

### Pitchers and Lamps.

This particular pitcher was old-fashioned, awkward, and ugly enough to gratify any aesthetic taste. If it held a lamp, Mrs. Lander did not know it. She was enraptured when she discovered it in a down town crockery store, and having "purchased it at a bargain," by paying three times what it was worth, carried it home to decorate it and make it more aesthetic and ugly still; for Mrs. Lander was not yet a proficient in ceramic art. But she intended to be, and she had decided that as soon as the pitcher should be completed she would purchase other pieces sufficiently unlike it to make a set.

She was absorbed in her occupation when the door-bell rang, and Bridget's head inserted itself at the partly-open door.

"A lady to see you, ma'am."

"Book-agent, I suppose," sighed Mrs. Lander, laying down her brush reluctantly.

But instead of one of that much abused class, the caller proved to be a bright-eyed, earnest faced lady, with a request that Mrs. Lander would entertain one or more delegates to the woman's missionary convention.

"Perhaps we may have already secured places enough, but it is sure to be a large and enthusiastic meeting, you know."

Mrs. Lander did not know anything about it. She had heard something, to be sure, but it was forgotten as soon as heard. Mrs. Lander never attended missionary meetings. Years before, when she was a young girl, she had gone regularly to the monthly concert in the old church at home, for the very good reason that her parents believed in it and never inquired whether she did or not. If those monthly concerts had been expressly designed to awaken in the ordinary mind a desire not to know anything about missions, they could scarcely have been more successful. They were always held in the afternoon, when the old church looked greyer and grimmer than ever. Most of the people stayed away, and the few who came scattered themselves so widely through the church as to add to its deserted and forlorn appearance. There was no sermon—"a little talk would do well enough for monthly concerts." They always sang "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," which was the only cheerful feature of the occasion. The "heathen" were not individualized, but served and swallowed in one indigestible mass. Then some good brother prayed that the "watchmen on Zion's walls might see eye to eye"—what that might mean Mrs. Lander had not the faintest idea—and that "the islands of the sea might be speedily converted," with no definite conception in his own mind, or that of any one else, what those islands were or where they were located. And then everybody went home, thankful that the dull duty was over for one month more.

In view of these early experiences, a missionary meeting was not an enticing prospect to Mrs. Lander. She did not positively determine that she would never go to them—it is not always comfortable to be too honest, even with one's self—she had only told herself that she was too busy. Fortunately, however, people did not all think alike and there were ladies of more than ordinary intelligence and of high social rank who seemed really interested in such matters. She had noticed that fact with secret wonder, and there was something of the same wonder in her eyes as she surveyed her bright-faced caller. It would be pleasant to oblige these ladies, and, moreover—human motives being usually somewhat mixed—she reflected that her front-chamber was lovely in its new furniture of crimson and grey, and it was a pity not to have some one see it! So she graciously consented to receive a

delegate, and went back to her pottery with a complacent feeling of having fulfilled her missionary duty at last.

On the bright morning following there were three people, at three different points of the compass, who had each an appointed work to do without in the least knowing what it was to be—an old woman with a rusty satchel, a boy with a stone, and a lady with a sick headache. The old woman with the satchel thought she knew her errand perfectly. She had planned, all the time she was knitting stockings and selling eggs to earn the money, for this great event of her life—going up to the woman's missionary convention in the city. Her daughter-in-law thought it "all nonsense for mother to go off alone so among strangers." But the old grey head shook a decided negative. She wanted to hear from those fresh from the field how the King's armies were advancing, and where the royal banner was planted.

"I want the refreshin' to my own soul," she said. "And if David could go up to hear, and to carry a little parched corn, in his day, I guess I can go with my little offering now."

The little boy with the stone had no idea of a mission. He had picked up the stone and put it in his pocket to consort with a broken knife, some rusty nails, three marbles, a bit of chewing gum, a leathern sling and an old padlock. That stone might prove a convenient article if he should come across a dog, a window, or something else that did not need to be hit; and meanwhile, it was just as valuable as the other treasures he had accumulated.

The lady with the headache was in dire dismay, because she thought her mission ended when the headache began. She was one of the prime movers and directors of the convention. Head and hands had been busy with it for weeks. And now on this important day, when she particularly desired to be at her post to assign strangers who came unannounced to the places held in reserve, this distracting pain kept her a prisoner at home. It must get better! She could not be sick, she declared. But it was one of those persevering, unreasonable, not-to-be-argued-out-of-the-matter headaches that all nervous women know, and of course it was victorious. The hot head sank helplessly on its pillow at last, and with an odd little compromise between a groan and a laugh, the lady gave up the contest.

It is of no use. The world did exist after a fashion before I came into it, so I suppose it may be possible for it to move on for one day longer even if I am kept out of it. I must accept your offer, Bob. Go and do your best."

Bob was a young gentleman with the kindest heart, the best intentions and the least tact imaginable. He was home on a college vacation, and had offered to take his mother's place for the day, and fulfill its duties to the best of his ability. Very fine ability, too, Mr. Bob privately considered it, though he did not discover much room for its exercise in a position like this. In his secret heart he wondered why his mother and the other ladies should make so much fuss over so very simple a matter.

"Easiest thing in the world," said Mr. Bob, looking at a new arrival and then at his list, "Here's a delegate that wants a place, and here's a place that will take a delegate. Put them together and it's a fit." And he fitted them without once perceiving, in his masculine obtuseness, that the place was gilt-edged and the delegate was not.

That was the way in which it happened that the old woman with the antiquated bonnet, the coarse shawl and