

❁ ❁ The Story Page. ❁ ❁

The Deacon's Tenth.

MARY S. CHAPMAN.

Ye see, the elder had preached a most powerful sermon on Christian givin', in which he took what I called partly strong ground. Among other things, he said we'd ought to do as much for our religion as the old Jews did for theirs, and while it was all right to lay up for a rainy day, an' to get ahead if we honestly could, we should set apart at least one-tenth of our income as the Lord's money.

"Now, I think the elder went a lee'le too far," says I to my wife, Huldý, as we was a drivin' home from meetin'. "Givin' is well enough, but I get a'most tired a heavin' these ministers forever a dingin' about it."

"Waal, Lyman," says Huldý, "why don't you try givin' a tenth—try it for one year anyhow."

"My I!" says I, "as if I didn't give more 'n that now; it's two shillin's, and fifty cents, every time I turn around, to say nothin' of the contributions to big objects. If I get home with a dollar in my pocket I think I'm a lucky fellow."

"Then, I'm sure," says Huldý, with that queer little smile of her'n that she sometimes has, "it'll be a real savin' to ye to go into systematickly a givin' yer tenth."

Now, I hadn't any idea of doin' it, an' keepin' a reckonin' of what I contribute—in fact, I thought that verse about lettin' yer right hand know what yer left was a doin' was rather again it, but somehow Huldý has a cool way of takin' things for granted, and though the mildest of all women, she generally manages to carry her pint.

Next mornin' I see her makin' a book out of some sheets of paper an' rulin' 'em off, and stichin' on to 'em a pasteboard kiver an' on the outside she writ in big letters that was as plain to read as printin', "The Lord's Money." This she handed to me an' said nothin'.

That very week I got pay for my wheat; it was an uncommon good crop; it come to six hundred dollars. I was a settin' by the fire a countin' it up with some satisfaction, when Huldý jest stuck under my nose that book "The Lord's Money."

"What's that for, Huldý," says I.

"Why, for the tenth," says she.

"Bless my soul!" says I, a wrigglin' an' twistin', "that would be sixty dollars; I can't stand that."

She didn't say anything, but set a watchin' me, and I knew it wasn't no use a dodgin' her; so I took six ten-dollar bills, all crisp and new, and laid 'em in a pile.

"Via, yis," says I, a tryin' to screw my face into a smile, and to set as if I'd been a calkerlatin' all the way through to give 'em.

Ye see there was an awful sight of old Adam in me. I jest set there a begreddin' that money. I most wished the wheat hadn't come to so much. Then I happened to remember what the elder had said in his sermon—that it would be a mighty hard wrench on us at first to give a tenth—that when the fingers had got crooked up a graspin' this world's goods 'twas hard to get 'em straightened out, but that when we'd become used to this way o' givin', we'd enjoy it an' be blessed in it as much as in pravin' an' readin' the Scriptures. A thinkin' on that sermon, I made up my mind I'd double my subscription for the elder's support, an' that would just take the sixty dollars.

As I harvested my crops an' sold 'em, I was astonished to see how the Lord's pile grew, an' I had to think it over middlin' sharp to know where to invest it so 'twould do the most good, an' I was gettin' over the wraunch a little until my interest became due. The year before old Uncle Nat had died, an' most unexpectedly had left me five thousand dollars. If the legacy had dropped down from the skies I couldn't have been more surprised. Now I had three hundred a comin' in from it, and it most killed me to take thirty on't an' put it aside for the Lord. I couldn't help whinin'.

"Now, Huldý," says I, "don't ye believe the old Jews deducted their taxes afore they laid by their tenth?"

"I dunno," says she, "we might read up Leviticus an' Numbers an' Deuteronomy an' see."

"Bless my soul, Huldý," says I, "I'd rather pay the whole thirty dollars than wade through all them dull books." "An' then," says I, a thinkin' hard, "accordin' to what these agents that come around beggin' say, I s'pose it would be a good peccooniady speckleration to give to the Lord. They tell about throwin' out crackers an' comin' back loaves, an' show how them is blessed in their basket an' in their store that bestow their goods on the poor. Anyhow, I've made up my mind to try it."

