

MRS. DENNETT'S DIFFICULTY.

BY FRANCES J. DYER.

Mrs. Dennet was the minister's wife in a country parish. He had left a city church on the Atlantic coast for recuperation in an inland village, and in less than a month his wife was made president of the sewing circle, the missionary society, the temperance union, the young people's club, the mission circle, and the society for social and mental improvement. Being a woman of tact, as well as of large executive ability, she was not overwhelmed by these manifold honors and bravely set about the tasks assigned her. Usually she did not worry her husband with any annoyances that grew out of her work, but one day a difficulty arose which compelled her to seek his advice.

"It's the fair, John," she said in answer to his look of enquiry, as she dropped into a chair in the study. "I managed the strawberry festival and Christmas entertainment and all the other things last year, without greatly damaging my principles, but when it comes to raffling for the parson's salary I'm dead set against it."

"Is it necessary to have a fair?" asked John, rather helplessly.

"Of course not; but the women think it is, which amounts to the same thing. When I feebly remonstrated at the last sewing-circle, you should have heard the outcry. They all declared that such a thing as not having a fair every spring was unheard of, and Jane Sibley thought she clinched the argument by saying, 'Why, Mis' Dennett, we made fifteen dollars clear gain last year just from the guess-cake!'"

"Can't you arrange some compromise?" enquired Mr. Dennett, who had great faith in his wife's inventive genius.

"I don't want any compromise," was the energetic reply. "Paul gave the most sensible rule that has ever been laid down on the subject of giving in his first letter to the Corinthians, but I cannot convince these women of its reasonableness. I've been through the religious papers this afternoon, hoping to get some help; but while they all condemn the methods, no one suggests how to introduce better ones. Please read that, and Mrs. Dennett passed her husband a sheet of paper on which was pasted the following extracts:

We regard this as one of the chief reasons why the church holds so little power over the world. She has put herself so commonly in the attitude of a mountebank, that the world has lost a large share of its respect for her and for her teachers. These ways of obtaining money for the use of the church are like the selling of indulgences, and have the same power to hurt the cause of true religion as did that practice of the Romish Church in the sixteenth century.—*National Baptist.*

There is no religion, no charity, none of the spirit of Him who became poor for our sakes, in spending money at a fair.—*New York Observer.*

Can there be any doubt as to the folly of this double-faced, indirect method of trying to raise money for the Lord's cause, in contrast with the straightforward, honest appeal to men to give of their substance to him on whom they depend for all things.—*The Sunday-school Times.*

This whole system of supporting religious worship by the sale of gimcracks and the giving of entertainments is a fraud.—*The Christian.*

We incline to class them as a whole among the questionable expedients. The utmost we can say in the way of allowance for them is that they may be "good for the present distress." As things are in many communities they may seem to be the only resort to raise needed funds. But we are sure there is a more excellent way.—*Illustrated Christian Weekly.*

Fancy Paul attending an "oyster supper" of his Corinthian converts, who would thus raise the money for his expenses; or John managing a "bazaar" to establish a church in Ephesus.—*Christian Union.*

Some of the noblest enterprises of charity are well nigh starved out. A large number of local institutions and enterprises are only kept afloat by a resort to the pitiful devices of fairs and bazaars, and "pound parties," and divers other dickerings. I am constantly beset to go and lecture for the benefit of this, that, or the other religious "movement," which, having got into the mire of debt, is not able to move at all. Every pastor can give his humiliating testimony in the same direction.

The Rev. Father Scully, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a severe condemner of church fairs. "They demoralize our girls," he says, "more than do our lowest theatres, for girls, armed with their church fair book, go forth under religious and parental sanction, where they please and when they please, entering even bar-rooms to solicit chances and votes. The children think of nothing but the fair. Home, church and school are banished. When lager beer is sold in our churches where fairs are held, how can we train our youth to look with horror on the evils of rum?"

Fairs, strawberry festivals and all similar abominations are thus rendered unnecessary. Subscription papers carried about the town by the attractive members of the congregation (female, of course) may thus be relegated to the limbo of forgotten devices. The church-members will then give for the sake of the cause, and not for the sake of having a good time at a festival, or because shame drives them into putting down their names on the hated subscription paper.—*Congregationalist.*

It is a pitiable thing to see men who separate themselves from the world as those who are redeemed and made heirs of eternal life, giving their three or four percent, and wasting time and thought, and conscience even, in devising schemes for getting the deficit from the non-religious by public entertainments, fifth-rate theatricals, bazaars, etc.—*New South Wales Independent.*

"Why not read this at the next sewing-circle?" said Mr. Dennett, giving back the excerpts.

