

THE REVOLT IN THE HALL CLOSET.

BY HELEN A. BUTLER

Mrs. Nutter had just returned from making a call at the farther end of her street. She seldom got so far, but the beauty of the day had tempted her out, so now she rather wearily removed her wrappings and sat down to rest.

A member of the family where she had called had politely asked her to make one of a club of subscribers to a bright little paper called *The Home Mission Echo*. As Mrs. Nutter was a member of the church represented by the paper, the request was altogether reasonable and proper, but it was met by a prompt and decided no.

"I am not interested in missions," said Mrs. Nutter. "There's a pile of foreign missionary papers on my closet shelf now that I've never read and probably never shall. I don't know what I took 'em for I'm sure."

The petitioner had remarked very earnestly: "That is just the reason of your lack of interest, Mrs. Nutter. If you would only read you couldn't help being interested."

There were whole volumes of expostulation in the speaker's eyes which Mrs. Nutter was not too obtuse to see, but was not moved to reconsider her decision. Nevertheless, she could not quite rid herself of the remembrance, and conscience, which had become callous on the subject, stirred uneasily. Some papers had been scattered about during her absence, and as she laid them carefully away in the hall closet, she suddenly recalled a remark overheard on the street not long before that, "there was enough discarded literature in well-to-do families in town to provide a hundred poor people with reading for the entire winter."

Sitting there in her easy chair, Mrs. Nutter presently seemed to hear strange sounds from her closet off the hall.

"Discarded literature! I never thought I should come to be so classed," snapped a paper devoted to agriculture. "I was made to be useful, I am crammed full of practical ideas which would bless the world if read and carried out, and here I'm doomed to lie in a dark closet with the life nearly pressed out of me."

"It is too dreadful," chorused a large pile of funny papers. "Oh, the ribs we might be tickling if we only had a chance! I should think Mr. Nutter might remember how we entertained him when he was confined to the house that week, and send us out to cheer up some poor gloomy soul."

"And our beautiful pictures!" groaned another pile. "That little invalid over the way would be so happy to have us. We would fly out of this if we could. Can't we do anything to help ourselves?"

Here an enormous pile of religious papers—Mrs. Nutter thought "it didn't look well" not to take one such paper in the house—nearly lurched off the shelf in righteous indignation. They fairly startled their neighbors by the vigorous wish that they "might spontaneously combust, or something; it would be better to be utterly destroyed than to lie here forever idle," said they.

But it was left to the small and unassuming missionary sheets to sting Mrs. Nutter to a keen sense of her short-comings.

Said they in low, clear tones while all the others kept silence to listen:

"We are plain witnesses to her indifference to the coming of the kingdom. Not to be interested in and work for missions is to ignore one of our Lord's plainest commands. If she would but heed us! We are full of information and pleas for help from across the seas. Our urgent voice echoes from Maine to California. Christians need missions as much as missions need them and their money. Their heaven-born sympathies and charity will shrivel away if not exercised. They mock the Lord when they pray 'Thy kingdom come,' and then do absolutely nothing to help it come. Service is the key-note to happiness, and is love's opportunity always. Oh! how is she going to sing the song of the redeemed if she has only sought to save her own poor little soul!"

"She can't! she can't!" burst forth every publication in the closet, moved to utterance by the little paper's touching remarks.

Crash! clatter-bang!

"Of course I cannot!" shrieked Mrs. Nutter, suddenly awaking to find herself standing with clasped hands in the middle of her sitting-room, while her husband was hastening to put a reassuring arm about her.

"Why Julia! Were you asleep and dreaming?" said he.

"As I opened the outside door I heard a tremendous crash. Was that what woke you?" he hurriedly asked.

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Nutter confusedly. "The noise was in the hall closet, or I think it was," she hastened to add, noticing her husband's look of astonishment.

They went up the stairs together to investigate; and, sure enough, when they opened the door a small avalanche of books and papers fell out into the hall. The braces of a shelf had given away, and the shelf falling had carried two more with it.

"My shutting the outer door so heavily was undoubtedly the one touch needed to send it down," said Mr. Nutter.

"But what on earth have you hoarded up all these papers for, Julia?" he queried. "If they weren't all tied up so neatly you would have a pretty job to sort them out. A regular revolt of reading matter, I declare," he said laughingly.

"It shan't happen again," said Mrs. Nutter, with quite uncalled for decision.

"Of course not," promptly replied her husband looking at her somewhat curiously, as he started off after hammer and nails.

If Mr. Nutter had chanced to look into the hall closet a month later, he would have been considerably surprised to have seen mostly empty shelves. The Y.M.C.A. rooms, the lonely quarters of the Life Saving Crew, and the homes of several poor families received most welcome accessions of suitable literature about that time. The little invalid was made too happy for words by a great bundle of picture papers; and a package of religious papers, carefully selected, were carried to some dear old ladies who had a mania for scrap-books. These papers, rich in the best thought of the times, were soon converted into neat volumes to be read and loaned as long as they held together.