

ONE SUNDAY.

(By Sally Campbell.)

He was the only passenger who got off the cars on that Saturday evening. He was young, almost boyish, tall and slight, with light hair and mild, light eyes set far apart in a face that looked pale to the sunburned loungers about the station. There were a great many of these, for the coming in of the train was the event of the day in the isolated Western town. They were rough-looking men, the most of them, miners, with grimy faces and the sleeves of their flannel shirts rolled up to their elbows, with here and there a straw-hatted clerk from one of the stores and the usual rabble of small boys. The newcomer took in all his surroundings in one deliberate glance and then, without speech of anybody, walked rapidly along the platform toward the single street of the village.

The silence which had fallen upon the bystanders at the instant when the train got in, lasted until he got out of earshot. Then old Pete Saunders shifted his tobacco from one side of his mouth to the other, spat with a science which was the admiration and despair of every boy in the town, and remarked, laconically, "Tenderfoot."

And Bob Ellis, pointing out with a gesture of his big thumb the ominous length of the tails of the stranger's coat, added, with still greater sarcastic meaning, "Parson."

That Bob was right, became apparent before the evening was out. For within an hour notices were posted up in several of the stores and at the post-office, and even in the bar-room of the Golden Eagle, stating that religious services would be conducted the next morning at eleven o'clock, in the hotel parlor, by the Rev. William Shearer, to which all were cordially invited.

"I can't go," said Bob. "Ain't that too bad! I've got another engagement about that time. But I'm just as much obliged to him. Whoever of you goes, will you give him my love, and tell him I don't see how I'll ever get over missin' it; but tell him I won't be so far off and tell him I'll be drinkin' good luck to him."

"We've had enough of these travelling preachers," cried a sullen-looking young fellow, with an oath. "They keep stopping over here on Saturday night and putting off their wares on us whether we like it or not. I believe in packing them off as soon as they show themselves."

"What's the good o' that, Jerry?" said Bob, good humoredly. "I don't see as there's any call to act ugly over it. Give 'em a wide berth like me, that's all you've got to do. You know you needn't go call on everyone of them, and sit up nights with him reading the Bible, and get your pay docked seein' him off on the train the next day. That might do for once, but a fellow would get tired of it."

These seemingly innocent remarks brought a smile to all the faces near, and made Jerry flush and turn with a sudden motion of anger on the speaker. But whatever his passions might have been, he thought better of it and dropped lazily back into his place, saying as he shrugged his shoulders: "I don't suppose anybody that knows what I've been since, would suspect me of doing that thing over again. I've travelled on fast time and got along past the place in the road where men turn back, and I don't believe, either, that there's much danger I'll have to break my heart parting company with any of you on the rest of the way down; or, if I do, we're all safe, I imagine, to turn up together in the same spot at the end of the trip."

Reckless as his hearers were, there was something in this speech which grated even upon them. It was after a short silence that old Pete turned the subject by saying, with weighty emphasis: "This last chap has got a slow, sassy eye on him, that's what he's got! There when the train come in he looked us over as if we were so many pictures in a book that couldn't see back for themselves. I like to have anyone use his sight that way as if he knew what it was for," he ended, rather unexpectedly.

"Are you goin' to hear him, Uncle Pete?" asked somebody.

"I am so. I always do. It makes a nice change for a man. It wouldn't do for it to come off too often, but once in a while it's something like bein' to a theaytre, to sit up there quiet and listenin', like you was somebody respectable."

"It don't suit me," said Bob Ellis, who had lost something of his careless good temper in the last few minutes. "It's all alike; you can say just what it's goin' to be before they get it off, for nine out of ten of them plump right down, first shot, on that prodigal son chapter." A general laugh acknowledged the truth of Bob's observation. "And when they get to handlin' him they seem to feel real comfortable, as if they were sayin' what was sure to fit. Supposin' we were all to pick up and start right off to our fathers?"

"Some of us would get a welcome that isn't mentioned anywhere in the Scriptures," sneered Jerry.

"They'd a long sight rather we'd stay where we are," Bob went on, "and send home the travellin' expenses in a letter. Or else, if it ain't the prodigal son, it's that place about our sins bein' red and scarlet. I suppose of course, they are, but it makes me mad to see those sleek fellows standin' there so high and mighty, throwin' it up to us poor devils that's never had the chance they have."