"That's a capital idea, John. Now you can finish your sermon," and the busy little woman fitted from the room.

But the good ladies in her husband's parish were not so ready to sacrifice their ancient customs. "No other minister's wife ever found fault with fairs, and why

no heart for the approaching fair, and if you will kindly enclose in the accompanying envelope the amount which you would probably expend in materials therefor, and return to me by Saturday, I think we can secure the needed funds."

What a sense of relief these notes gave! What a burden was lifted from the female hearts in that parish! For, with sickness added to the usual household cares, the work of the fair looked like an impossibility. Willing fingers loosened the purse-strings, and there was a busy time at the parsonage on Saturday evening counting the gains. No candidates for Congress could be more excited over the clicking of the wires which brought election returns than were Mr. and Mrs. Dennett at the ringing of the door-bell. The next day it was quietly announced from the pulpit that \$347.29 had been received in voluntary contributions from the people of the parish.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Jane Sibley, as she fluttered into the aisle, "that's twice as much as we ever got before, an' I only sent fifty cents!"

"And we only gave a dollar at our

but her cheeks burned, and her lips quivered, as she looked up.

She had not been called "good-for-nothing," since she got up that little society, and had that Dolls' Reception, when she had earned twenty-five dollars for the American Missionary Association. She was quite taken by surprise.

Suddenly, a large rosy apple rolled to her feet, and she heard a merry laugh. She looked up, and saw her cousin Charlie.

"Well, Madge dear, are you surprised at hearing your old title again? I thought since you got up that big missionary fandangoo, we were not going to hear that any more."

"I know it, I thought so, but I don't suppose because a person has done some good once in their lives that that is to last them forever. I believe Aunt Penelope has rightly named me."

Charlie drew down his face and looked very solemn. "Margaret," he said, "are you rightly mindful of the preacher's words last Sunday, 'Be not weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not!'"

"Yes, Charlie, I am; and I believe I am one of the fainting ones. I'm like the clock that used always to strike twelve and then stop."

"And I have not even struck twelve," said Charlie thoughtfully. "I think I need winding up. We boys don't seem to do much for the good of the world any way. Suppose, Madge, we club together and see what we can do."

The Rev. Mr. Clarke, of Lindenboro, preached for a brother minister in a town near his own one Sunday. The day was very warm, and his congregation small, and he went home feeling quite discouraged with himself, and almost sorry that he had ever decided to be a minister. His text had been: "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." Truly, the preacher himself, was ready to faint. He thought no one took any heed to his words.

About six months after he was called to preach there again and refused. A day or two after a little pink note came to him written in a childish hand. It was signed Madge Vernon, and as I cannot show it to you, I will tell you what it said:

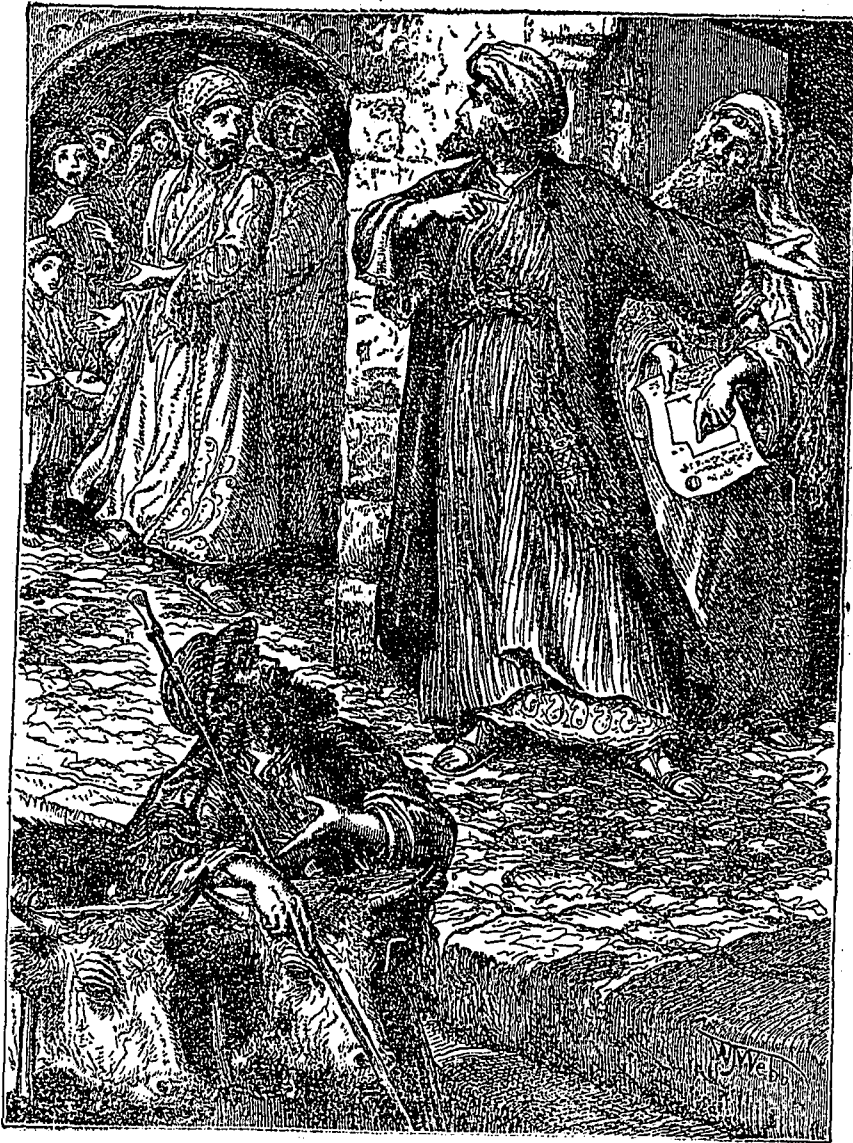
"DEAR MR. FURNESS—We were so sorry you did not come to preach last Sunday. My cousin Charlie and I liked your last sermon so much, and we thought it was just what I needed, for I had got weary in well doing, and thought because I had done something once, I need do no more, and Charlie said he had not even begun, so we went to work together.

