

## THE CONFESSION OF A STINGY MAN.

BY S. J. SMITH.

There is no doubt about it; I was a stingy man. I lived in a mean house, had it poorly furnished, paid my servant the lowest possible wages, and ate the cheapest food that could be found in the market. I gave little to the church, nothing to the needy, and was amassing a fortune for the mere pleasure of its possession. I held mortgages on half the houses in our village, and showed no mercy for the poor creatures who failed to have ready the interest.

Otherwise I was an upright man. I never was known to lie or steal, I refrained from running in debt, kept the Sabbath day holy, and was even deacon of the church which I attended with a regularity that was indeed praiseworthy. I did not understand how I came to be chosen for that office—I presume there was a scarcity of male workers in the church—but I know that I was faithful to all the duties which did not interfere with my own pocketbook.

Our church building was large and grand, having been erected only a year or two previous to my advent in the place; but the Sabbath-school was held in a little old structure adjoining the church, one in which our people had formerly worshipped. This was not large enough to comfortably seat all the children, and they were packed in there every Sunday like sardines in a box. Besides, the ceiling was very low, and on warm days the room was almost unendurable. Of course, it was out of the question to have the children meet in the church, and our pastor was making strenuous efforts to collect sufficient money to build a chapel for the little ones. But it was uphill work. Several of our well-to-do families had moved out of the neighborhood, and the few that remained in the church did not feel like bearing all the expenses of the new building. The people in moderate circumstances had been so lately taxed for the church edifice that they were unable just then to give anything extra. Yet our pastor would not relinquish the idea of having a comfortable room for the children. Notice after notice was read that a meeting would be held to talk the matter over, but the people were discouraged, and so few attended that nothing could be done. At last he hit on a new plan. He invited the congregation to a sociable to be held in the Sunday-school room. Then they came out in full force, and the pastor took this opportunity to plead the case with them. Crowded and uncomfortable as were the people that night, they knew it was far worse for the children, for they numbered many more than the grown folks. It was readily agreed that a new building was necessary, but no one could decide how to get the wherewithal for the same. As to my helping in the matter, the idea never occurred to me; my money belonged to me, and not to the church. Therefore I was highly indignant when I heard this remark from one of the brothers: "What is the matter with Deacon Storrs? Isn't he the stingy man? He might build the room himself; he's able."

I was too much insulted to remain longer with the others. I slipped away from the meeting and went unnoticed through a side door into the church. The gas in there had not been lighted, but the moon, beaming through the colored glass of the windows, lent a soft radiance to the holy edifice. I took a seat in a side pew, directly opposite a large window which was the pride of our people. It was of stained glass, and beautiful in design. In the centre was a life-size picture of our Saviour with a little lamb in his bosom. Lit up as it was, it seemed almost like a living person standing there, and the Saviour appeared to be regarding me with a tender, pitying gaze. The longer I looked the more life-like the figure became, and I grew so used to the idea that I was not at all surprised when it slowly descended from the window and stood before me, the little lamb being now transformed into a living child. Laying his unoccupied hand gently on my head, he looked kindly but reproachfully into my face and said in a sweet voice that I shall never forget, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Then gradually the form floated back toward the window, and in a moment everything was as it had been—that is, all excepting myself—I felt that I was a changed man; my eyes had at last been opened, and I could see my grievous fault in all its enormity. The words "Suffer the little children" had told me that I had been instrumental in hindering them.

Persons to whom I have since related this wonderful occurrence have declared it was all a dream. Perhaps they were right, but I was not conscious of a going to sleep or even of an awakening; things seemed to slowly change as I sat there in that pew with my eyes wide open. I believe it was a vision sent by God to turn my eyes toward my own shortcomings. However, I remained there for a long time and pondered deeply, honestly, seriously, on myself and my duty. At last I slipped away home without stopping to speak to any person.

About a week later I met one of the deacons, who thus accosted me:

"Brother Storrs, the strangest thing is happening. Ground is being broken for the new chapel for the Sunday-school. No one knows who is having it done, not even the pastor, and the contractor won't tell."

"It does look strange," I answered, and being in somewhat of a hurry, passed on my way.

The following month I surprised myself, my servant and my friends by moving into a house more in keeping with my means. I furnished it comfortably, nearly knocked my servant down with astonishment by doubling her wages, and altogether began to live like other people.

