

One Woman's Work.

"Mary," said Pastor Winfield, as he placed in his wife's hand an unfolded letter that he had just finished reading, "I must leave the work here, to your care to-night. The postman has just brought this note from the mining settlement at H—, where a number of men were injured by an accident that occurred a few days ago. Two of the sufferers are said to be dying, and one of them has sent a most urgent request, begging that I will not fail to come to him without delay."

"I must start within half an hour, and I just want to tell you about this evening's service. Will you please ask Deacon Page to lead the meeting? and do not fail to have the announcement made that you will take my chair in 'Confidential Corner' during the 'Good-night' half hour. Annie Ray will be there to-night, sure, and the young men of whom I told you yesterday. Perhaps two or three of the lads from the hill farms may linger for a word of cheer; I would not have them be disappointed. I know you understand and will help even to the extent of conducting the service yourself, if need be."

A few more directions briefly given while preparations for the long drive were being hastened by helpful hands; then "Good-bye" and away.

While the pastor hastened to the dying miners, his wife, who was "a help-meet for him," having given all needful directions to the one careful servant, started for the home of Deacon Page.

"No ma'am the deacon can't go out to-night. He fell in the barn this noon and sprained his ankle so he can't put his foot to the floor."

Thus inquiry at the door was answered.
Elder Fröst?

White locks moving restlessly upon the pillow where an aged head turned wearily, gave unspoken, swift reply.

The church in Stoneham, like many other churches in country villages, could boast of but few "pillars;" so Mary Winfield returned from her unsuccessful errand to make what preparation she could for the work that evidently lay before her.

As to that evening's service, only this need be told. She tried to carry out her husband's intentions and wishes to the best of her ability, and, judging from the bright faces that gathered round the pastor's chair in Confidential Corner, for the afterward talk, that night, the effort was not altogether failure. True, any mother might have given the same advice and encouragement in her own home-corner, but unfortunately some of those young people had no "home-mothers." Little Annie Ray was, in a double sense, a drunkard's child; for the parents were "one" in the love for strong drink, however divided their lives may otherwise have been; and the mother of John Sharp, at that very hour, was standing behind the bar of her husband's tavern, filling glasses in obedience to orders that she dared not disobey. Another lad had been sent out from a distant orphanage, and in the home of his adoption, was regarded as a useful piece of machinery, rather than a living human being. Of the others, some had come from homes good and true, and their steps had turned towards the right because of that home influence.

The Winfield little ones slept peacefully under faithful Maggie's watchful care, while their mother gave to others the thought and guidance her own so well could spare. Sometimes, perhaps, in time of dire need, another's hand may guide and strengthen them.

Next day, at evening, the pastor and his wife, as they rested in the gloaming, until the stars should appear and the indoor lamps be lighted, told what of work and care and thought had come to each since yesterday: The story of the dying and the dead, and of the light that came at "evening time." The message to the distant home bereaved, a message touched with thankfulness and peace.

"What a narrow world this is after all," he said, when the uppermost thoughts had been spoken. "How the sorrowful and the glad, the grave and the gay, jostle and push each other as they hurry along. I had but just turned from the last sad offices for the dead, when Pat Finlan confronted me, hat in hand, and asked to 'spake a word.'" "What is it Patrick?"

"I was a thinkin', sir,—an' Norah thought the same—that as ye were here, it might save us the long jaunt to Stoneham, if ye could just recite the marriage service to us before ye go. It would be a great obligement."

"What about a license," I asked.

"Sure now, I thought ye might be carryin' one o' them round in yer pocket, convenient like, knowin' that sich things often happen."

Let me give you another episode. At the Forge Crossing I met Rev. Josiah Dont; and while we traveled in company for an hour or so, I listened to a discourse upon what seems to be one of his favorite themes: Woman's

The Story Page.

sphere, and the waywardness of the present generation of womankind.

The application seemed to be that we men must not only insist upon obedience, but we must also discourage all of woman's aspirations for work outside the home circle; else we take the edge off the scriptive commands, "be ye in subjection, etc." To my mind, the edge has been put there by arbitrary interpretation. Those passages were not intended to be knives, to cut into the sensibilities of the defenceless, but smoothing-boards, by which the wrinkles and twists of human nature might be removed.

Now that the lamps are light, suppose we turn to some of the passages to which he calls attention. Here is Eph. 5: 22-24, but instead of stopping at verse 24 we will read on to the end of the chapter; and verse twenty-one seems to belong to the same subject. Those passages make a smoothing-board, broad and solid; and many wrinkles may be effectively pressed against it. I see nothing there that debars a woman from good works outside the home, provide her husband is in sympathy with her action. Now take Col. 3: 18, and by reading to the end of the chapter we find that not only wife, but children and servants are exhorted to be obedient to lawful authority. And all this obedience must be subject to a higher law. No one will contend that it is right for wife, child or servant to lie or steal, to commit murder or any other crime, even though ordered to do so by the head of the household. In all these passages the higher law is ever kept in view. Titus 2: 4, 5 tells the same story; and the third chapter of 1 Peter contains nothing to forbid a woman the exercise of the franchise even, provide that power be exercised with the consent of her husband, if she has one.

The sum of the matter appears to be, that all are directed to submit to subordinate authority, whether it be that of husband, father, overseer, or master, unless that authority shall conflict with the Laws of God.

"What about the duty of every woman to marry if she can?" asked Mrs. Winfield. "I thought that was one of Brother Dont's favorite theories."