When Jerry went to his boarding-house that night, he was greatly put out to find that the clerical stranger had been lodged in a room next his own. He could hear him moving about there the next morning, whistling to himself in a boyish fashion as he dressed. Jerry shoved the chairs about and slammed his boots on the floor to keep out the sound, but when as quickly as possible he had escaped from the house, certain well-known words set to a familiar hymn tune, pursued him and sang themselves over and over in his brain with maddening persistence:—

When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, Oh, abide with me.

Perhaps it was this that brought him to the parlor of the Golden Eagle at a little after eleven o'clock. Pete Saunders was there in the front row, and before all was over, Bob Ellis sneaked into a seat half-hidden behind the door.

When the Rev. Mr. Shearer, ready to begin his sermon, stood up at the marble-topped table and looked about on his audience with the direct gaze which had so won old Saunders's approval, he had chosen his text neither from the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel nor from the first chapter of Isaiah. There was a stir in the seats and an interchange of glances as the few words fell slowly on the silence of the room: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations."

And if they were a surprise to the listeners, it must be admitted that the clergyman himself was half puzzled at his own choice, though he had been unable to resist the impulse which led him to it.

"I shall never see these people again," had been his reasoning; "I will give them the best I have, and that is missions."

It was a good sermon, full of the enthusiasm which was carrying the fair-haired preacher away from his home across the continent to California to sail in a few days for a life's work in Japan. And it was a better sermon, doubtless, because of the absorbed attention with which his congregation listened to it, moved as they were to deep and unexpected interest if only by the novelty of the theme.

No sooner was the service concluded than old Saunders started to his feet.

"See here, my men, there'd ought to be something to show for preachin' like that. The young gentleman's asked us for our prayers, but I don't know as they'd help him along much; we're kind o' weak on prayin'; it's a poor article round this neighborhood. But maybe our money would do. What do you say?"

He picked up his hat and passed it about the room from man to man, exhorting them to "pay up lively" and "show what the linin' of their pockets was made of," to such effect that when he set it down on the table at last it was heavy with coins of many descriptions. Mr. Shearer seized on it and

counted it with a youthful avidity which was favorably regarded by his patrons.

"I am much obliged to you, friends," he said, heartily, when he had shaken out the last dime and handed the hat back to its owner. "This will do good work for us, I hope. I had not thought of taking a collection. But it is a dangerous thing to start a missionary begging. I wish we could count on a sum like this another year. I wish someone would volunteer to put it together and send it out to us. Will you?" turning suddenly on Jerry, who was standing somewhat behind him. "Will you take a turn at following this good friend's example a year from now?"

After a moment's thought, Jerry promised, adding carelessly, "If I don't forget, and since it's not praying."

Mr. Shearer promptly drew a card out of his pocket upon which he wrote an address, and handed it to Jerry. Then, as they were all about to separate, he said in a tone made solemn by its earnestness: "My brothers, if it is true that you have never learned to pray, will you not do it now? Will you not ask for me that the very presence of our Father may go with me to these poor lost brothers to whom I am sent? They are your brothers, too, and they have never had the choice between light and darkness which has been offered to you all your lives."

The next day he went; on the following Sunday there was some talk in the town of his sermon, which the Sunday after was replaced by other topics, and in another week the visit seemed forgotten.

Jerry had not forgotten. Try as he might to put the remembrance from him by fast living—gambling and drinking until his mates marvelled at him—he was haunted by the face and the voice of the young missionary, and chafed by it past endurance.

"I wish to God he had never come here," he cried to himself, sitting alone one wet night in the darkness of his room. "Why can't the preachers leave me to myself? Why can't they let me go to the bad in peace? I am sure to go. Everything has failed me. My own father and mother have turned me off, my friends have forgotten me except as something to gossip of now and then to a stranger, the society I was brought up to has shut its doors on me, and none of this is the worst. I have failed myself. There's hope in anything short of that. But when a man gives himself up, what is left?"

It might have been that the word suggested it, but so distinctly that he was startled; as though a living voice had spoken, the couplet of the hymn came back to him:—

When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, Lord, abide with me.