"Now, Lyman Tubbs, don't ye go into this tenth business with no such worldly motives. If ye do ye'll be worse than Ananias and Sapphira, who was struck dead at once. Not but that the Lord has said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' and 'prove me now herewith,' but if ye undertake to drive a sharp bargain with him, ye'll find out that he'll git ahead of ye every time. No, he's given us all we have, an' I'm thinkin' he'll ask

us some mighty close questions about the way we've used it."

Huldý didn't very often preach, but when she did her sermons were what I call p'inted.

Time passed on an' I got used to givin' my tenth. I didn't squirm over it as I did; in fact, I got kinder raised, an' to feelin' liberal. I didn't sell so much as a turkey without puttin' aside tithes of it.

It happened in the summer that my wife's cousin Silas an' his family came to see us, an' I was a braggin' about my tenth, an' I supposed he'd never heard o' sech a thing; but Silas says, says he, "I've done it ever since I was converted. I aim two dollars a day, an' every Saturday night I jest lay aside one dollar and twenty cents, an' I pray over it; it's sacred; it's the Lord's money."

"Don't ye take yer livin' out o' it first?"

"Yer what?" says Silas, amazed. "It's jest so much I aim, an' the ability to aim it comes from the Lord, an' I joyfully give back to him the little part."

"But," says I, "ain't that kinder risky? Ye might be took sick, or yer work give out; I should be a little fear-some."

"These are the promises," says Silas; "My God shall supply all you needs," an' "Lo, I am with you." They are all yea, an' amen."

Waal, if I didn't feel small after that, I had simply given a tenth of all I'd sold and grumbled over it at that, and the e were all those broad acres that had fed us, and those big trees in the woods that had kept us warm—blessings 'pon blessings that I hadn't counted, and here was Silas with nothing but his hands, and yet so willing hearted and doing so much. When I carried him and his folks back to the city I jest filled my wagon box full of things, and felt as if I was a giving directly to the Lord.

One day the elder and his family was over to our house, an' we was a talkin'. His son Fred was a playin' with my Thomas—they was awfin' good friends—an' says the elder, "If I had as much money as you have, Deacon Tubbs, I'd send Thomas to school, and ask the Lord to make a minister o' him."

"Bless my soul!" thought I, "that's the last thing I want him to be." Ye see I had other things for my boy, but I said nothin'.

My next neighbor, old Mr. Hodges, had a son who went to the city and studied law, and got to be a judge, and comes home in his big carriage once in a while to visit the old folks, his wife and children dressed to fits, and seeing them I had a natural hankerin' for Thomas to turn out like that; I was a saying this to Huldý when the elder's folks was gone.

"Now, Lyman Tubbs," says she, a looking at me with them great earnest eyes of hers, "would you really like to have our Thomas jest like old Mr. Hodges' son—a breakin' the Sabbath, he and his boys, a shooting ducks and a drinkin' and a playin' cards? Ye you a deacon and a member of the church and not feel as if 'twas bigger business to persuade men to forsake their sins and to love the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Ever since Silas was here my mind has been dreadfully took up with something he was a telling me. He said some good Christian men had hired rooms in the worst part of the city and made them bright and attractive, and was a singin' hymns and a preachin' to the folks, all without money and without price, and some sech work as this is what I'd been a wishin' my boy could do, and jest then Thomas came in and stood beside his mother. He had the same hair as hers and the same brown eyes, and something told me that if he took to preachin' he'd be one of the convincin' sort, for I must say that nobody's words ever took hold of an old sinner like me as Huldý's does.

Well, my tenth money grew; half the time I didn't know what to do with it. I was over to the elder's one day and he was a tellin' me of a school near by which he thought would be a good place to send our Thomas—he'd noticed how crazy the boy was for books an' learnin' and the minister said he'd be a cousin a livin' jest out of the village that would take good care of Thomas, and board him, an' he'd be under good Christian influence.

"What do you say, Huldý?" says I, as soon as I got home.

"I'd like him to go," says she, "an' for the elder's boy to go with him."

Sure enough he should, an' that would be a use for the rest of my tenth, an' Thomas an' Fred was awful good friends; they was like David an' Jonathan, an' what do you think, there was a revival that, jest like a big wave, struck that school, an' in fact the whole community, an' both the boys was converted, an' you can't think how I felt, so glad about it, an' kinder streaked, too, for I knew it warn't none of my doin'; I'd been sech a poor, good-for-nothin' Christian all my life, it was enough to set my Thomas agin' the Lord.

