

## THE DEACON'S STORY.

"Yes," said the deacon, "there's many a man that calls himself honest that's never so much as enquired what amount of debts heaven's books are going to show against him. I've learned that. There were years in my life when I hardly gave a cent to the Lord without grudging it, and I've wondered since what I'd ever have talked of if I'd gone to heaven in those days, for I couldn't talk about anything but bargains and money-getting here, and those wouldn't have been suitable subjects up yonder."

"I know I read once about one of the kings of England, Edward I., who had an officer called the Lord High Almoner, and one of the things that man had to do was to 'remind the king of the duty of almsgiving.' I've thought to myself many a time that it would be well for a good many folks nowadays if they had King Edward's almoner to stir them up to give. Not to the poor only, I mean, but to all the needs of the cause of Christ. There are lots of people besides the children of Israel that need a Moses to say to them, 'It is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.' I've allers thought that that was a grand thing in David, when he'd done such a job, getting together that pile of gold and silver for the temple, and he just turned to the Lord, and said: 'All these things come from thee, and of thine own have we given thee.' Most men would have wanted a little credit for the pains they'd taken themselves."

"Well, in those years I was telling you about it was dreadful how I cheated the Lord out of his due. Once in a long while I paid a little to our church, but I didn't give a cent to anything else. Foreign mission Sunday was my rheumatiz day, regular, and I didn't go to church. Home mission day was headache day with me allers, and I stayed away from meetin'. Bible-society day I'd gen'rally a tech of neuralgia, so I didn't feel like goin' out, and I stayed home. Tract society day I'd begin to be afraid I was goin' to be deaf, and I oughtn't to be out in the wind, so I stayed indoors, and on Sabbath for helping the publication society like as not my corns were unusually troublesome, and I didn't feel able to get out."

"Wife wanted to take a religious paper once, but I wouldn't hear to it. Told her that was nonsense. I didn't believe any of the apostles ever took religious papers. The Bible was enough for them, and it ought to be for other folks."

"And yet I never even thought I wasn't doin' right. I'd come into it a sort of gradual, and didn't think much about giving, anyhow, except as a sort of losing business."

"Well, my little girl Nannie was about eight years old then, and I was dreadfully proud of her, for she was a smart little thing. One Sabbath night we were sitting by the fire, and Nannie'd been saying her catechism, and by-and-by she got kind of quiet and sober, and all of a sudden she turned to me, and says she: 'Pa, will we have to pay rent in heaven?'"

"What?" says I, looking down at her, kind of astonished like.

"Will we have to pay rent in heaven?" says she, again.

"Why, no," says I. "What made you think that?"

"Well, I couldn't get out of her for a time what she did mean. Nannie didn't know much about rent, anyway, for we'd never had to pay any, livin' in our own house; but at last I found out that she'd heard some men talking about me, and one of them said: 'Well, he's bound to be awful poor in the next world, I reckon. There ain't much of his riches laid up in heaven;' and as the only poor folks that Nannie'd ever known were some folks down at the village that had been turned out of doors because they couldn't pay their rent, that's what put it into Nannie's head that maybe I'd have to pay rent in heaven?"

"Well, wife went on and talked to Nannie, and explained to her about the 'many mansions' in our Father's house, you know, but I didn't listen much. I was mad to think Seth Brown dared to talk about me in that way, right before Nannie, too."

"I fixed up some bitter things to say to Seth the next time I met him, and I wasn't very sorry to see him next day in his cart. I began at him right off. He listened to everything that I sputtered out, and then he said: 'Well, deacon, if you think the bank of heaven's got anything in it for you, I'm glad of it; but I've never seen

you making any deposits,' and then he drove off."

"Well, I walked over to my blackberry patch and sat down and thought, and the more I thought the worse I felt. I was angry at first, but I got cooler, and I thought of foreign mission Sabbath and the rheumatiz, and home mission Sabbath and the headache, and Bible society day and the neuralgia, and tract day and the corns, till it just seemed to me I couldn't stand it any longer, and I knelt down there in the blackberry patch and said: 'O, Lord, I've been a stingy man if ever there was one, and if ever I do get to heaven I deserve to have to pay rent, sure enough. Help me to give myself, and whatever I've got, back to thee.' And I believe he's helped me ever since. 'Twas pretty hard work at first, getting to giving. I did feel pretty sore over that first dollar I slipped into the collection plate, but I've learned better now; and I mean to keep on giving 'as unto the Lord,' till I go to that heaven where Nannie's been these twenty years."—*Congregationalist*.

## BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

On visiting the Conference at Biddeford, Me., we had a very pleasant companion upon the cars of the Main Railway, a gentleman well known in a New York mission centre for his vigorous business abilities and the marked success with which he has developed one of its important departments. "I am going home," he said, in answer to the question as to the occasion of his visit, "down East." When a lad, as he related the story to us, an orphan, seeking employment, he came from Canada to Biddeford. He found employment on very small wages at one of the mills. His clothes were poor, he had no shoes, and could just about earn enough to pay for his cheap board. He had not been in the habit of attending church, and was in no condition to do so if he had desired to go. One Sunday he was passing the Methodist church as the superintendent of the Sunday school stood in the door-way; the kind-hearted man spoke to the lonely boy, asked him if he belonged to any school, and invited him into his. He made no account of his excuses about his dress and bare feet, but said good-natured words to him, and taking him by the hand led him into the schoolroom and placed him in a class of boys of his own age. A well-dressed lad who sat next to him noticed his feet, and after school said to him, "Father has just bought a pair of new shoes for my brother. His foot is just about your size. Come home with me and mother will give you the old pair." With much reluctance he was persuaded to go. The mother received him as if he were a son, fitted him up with shoes and stockings, and invited him to call at the house. All this cost little of sacrifice or money, but it was the turning-point in the boy's history. He has not left the Sabbath school to this day. A church-going habit was formed. He was afterwards happily converted, and has been an active, generous, and very useful member of the Church. The kindly family in Biddeford has been his loved home, to which he has from time to time returned. The mother has been, and is to-day, a mother greatly beloved to him. His companion in the Sunday school class is dead, and in some measure he fills the vacant place in this home circle. How providential these simple incidents! How important to speak the kind and wise word to the shoeless child!

## A BEAUTIFUL FATHER.

"Tell your mother you've been very good boys to-day," said a school teacher to two little new scholars.

"Oh!" replied Tommy, "we haven't any mother."

"Who takes care of you?" she asked.

"Father does. We've got a beautiful father. You ought to see him!"

"Who takes care of you when he is at work?"

"He takes all the care before he goes off in the morning and after he comes back at night. He's a house-painter; but there isn't very much work this winter, so he is doing laboring till spring comes. He leaves us a warm breakfast when he goes off; and we have bread and milk for dinner, and a good supper when he comes home. Then he tells us stories and plays on the fife, and cuts out beautiful things with his jack-knife. You ought to see our father and our home, they are both so beautiful!"

Before long, the teacher did see that home

and that father. The room was a poor attic, graced with cheap pictures, autumn leaves, and other little trifles that cost nothing. The father, who was preparing the evening meal for his motherless boys, was at first glance only a rough, begrimed laborer; but, before the stranger had been in the place ten minutes, the room became a palace and the man a magician.

His children had no idea they were poor, nor were they so with such a hero as this to fight their battles for them. This man, whose grateful spirit lighted up the otherwise dark life of his children, was preaching to all about him more effectually than was any man in priestly robe in costly temple.

He was a man of patience and submission to God's will, showing how to make home happy under the most unfavorable circumstances. He was rearing his boys to be high-minded citizens, to put their shoulders to burdens rather than become burdens to society in the days that are coming.

He was, as his children had said, "a beautiful father," in the highest sense of the word.—*Sel.*

THE EMPRESS OF JAPAN has given instructions for the adoption of foreign female dress. She declared that the new costume need not be attended with great expense if native materials were utilized. She tried to make the change acceptable to the conservatives by calling attention to the fact that the ancient female costume of Japan bore a strong resemblance to modern European dress. The result of her words will be the sudden adoption of foreign costume by every Japanese lady who has the means, and foreign observers predict great hardship to men of small means. What makes the change specially hard is that large sums of money are invested in clothes, as the styles have been unvarying for hundreds of years.—*Harper's Bazar*.

## Question Corner.—No. 15.

## BIBLE QUESTIONS.

1. What Old Testament prophet is designated in the New Testament as the preacher of righteousness?
2. To what men in the Old Testament was it commanded not to drink wine at a certain time, under penalty of death?
3. What name does tradition give the three wise men who came from the East to greet the new-born King of the Jews, and from what countries did they come?

## ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS.

1. Gopher. Gen. 8: 14.
2. Gourd. Jonah 4: 6.
3. Grape. Lev. 19: 10.
4. Hemlock. Hos. 10: 4.
5. Hyssop. Ex. 12: 22.
6. Juniper. 1 Kings, 19: 5.
7. Lentils. Gen. 25: 34.

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