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"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD."—Paul.

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AUNTY PARSON'S STORY.

HOW TO RAISE A CHURCH DEBT.

BY DORA DENNIS.

I told Hezekiah—that's my man. People mostly call him Deacon Parsons, but he never gets any deaconing from me. We were married—"Hezekiah and Amariah"—that's going on forty years ago, and he's jest Hezekiah to me, and nothin' more.

Well, as I was saying, says I: "Hezekiah, we aren't right. I am sure of it." And he said: "Of course not. We are poor sinners, Amy; all poor sinners." And I said: "Hezekiah, this 'poor sinner' talk has gone on long enough. I suppose we are poor sinners, but I don't see any use of being mean sinners; and there's one thing I think is real mean."

It was jest after breakfast; and, as he felt poorly, he hadn't gone to the shop yet; and so I had this little talk with him to sort of chirk with him. He knew what I was comin' to, for we had had the subject up before. It was our little church. He always said: "The poor people, and what should we ever do?" And I always said: "We never shall do nothin' unless we try." And so when I brought the matter up in this way, he just began bitin' his toothpick, and said: "What's up now? Who's mean? Amariah, we oughtn't to speak evil of one another." Hezekiah always says "poor sinners" and doesn't seem to mind it, but when I occasionally say mean sinners he somehow gets oneasy. But I was started, and I meant to free my mind.

So I said, says I: "I was goin' to confess our sins. Dan'l confessed for all his people, and I was confessin' for all our little church."

"Truth is," says I, "ours is allus called one of the 'feeble churches' and I am tried about it. I've raised seven children, and at fourteen months old every boy and girl of 'em could run alone. And our church is fourteen years old," says I, "and it can't take a step yet without somebody to hold on by. The Board helps us, and General Jones, good man, he helps us—helps too much, I think—and so we live along, but we don't seem to get strong. Our people draw their rations every year as the Indians do up at the agency; and it doesn't seem sometimes as if they ever thought of doing anything else."

"They take it so easy," I said. "That's what worries me. I do not suppose we could pay all expenses, but we might act as if we wanted to, and as if we meant to do all we can."

"I read," says I, "last week, about the debt of the Board, and this week, as I understand, our application is going in for another year, and no particular effort to do any better, and it frets me. I can't sleep nights, and I can't take comfort Sundays. I've got to feelin' as if we were a kind of perpetual

paupers. And that was what I meant when I said, 'It is real mean!' I suppose I said it a little sharp," says I, "but I'd rather be sharp than flat any day, and if we don't begin to stir ourselves we shall be flat enough before long, and shall deserve to be. It has jest been 'Board,' 'Board,' 'Board,' for fourteen years, and I am tired of it. I never did like boardin'," says I, "and, even if we were poor, I believe we might do something toward settin' up housekeepin' for ourselves."

"Well, there's not many of us: about a hundred, I believe, and some of these is women folks, and some jest girls and boys. And we all have to work hard and live close; but," says I, "let us show a disposition, if nothin' more. Hezekiah, if there is any spirit left in us, let us show some sort of a disposition."

And Hezekiah had his toothpick in his teeth, and looked down at his boots and rubbed his chin, as he always does when he's going to say somethin'. "I think there's some of us that shows a disposition."

Of course, I understood that hit, but I kept still. I kep' right on with my argument, and I said: "Yes, and a pretty bad disposition it is. It's a disposition to let ourselves be helped when we ought to be helping ourselves. It's a disposition to lie still and let somebody carry us. And we are growin' up cripples—only we don't grow."

"Kiah," says I, "do you hear me?" Sometimes when I want to talk a little he jest shets his eye, and begins to rock himself back and forth in the old arm-chair; and he was doin' that now. So I said: "Kiah, do you hear?" And he said: "Some!" and then I went on. "I've got a proposition," says I. And he sort o'looked up, and sed "Hev you?" Well, between a disposition and a proposition, I guess the proposition might be better."

He's awful sarcastic, sometimes. But I wasn't goin' to get riled, nor thrown on the track: so I jest said: "Yes; do you and I git two shillin's worth a piece a week out of that blessed little church of our'n, do you think? 'Cos if we do, I want to give two shillin's a week to keep it goin', and I thought may be you could do as much." So he said he guessed he could stand that, and I said: "That's my proposition; and I mean to see if we can't find somebody else that'll do the same. It'll show disposition anyway."

"Well," says he; "you most allers do." And I said: "Isn't it most allers a good way?" Then I brought my subscription paper. I had it all ready. I didn't jest know how to shape it, but I knew it was something about "the sums set opposite our names," so I drewed it up, and took my chances. "You must head it," says I "because you're the oldest deacon, and I must go on next, because I am the deacon's wife, and then I'll see some of the rest of the folks."

So Kiah sot down, and put on his specs, and took his pen, but did not write. "What's

the matter?" says I. And he said: "I'm sort o' 'shamed to subscribe two shillin's. I never signed so little as that for anything. I used to give that to the circus, when I was nothin' but a boy, and I ought to do more than that to support the gospel. Two shillin's a week! Why, it's only a shillin' a sermon, and all the prayer meeting's thrown in. I can't go less than fifty cents, I am sure." So down he went for fifty cents, and then I signed for a quarter, and then my sunbonnet went onto my head pretty lively; and says I: "Hezekiah there's some cold potato in the pantry, and you know where to find the salt; so, if I am not back by dinner time don't be bashful; help yourself." And I started.

I called on the Smith family first; I felt sure of them. And they were just as happy. Mr. Smith signed, and so did Mrs. Smith; and long John, he came in while we were talkin', and put his name down; and then old Grandma Smith, she didn't want be left out; and so there were four of 'em. I've allers found it a great thing in any good enterprise to enlist the Smith family. There's a good many of 'em. Next, I called on the Joslyns, and next on the Chapins, and on the Widder Chadwick, and so I kept on.

I met a little trouble once or twice, but not much. There was Fussay Furber, and bein' trustee, he thought I was out of my spear, he said, and he wanted it understood that such work belonged to the trustee. "To be sure," says I, "I'm glad I've found out. I wish the trustee had discovered that a leetle sooner." Then there was sister Puffy, that's got the asthma. She thought we ought to be lookin' after "the sperritoalities." She said we must get down before the Lord. She didn't think churches could be run on money. But I told her I guessed we should be just as spiritual to look into our pocket-books a little, and I said it was a shame to be ternally beggin' so of the Board.

She looked dreadful solemn when I said that, and I almost felt as I'd been committin' profain language. But I hope the Lord will forgive me if I took anything in vain. I did not take my call in vain. I tell you Mrs. Puffy is good, only she allus wanted to talk so pious; and she puts down her two shillin's, and then hove a sigh. Then I found the boys at the cooper shop, and got seven names there at one lick; and when the list began to grow, people seemed ashamed to say no, and I kep' gainin' till I had jest an even hundred, and then I went home.

Well, it was pretty well toward candle-light when I got back, and I was that tired I didn't know much of anything. I've washed, and I've scrubbed, and I've baked, and I've cleaned house, and I've billed soap, and I've moved; and I'low that almost any one of that sort of thing is a little exhaustin'. But put your bakin', and movin', and bilin' soap, and all together, and it won't work out as much genuine tired soul and body as one day with a subscription paper to support the Gospel. So when I sort o' dropped into a