We got the good news on Saturday mornin' an' in the afternoon was the covenant meetin'. It was jest about a year from the time that Huldý handed me the "Lord's

Money" book. I remembered how I got up in the meetin' then and talked, not because I'd anything to say, but being deacon, I felt as if I ought to and told the brethren I hadn't made no progress, and all that—jest what I commonly said. How could I talk that way now when I'd a year of sech uncommon blessin', and with Huldý beside me a cravin' for joy because our Thomas had been converted? No, I couldn't keep from breaking down, and thankin' the Lord for his goodness to me and mine, and I knew that givin' my tenth, though it had come so begredeggingly, had been a help to me. I warn't sech a small, waspish critter as I was afore.

The next year I was man enough to d'vide my tenth with Huldý, and sech good times as we had investin' it. Now, Huldý was great on what we call the "inasmuch charities"—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these," etc. She was always a findin' some bed-ridden old woman to help, or crippled child, or some other case of need, while I couldn't hardly sleep nights a thinkin' of the great West, with the foreigner's comin' into it, and of the poor freedmen of the South, or of the great heathen world that so needs the gospel. We spent hours and hours a talkin' it over, as we did so we got nearer to each other, and I trust nearer to the Lord.

It's now been a good many years that we have been a tryin' this tenth business, and I wouldn't go back to the helter-skelter way of givin' for anything.

Huldý has jest been to the city to see the children, and came home with her face all aglow. Our Thomas and the minister's Fred, who married our Mary, have gone into business together, and are doin' first rate; but that isn't the best of it; they have started a mission in the wickedest part of the city, and Huldý said it did her soul good to hear those young voices a tellin' them poor ignorant ones of the love of Jesus and to see them a listenin' an' a comin' into the kingdom.

As I'm a closin' I've got this much to tell you: if you want to be a happy Christian you must let your prayin' and praisin' and givin' go together, and I will say that Huldý never did a better thing for me than when she gave me "The Lord's Money" book.—The Examiner.

❁ ❁ What Christ Did. ❁ ❁

Christie stood in the hall door looking down the street rather disconsolately. Grace Dennis was just driving around the corner; she had stopped to see if Christie would not go with her over to Wire Village and try to pick up a class for the mission Sunday school.

"I wish I could," said Christie, wistfully. "But I can't possibly. We've a house full of boarders, you know, and I'm the only girl we keep."

"I wish I could have gone," thought Christie, as she watched Grace out of sight. "I should just love to have a class. I would try my very best to help them; it must be beautiful to feel you are helping any one to be better. I wish I wasn't tied up here at home."

And then all at once Christie turned herself squarely about and went out into the kitchen.

"I'm ashamed of you, Christie Evans, to be fretting because you can't do just what you want to. If you were needed over there at Wire Village I rather guess the way would be made plain for you to go. Instead of that it is clear as clear can be that you are needed right here in this identical kitchen to wash these dishes, and then there are all those rooms that want sweeping. Now if I was in your place I wouldn't spend any more time lamentin' because I couldn't be where I wasn't needed, but I'd do the work that was given to me, just the very best that I knew how."

Whereupon Christie donned her apron and set about doing the dishes.

"You here?" said Miss Tompkins, coming down into the kitchen on an errand. "I saw Grace Dennis drive up, and thought perhaps she had come to take you to ride."

"So she did," answered Christie, cheerfully; "but you see I'm so indispensable to the welfare of this household that I can't get away very often. If I could have my choice of course I'd choose a higher 'spear' of action, as Miss Kent tells about, but I didn't, so I must make the best of it. I'll try to do my out-and-out best where I am, and maybe I'll rise some time."

Miss Tompkins went back upstairs without the dustpan she had come for.

"I wonder," she said to herself, "if I've got any 'spear' at all. I don't believe I've ever done my out-and-out best whether I have or not. I wish I had, though. I wonder if it is too late to begin now. I declare I'll see what I can do to-day. I'll go down and spend the day with brother Joseph. I can find chances enough to make myself useful there if I don't find my sphere. I don't believe, with those five romping boys, that Martha ever sees the bottom of her mending basket; but I'll look for it to-day. I'm afraid she don't care much about my comin'. I guess I am apt to be sort of cranky and fault-