abundant my harvest had been."

"When I came in sight of my home that night I saw my well-filled barn in flames, my general treasures gone beyond hope of rescue. It was a terrible blow, and as I stood there helpless—for nothing could be done—and saw the product of my hard toil a great, blazing mass, how I wished that I had given more of that burning wheat to my pastor. But it was too late now. I had only enough left for bread and for seed, a few bushels put in another barn for lack of room."

"It was summer, my oats were sown, my corn and potatoes planted, the cattle and sheep were in the pasture; but there was no rain. Day after day, the sun rose without a cloud, and night after night the moon and stars shone with unclouded beauty. So the summer months passed—not one drop of rain, no harvest. The winter came, and still no moisture for the thirsty earth. I had no grain in store, it had been burned; no hay for my cattle, the grass had not grown. The cattle died, one after another; and through the long winter it was a fearful struggle to get bread to eat."

"Spring returned, and yet no rain. I had no grain to sow and others began to be in want. We grew weak and sick at heart. We were in the midst of what this country had never known—a real famine. Terror took hold of the soul, while hunger tormented the body."

"Day and night we prayed for relief, and the answer, always the same, echoed and re-echoed everywhere: 'Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.'"

"Summer's burning heat poured down upon us, and one after another my whole family sickened and died. Oh! the agony of watching over their sick-beds with nothing to alleviate their suffering! To see our dearest friends dying of starvation! Yet so my loved ones died, and I lived on. I buried them with my own hands, for the famine had taken all sympathy from the community; each was fully occupied with his own sorrow."

"Day after day I wandered through the rooms of my desolate home, and touched reverently the common things which their dear hands had used, and found some comfort in this indulgence of my sorrow."

"But even this poor solace was taken away from me. Another fiery tempest came, sweeping away every remaining vestige of my earthly possessions, and I fled before it. On, and on, and on, still flying, still pursued, never tiring, impelled by a terror indelible, till—I know not how—I found myself in a deep gorge of a California mine. All around me lay broken fragments of rich gold-laden quartz, the very earth beneath my feet seemed formed of golden sand, and on either side of the narrow valley the mountains rose, full of treasure. But all this wealth awakened no emotion, for yonder, trickling over the rocks, was water, pure cold water! Almost frantic with joy, I rushed toward it, but fell fainting ere my lips were moistened. I did not lose consciousness, but too weak with my utmost effort to drag myself onward, there I lay, with the life-giving water almost within my reach!"

"At last relief came; the miners gathered to the little grass plot not far away to eat their noonday meal. They seated themselves on the grass, made tables of the broken rocks, and spread out their bountiful repast. How delicious their food looked! I had not seen so much at one time for months. How I longed for the very crumbs that fell from their hands, yet I could not ask. It was not pride, but despair. All the ungrateful part of my life seemed to come up before me, the food I had carelessly wasted, or carelessly received, unmindful of the Giver. I never was hungry till this famine began, and now it seemed impossible for me ever to be fed. 'Cursed with a curse' for my ingratitude and robbery of God! Oh, the thought was agony! A deep groan escaped my lips and discovered me to the miners. One brought me a cup of water, and others gave me food. What a luxury was that cold water! How delicious was that coarse but wholesome food! I ate and drank like the famished creature that I was, till fully satisfied, and my kind friends returned to finish their own repast, leaving me lying on the soft grass with a heart full of praise and thanksgiving."

"The miners were rough men, of many nationalities. Irish, Germans, Chinese, and profane, God-defying Americans, worked side by side. And as they sat in groups, enjoying their noon-day meal, I listened to their fearful profanity till my soul was sick within me. There I lay, all that long summer afternoon, living over the years of my past prosperous life, bemoaning my selfishness and thinking how little I had ever done to send the gospel to such as the men in the mines."

"But all the future was dead within me. What could a poor, bereaved, famine-stricken man do, only to pray for pardon and for death?"

"At last the day was ended, and two of the kind miners, half led, half carried me to their camp, shared their evening meal and their scanty tent with me. My heart was full of gratitude, and before seeking repose, I knelt to thank Him who had given such unexpected deliverance from famine and death."

"Scarcely had I lain down, when one of the men touched me on the shoulder, saying: 'Stranger, if you can pray won't you come and see a sick man just over here?'"

