

and in this way render just as acceptable an offering as though I put my money directly into the contribution-box? But notice the needless indirection of the gift. The frosting and flavoring of the loaf are skilfully adjusted to satisfy the taste of the eater, when in the true worship of giving the mind ought to be free to be occupied with God, to whom the gift is brought. The direct giver careth for the things of the Lord that she may render unto Him an acceptable offering; the indirect giver careth for the things of the world—how she may please her customer. Then when her loaf is sold, he who buys it *gives* nothing into the missionary treasury, though he mistakenly thinks he does. He simply *makes a purchase* so sweet to the taste and so satisfying to the palate, that self-sacrifice is completely swallowed up in self-gratification. Thus the charity, instead of being “twice blessed,” has been twice defrauded—once by her who baked, and once by him who bought. It may seem like a fine-drawn objection which we are urging, oh, candid reader; but we must strenuously maintain, nevertheless, that the widow’s mite is worth vastly more to the treasury of the Lord than the widow’s muffins. In giving, as in everything else, we are to take up our cross and follow Christ. We strongly believe that money sanctified by self-denial and prayer will go farther and buy more in the great missionary transaction than the same amount passed through the Church victualler’s clearing-house. Sarah Hosmer worked in a cotton mill, lived in an attic, and prayed in her closet for missions; and when she died the Lowell factory girl rejoiced in six missionaries preaching the Gospel among the heathen whom her hard-earned money had put into the field. Does it not look as though the God who multiplied the widow’s meal and cruse of oil in order to feed a prophet, did likewise with this working-woman’s contributions that they should accomplish so much? Would that our churches might study the object-lesson in Christian giving, which the Salvation Army is holding up before them! The poorest of the poor, they have now and then their “month of self-denial” in which, by stinting their narrow living, they are enabled to put their fifty thousand dollars at a time into their missionary treasury. If for one year the ice-cream suppers and strawberry festivals, which so abound in our churches, could be abolished, and the aggregate of time bestowed thereon put into a month of self-denial, we question not that there would be an inpouring of sanctified offerings of which we have yet known nothing.

If we must speak thus of our luxurious methods of giving, what shall be said of our luxurious manner of spending? Leave out of the question now personal and family extravagance, and consider simply that of the Church. We have, on inquiry, found repeated instances of congregations spending five times the amount on quartet choirs which they give to missions. Commenting on this fact, not long since, in a missionary address in a large city, and giving instances of the extravagant cost of artistic choirs, a gentleman said to us at the close: “You have understated it, sir; our church pays twenty-five hundred dollars per annum for a single singer.”