In the meantime the little chapel was growing rapidly and beautifully, and before long the scholars of our school had an assembly room of which we had no reason to be ashamed.

"All that remains now is to discover the generous donor," said the pastor to the children on the day they took possession of the chapel. "Let us bow our heads and ask God to shower blessings on our unknown friend."

One evening nearly the whole congregation rushed in upon me in my new house and greeted me with: "We've found you out, we've found you out at last!" After inviting them in and making them comfortable, I began to inquire what it all meant. This was told me: Noticing the change in my manner of living, our pastor had suspected that it was I who built the chapel. Of course, he determined to find out the truth. Meeting the contractor near the chapel one morning, he said: "Did Mr. Storrs plan the building himself, or did—"

"Oh, no!" the man answered, supposing that I had confessed at last, "he had an architect."

To be sure, the story spread, and the only wonder was that I had not heard of it before.

When all had been explained we proceeded to make merry, and I believe I am safe in stating that among the many people present there was not one merrier or happier than myself. I had discovered that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and now I would not go back to my old life for the greatest fortune on earth. Should a stingy man chance to read this story, I advise him to try my plan and he will never regret it.

## A GENEROUS GIVER.

Martin E. Gray, of Ohio (we do not give his post office address, lest he be pestered with all sorts of appeals), is one of the most remarkable givers of our time. Many years ago he promised the Lord that, if he should be spared to a good old age, he would endeavor to give to the cause of Christ not less than \$100,000. He is now nearly eighty years old, and has almost reached his great aim. To the Home Mission Society, in January, he sent a New Year's gift of \$3,000, making \$41,502.66, which he has given to this Society in large sums, aside from smaller and special offerings.

How has he done it? By great industry and frugality in a spirit of consecration to Christ. He began life with almost nothing. From a farm and saw-mill, chiefly, have come his resources. He lives and dresses moderately, that he may give more to promote Christ's cause on the earth. This is his chief joy. And, if there is a happier

man, in the best sense of the word, than Martin E. Gray, of Ohio, at the age of eighty, we know not where to find him. He has the consciousness of having honored God with his substance in an unusual degree. While there are men of larger resources who have given more than he, yet, in proportion to his ability, he far outranks them as a generous giver, for the true standard of measurement is not simply the amount a man gives, but what relation this bears to his ability to give. Honor the devoted man who thus honors God.

In a letter written about three years ago to the Corresponding Secretary of the Home Mission Society Brother Gray wrote:

"I received much inspiration in reading the life of J. S. Cob, of Boston, who gave \$50,000 for benevolence, but I never expected to be able to give one-half that amount; but I am very thankful that the Lord has so abundantly blessed the labors of my hands that I have been able to give to advance his cause \$75,904 up to January 1, 1889. I practice the most rigid economy, as you will see when I tell you that during the past two years I have given over \$12,000 for the Master and about \$500 for my board, clothes, books, papers, and attending our anniversaries at Minneapolis and Washington, and our State Convention and other missionary meetings."

"I think the Master has called me to this work, and woe be to me if I do not obey. I love the work, and am willing to make sacrifice of many good things of this life if it can be the means of winning souls to Christ and honoring his name. If the Lord should permit me to live until I am eighty years of age, and should bless the labors of my hands in the future as in the past, I would be able to bring the amount for benevolence up to \$100,000. If it would advance his cause more to take me home, I am willing to go any time, as I know he will do right."

Martin E. Gray was born in Madison, N. Y. January 29, 1815. From his earliest recollection his mind was very tender on the subject of religion. At the age of sixteen he was deeply concerned about his soul's salvation, and after a long and earnest struggle found great peace and joy in Christ as his Saviour. Not until he was nineteen years of age, however, did he unite with the church, when he was baptized by the Rev. Richard Clarke at Madison, N. Y. For several years he was in poor health. And now we quote from a brief biographical sketch which he was induced to prepare for a friend, and which we are permitted to use:

"These were years of great anxiety that I might be restored to health in order to do some good in the world for the Master. As I could not preach, I knew if I could work I could earn money to sustain those that we called to preach the Gospel, as this appeared to be the means the Lord had appointed to save those that believe. It was my prayer in secret from day to day that I might be restored to health; and I told him if he would restore me I would consecrate one-tenth of my earnings to his service, that I would not follow the passions or follies of this world. I asked not for riches or honors of the world, but that I might be an instrument in the hand of God of doing good in saving souls from eternal death. My health improved slowly until I was 25 years old, when I could do a fair day's work. I was subject to my father until I was 30 years old. He would never permit me to leave him, as it seemed he could not get along without me."