For a moment he was silenced, but then he laughed out savagely: "Abide with me?" We'd hardly get on, I think; we are not the kind to flock together. When a man has drunk as deep as I of the cup of devils, the cup of the Lord is not for him. I don't deny what the preacher said, that I have had the chance to choose. But I've taken my choice just as he has taken his, and I want to be left in quiet. I don't want him here, pointing out how far apart our two paths have taken us. Hardened sinner though I am, it is horrible to me to see the difference between us—to see him, young and strong like myself, with life fair and sweet and earnest before him, and the cursed wreck that I am with nothing but deeper depths beyond. If we two are brothers, the family resemblance is hard to trace; I fear it's lost, for ever and ever."

The wind raged and shook the house, the rain dashed in gusts against the windows, and the night grew darker. At length the bent figure which had sat motionless for hours stirred, the tight shut lips opened, and from them came the whisper: "Hast thou not a blessing for me, even for me also, O my Father?"

It was getting very late. The keeper of the Golden Eagle had more than once hinted to his guests that it was time for them to be gone, when the bar-room door was flung open, and Jerry came in. Rain dripped from his clothes, his face was white and his eyes burning.

"Men," he said, without preliminary, "you all know that I tried once before after something better and failed. I am going to try again. I may fail again. God knows I am afraid enough of what the end will be. But at least I mean to make the attempt, and you might as well be told. Let us start fair about it."

He left as suddenly as he had come, before anyone could answer him. In the midst of the storm of oaths and merriment, which broke out after his departure, Bob Ellis's burly figure presently loomed up from a corner.

"See here," he said, "bringin' his hand down heavily on the counter, 'just leave Jerry be, will you? If he can work this let him. I was blamed sorry he didn't get through the other time, and now there ain't got to be no tricks played on him. For I tell you, when a person is struck with accidents or death, or any kind o' home-sickness in this place, he don't find much comfort to take in a wild crew such as us. I tell you, it's safe to have one right-livin' man about you for times like them. And what I say is, that if anybody wants to meddle with Jerry, let him settle with me.'"

Settling with Bob had been tried once or twice in the history of the town, and had since gone out of fashion, so that in the hard fight before him, Jerry had found a supporter well worth the having.

A year later, true to his promise, he collected and sent to Mr. Shearer, a second contribution to missions. After the bare business note with its enclosure had been sealed and was ready to go, he broke it open and added a postscript:—"When you and I meet before our Father's face, in that day I think he will tell you that I was the first heathen you ever converted."—"Interior."

GREENLAND DELICACIES.

Greenlanders have no regular meal-times, but eat when they are hungry. They seem able to go without food for a remarkably long time, and also to eat at a sitting the most astonishing quantity. Among their principal dainties is the skin of different kinds of whales. They call it matak, and look upon it as the acme of deliciousness. It is taken off with the layer of blubber next to it, and is eaten raw without ceremony. Mr. Nansen declares that he must offer the Eskimos his sincerest congratulations on the invention of the dish.

I can assure the reader that now, as I write of it, my mouth waters at the very thought of matak, with its indescribably delicate taste of nuts and oysters mingled. And then it has this advantage over oysters, that the skin is as tough as india-rubber to masticate, so that the enjoyment can be protracted to any extent.

Of vegetable food, the primitive Greenlanders used several sorts; I may mention angelica, dandelions, sorrel, crowberries, bilberries, and different kinds of seaweed.

One of their greatest delicacies is the contents of a reindeer's stomach. If a Greenlanders kills a reindeer, and is unable to convey much of it home with him, he will, I believe, secure the stomach first of all; and the last thing an Eskimo lady enjoins upon her lover, when he sets off, reindeer-hunting, is that he must reserve for her the stomach of his prey.

It is no doubt because they stand in need of vegetable food that they prize this so highly, and also because it is in reality a very choice collection of the finest moss and grasses which that gourmet, the reindeer, picks out for himself. It has undergone a sort of stewing in the process of semi-digestion, while the gastric juice provides a somewhat sharp and aromatic sauce.

Many will no doubt make a wry face at the thought of this dish, but they really need not do so. I have tasted it and found it not uneatable, though somewhat sour, like fermented milk. As a dish for very special occasions, it is served up with pieces of blubber and crowberries.

It is hard to understand how anyone who always hides his money before he prays, can expect to attract attention in heaven.