We gave round jugs for money, and told the boys and girls to be ready for a grand smash up in six months, and we would see which jug had most money in it. We had missionary songs and recitations, and we had cake and ice cream, and Japanese tea in Japanese cups, served by a little girl in Japanese costume. I can't tell you just how much we made, for some of the boys were away and we have not had their jugs yet, but there is one thing sure, we have made as much as the big people's society did in a whole year, and if it had not been for your sermon, I am quite sure we should have been fainting still. Instead of that we are reaping in due season. I heard our minister say you were discouraged the day you preached here, and thought we did not care for your preaching, so I have written this to let you see, as far as two were concerned at least, it was not so. The good of your sermon may reach even to China and Africa. So, for my good-bye, let me beg of you in my turn, not to be weary in well doing, not to faint, for your seed dropped has already grown and borne fruit, and in this note you can know the pleasure of reaping.

Your little friend,
MADGE VERNON."

So you see, the dear old words of the Bible gave courage to Madge and the minister, too. Let those who have ever tried to do any work for these missions in our land remember Madge Vernon's example, and not rest after one effort, but try again, and let not the older ones who preach the word be discouraged. They can only drop the seed—the harvest is from the Lord.—*American Missionary.*

PROF. JOHN STUART BLACKIE says:—"My idea is, that work done under the influence of any kind of stimulant is unhealthy work and tends to no good."



WHAT PARABLE DOES THIS PICTURE ILLUSTRATE?

should this one?" sniffed Jane Sibley. "What was good enough 'fore she came is plenty good now."

With all possible earnestness Mrs. Dennett pictured the spiritual blessings that might follow if their gifts for the sanctuary service were made a voluntary offering to the Lord. A few wavered, and put the perplexing question, "What else can we do?"

During the following week Mrs. Dennett prayerfully pondered the subject, and then something happened which displaced all thoughts of the fair in the minds of anxious mothers and elder sisters. An epidemic broke out among the children, and fancy work was neglected for the absorbing duties of nursing the sick. Though none died, in almost every home there were little convalescents who, for several weeks, taxed the time and strength of those who ministered to them. One day a dainty white missive dropped into these weary households, bearing the following message from the dominie's wife:

"MY DEAR FRIEND: I know you have

house," chimed in a deacon's wife, "for Johnny's doctor's bill just ate everything up this month."

This unexpected result was the beginning of better things. Old prejudices did not yield at once, but both Mr. and Mrs. Dennett followed up the success by wise talking and teaching until Paul's plan for benevolence was thoroughly established in both church and Sunday-school. Souls were quickened into a new love for the Saviour, and a dear little prattler in one household probably voiced the general sentiment when she said, "Papa, isn't it just nice to give without any fuss or teasing!"—*S. S. Times.*

GOOD-FOR-NOTHING MADGE.

BY MARY MORRISON.

"Madge, get right up this minute, you good-for-nothing girl, that dress cannot be washed again this week; I wish you could ever do something right, or be any use in the world."

Madge obeyed her aunt, and said nothing,