"He touched that point this afternoon, and quoted 1 Tim. 5: 14, which, as you know, refers to widows, and simply recommends that they marry again rather than become church paupers; which seems to be good advice for the church, and probably for the widows too, provided they marry in accordance with admonitions given elsewhere. I fail to find that any woman is advised to marry any other than an honest, God-fearing man; and, unfortunately, the supply of that article rarely equals the demand.

Don't worry, little woman, faithful Maggies and industrious Marthas will always exist somewhere in the wide world, and the wise wife and mother will be far more likely to find them and to keep them than will the undisciplined, or the indolent, selfish, despotic woman, who cares not for the suffering and the need of the outside world, though she be one who has been exalted to guide a household.

I wonder if Rev. J. Dont is "J. D." whose opinions on this subject were published in a late MESSENGER AND VISITOR?

Wolfville, N. S.

Some Hitch About It.

"I will take the letters to the post office, Uncle Ralph." "Thank you, Francis, but one of them is not stamped and I would better take them myself."

"Is not a youth of eighteen capable of sticking a postage stamp on a letter," asked Aunt Minerva, laughing a little.

"There remains ground for a question and this is an important business letter, so I think I will mail it myself."

"Oh, what folly, uncle!" and catching up the package of letters, the long-legged lad was soon speeding down the pleasant tree-lined village street, while Uncle Ralph picked up his newspaper muttering:

"There will be some hitch about it, you will see."

In half an hour Francis came running back again, explaining, as he bounded in:

"It rains like split peas; I shall not have to go out again today. Let me see what I shall read! I haven't read much since I have been here this time, Aunt Minerva, have I? What is there new?"

"Famous Adventures and Prison Escapes of the Civil War" would interest you. It is one of the Century Company's newest books."

"Oh, have you got that? Clarence Spellman, of my class, wrote an essay about it; he said it ought to be in every Grand Army post in the land, and I was going to mention it to uncle, I shall be glad to dip into it as soon as I get off this damp coat," and he stepped into the back entry.

"Did you stamp the letter?"

"I did, Uncle Ralph. Here is the dollar's worth of stamps you sent for. You can see there are only forty-nine of them."

Auntie was passing through the entry just then, and heard the lad mutter:

"Oh! what is this in my pocket?" and he pulled out the whole package of letters and looked at them in blank astonishment; then whispered:

"Don't say a word, auntie. I bought the stamps, and put one on the letter that had no stamp, and then put them all in my pocket instead of the office, and I stayed up there until the mail stage went. Don't slip a word to uncle; I will take them to the station myself."

"But it is a hard two-miles walk, and raining very fast."

"Yes; four miles down and back, but it can't be helped. Don't let uncle know."

"I thought you were going to read?" said Uncle Ralph, glancing up from the document he was making out, as Francis passed his desk, in mackintosh and rubbers.

"Changed my mind, uncle. I may get a letter from my father."

"Impossible, Monday morning."

"He may have started it on Saturday," and away he ran.

"The best boy in the world, if he were not so flighty," said Uncle Ralph, settling again to his writing.

Just as the twelve o'clock dinner was upon the table, he came rushing in, as damp as a mountain fog, and his uncle said:

"Well, had your labor for your pains, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"When have you got to go back?"

"On Saturday, sir."

"It wasn't really a wrong story," he said to Aunt Minerva, later; "only now I shall have to go, and perhaps if it hadn't been for that little episode about the letter I might have stayed until next week."

"You should be careful and not put yourself in the way of such episodes, my dear boy. I shall keep quiet, but your uncle will find out the whole story, and it will all come about in the natural course of events. You will see."

Francis began to see very early the next morning, when his uncle exclaimed, as he glanced over the morning's mail:

"None of my yesterday morning's letters are answered, and that advertisement is not in the paper. You are quite sure, Francis, that you put on a stamp?"

"Yes, sir; quite sure."

That night there came a letter from Francis' father to Uncle Ralph, together with several other letters. He read them all through, and then, turning to his nephew, said:

"Did you mail that package of letters here in the village, Monday morning?"

"No, sir."

"You carried them to the station?"

"I did, sir."

"And the first train was gone?"

"It was, sir."

"How did it all happen?"

"Well, sir, I bought the stamps and put one on the unstamped letter, and just then John Snyder came into the post office and began telling about a horse trade he made yesterday, and I got so interested that I put the letters into my pocket instead of the mail."

"Well, now, let us count up the lies that have grown out of it."

"Not one, sir; I have not told one."

"A lie acted is as reprehensible as one spoken, and I fancy your aunt knew about it, but sheltered you by her silence."

"Your father in this letter makes excuse for not writing to you, and says you need not come back until next week."

"I did not say I had heard from him."

"You implied it. You bound yourself up in a network of falsehood, in spirit if not in letter. I wrote to your father asking that you might remain here as my clerk; and in this letter he gives his consent; but now I will not have you any way. I must have some one I can trust."

"Oh, Uncle Ralph, you are unreasonable."

"Is it unreasonable for a youth with his own way to make in the world to be so heedless that he cannot be trusted to do such a simple thing as to stamp a letter and put it in the post office?"

"Such a thing would never happen again, sir."

"I should hope not; but who would dare to take the risk?"

"Aunt Minerva, do you think that Uncle Ralph is too particular?" asked Francis, going into his aunt's room,

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