"In my thirtieth year I married one of the best girls in the State of Ohio, and took her into the family to do the work for the whole household (as my mother's health was poor). My father gave me a pair of steers which I broke and kept till they wore oxen, which I sold for \$50 when I was about 31 years old, it being the first \$50 I had ever received. When I was married father promised to give me one-third I could make on the farm, and one-half I could make on the saw-mill, and I was to keep everything in repair, pay all the hired help and support the family. I told my wife I thought we could save \$200 per year by my doing the work of two men and my wife doing the work of two women, and we succeeded in laying by that amount for a number of years, so that in six years, with the most rigid economy, we had laid up \$1,353."

The first investment that I made, soon after I was married, was in a piece of land

in company with my father. We bought it on time, and when we had it paid for we sold it and gave a warranty deed; my half of the pay amounted to a little over \$300. Notwithstanding I had promised the Lord one-tenth of what I could earn if he would restore me to health, I had neglected to do so; thought I was poor and had to work so hard for what I had he would not require it of me. This, I acknowledge and confess with shame. I found to my sorrow that there is that which withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty. The title to the land that we sold was disputed, and was put into court to be decided; and after continuing in law some ten years was decided against us; and I had to pay about \$2,000 to settle it all alone as father was getting old and took no interest in it.

"This I considered the chastening hand of my heavenly Father for my disobedience in not paying my vows unto him. I was constantly meeting with smaller losses. Everything seemed to go wrong. I made up my mind that I must fulfil the promise I had made to my heavenly Father, not on account of his chastening hand, but because it was a duty to perform—the vow that I had made; and I commenced at once to pay the one-tenth of my earnings to the different benevolent objects of the day, notwithstanding I was in debt on account of this great loss and my property was mortgaged to secure the payment. Yet I kept my payments all up, and the last payment was met more than one year before it became due. I felt that there is that scattereth and yet increaseth. The Lord blessed the labors of my hands continually, and I thought one-tenth was too small a portion to give, considering the constantly increasing demand for money to carry forward the work of the various benevolent enterprises of the day, and that I would give one-fifth of my income until I was worth a certain amount, and then I would give all, except a plain, prudent living. And much sooner than I expected was that amount reached and \$7.00 over. I collected \$1,000 immediately, and sent it to the treasurer of the Home Mission Society, it being the largest amount I had ever paid at one time for benevolence. I feel just as anxious to make money now as ever, not that I may follow the fashions and follies of the world, not that I may have a name of being benevolent, but that I may win souls for Christ. My motto, is 'one more soul for Jesus.'"

"What I have been made by farming, including a saw-mill on the farm that we run in wet weather when we cannot work on the farm. When I figure up the amount at the end of the year that I have paid for the different benevolent objects of the day, it is very strange where the money comes from; it seems almost a miracle. I send the amount of my free-will offering, not boasting, but with the prayer that the Lord will bless it to his own honor and glory, and that I may be an instrument in his hands of saving souls."

## A LESSON OF SPRING.

We walked with silent tread  
The "city of the dead"  
(My little maiden prattling merrily),  
The air was warm and stilled,  
Yet earth and air were thrilled  
With Spring's exultant breath of prophecy.

And all the smiling sod  
Sent incense up to God  
From wild white Easter lilies, small and sweet,  
Each holding gladly up  
Her pale and pearly cup  
Set round with dew-drops, in a crown complete.

Faint clanging overhead  
The pilot wild-fowl led  
His columns, like a wish-bone slung on high,  
Till, far against the blue,  
They melted out of view,  
Winging their way along the trackless sky.

With blue eyes wonder-wide  
My little maiden cried,  
"Who tolled the lilies it was time to come?"  
"The One Who sends the word  
To every exiled bird,  
That he may seek again his northern home."

"The One Who conquered Death  
To justify our faith  
Will call us from the grave, like Easter flowers;  
Will guide our spirits forth  
Like wild-birds from the north,  
Till the eternal joys of heaven are ours."

—Mrs. McFean-Adams, in *Youth's Companion*.