"I rose and followed him, and there in a dirty tent, lay, and had lain for weeks, tossing with fever and delirium, my once happy, innocent boy, my long-lost Henry. The fever had left him, and now, pale and exhausted, he seemed only waiting for the last heart-throb of a wasted life. Some of you, my friends, have known of this great sorrow which has lain on my heart for years, and may imagine the meaning and the end result I had to make. He said little of himself till I asked him of the spiritual world—his preparation for an exchange of worlds. A expression of anguish passed over his face. 'I am not ready—"

not prepared,' he exclaimed. 'All is lost, lost! Don't interrupt me,' he continued, 'as I was about to speak; I know what you would say. I know the way, but have lost the desire to walk there. I feel I am forever lost! Two years ago,' he continued, 'there came to the mine a young Christian minister, full of life and enthusiasm, yet so gentle and blameless, so Christ-like, that we must love him. He had a wonderful power over all, even the roughest, and I loved him as a brother. He remained with us a year, preaching, talking and praying, till profanity was banished, and many seemed almost persuaded. His second year's labors were scarcely begun, when news came from the Home Missionary Society, saying their treasury was empty, and they did not know how long it would be before they would be able to pay what remained due on his salary, and there were so many feeble churches needing a little help, that they could not continue his commission another year. His heart was full of grief. He loved those rough men. He would have gladly worked with me hands as old Paul, but had not the strength, nor could he live without the salary. The miners might have paid it, but they would not; they liked him, but he was a restraint upon them and he left us. Father, I thought of home then, of those rich farms, those bountiful harvests, and those men and women professing so much love to Christ, yet neglecting to fully support their own minister, and doing nothing to give these poor miners the Bread of Life. I might have been a Christian if young Hard had remained here, but when he went away, I was angry with Christians, with God and myself. I went back to my old ways, and now I cannot repent.'

"My poor boy sank back on his pillow exhausted; a deadly pallor overspread his face, his breath grew shorter and shorter, and in my agony at seeing him dying thus without hope, I uttered a deep groan and awoke."

"At first I could scarcely believe it possible that all I had passed through was but a dream, and then such a flood of confounding emotions poured in upon my soul as almost overpowered me. I was indeed like one rescued from deepest misery, and put in possession of every needful blessing. How happy I was, how grateful for the sparing mercy of my Heavenly Father! and never did I receive any worldly good with half the satisfaction that it gave me to know that God would accept a thank-offering at my hands. I was in haste to make the offering, for I feared the old life-long selfishness would come back to trouble me; and I could see that my wife had the same fear."

"But the offering was made, gladly and in good faith, by us both. During the few days that have intervened since then, I have thoroughly investigated the subject of tithing, and it seems so reasonable, so just, indeed so very little to offer in return for our many mercies, that I only wonder I, a professedly Christian man, could so long have been blind to my duty and privilege."

"Just think of it, year after year, I have ploughed my fields and sown the seed, utterly powerless to make one single seed germinate. I have planted orchards, and could not make the trees live, nor the fruit grow. And every season God has given the sunshine and the dew, and the copious rain. And more wonderful still, He has constantly carried on that chemical process by which each plant has appropriated to itself the elements it needed for growth and perfection. Then, when the rich harvests have been gathered in, I have not brought to God a thank-offering of even one-twentieth of the fruits of the earth—and the little which I have doled-out, I have called benevolence."

"And all these years, men, like the miners in my dream, men from the corrupt nations of the Old World, whom God has sent to us for light; and our own people, somebody's sons, every one of them, have been going down to eternal death un instructed and unwarmed; while I, Cain-like, have said in my heart, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Oh, my brethren! God would be entirely just if he were to visit upon me all the horrors of that fearful dream."

"Yet He is long-suffering, so abundant in mercy, and His fearful denunciation on us followed by the comforting words: 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open unto you the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it!'"

"I cannot recall the past; I can only pray God to forgive it; but most gladly for the future, do I, from the depths of a grateful heart, adopt Jacob's vow: 'O, all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.'"

"A solemn hush pervaded that large assembly when Mr. Penniman ceased speaking, broken, at length, by Mr. Goodman's voice in prayer. A hymn was then sung, and the meeting closed.—Chicago Advance.

RITUALISTIC young ladies engaged, as so many are now-a-days, in official duties find it hard to combine the services of the Church with the service of Mammon. At a certain assurance office in the city where female clerks are employed there have recently been a good many more fines than usual for late attendance. On examination the cause is found to be the custom of "watching" in church at untimely hours. Surely city ladies ought to be able to get a dispensation.

A Jewish woman in St. Lazare Prison having been induced to let her child, three years old, be baptised on the promise, as is alleged, of the Catholic chaplain, that it would be better cared for in its illness, the Jewish Consistory have made representations to the Minister of Worship, M. Brunet. He has replied to the effect that he has urged the Archbishop to exert his influence to having liberty of conscience respected, and that the Consistory ought not to have been perfomed with a Jewish rabbi had seen the woman and satisfied himself that she was under no unfair influence. The child died in 45 days after the baptism.