

be a difficult case to begin with. Then there was Mr. Simeon Styles, my opposite neighbor, but here my reflections were broken in upon by John, who said briefly: 'It's a bonny fine voice has the parson, sir—'

'Yes, a very fine voice, indeed, John,' yet it never occurred to me that my man must have been listening quite recently to the ministerial tones, thus to comment upon them! Well, where was I?—Oh, Mr. Styles—he attended church once in a while, and although affable to a delightful degree as a neighbor, still he was a proud man, and belonged to a very aristocratic old family; and was there not danger of his resenting what he might consider as a meddling piece of impertinence on my part? On the train every day I saw Colonel Parsons, an entertaining gentleman of no very fixed principles, if report said true; we were very good friends, but undoubtedly he would ridicule any advances on the subject of his soul's salvation. It almost annoyed me when John's deep, honest voice intruded itself for another brief observation: 'I suppose, sir, the kirk is open to a' alike when needu!'

Flitting memories of the fact that my wife had imagined of late that John was much interested in Kittie Malcolm, waitress at Mr. Styles's house, floated through my mind as I thought, half regretfully, 'I suppose the man wants to marry Kittie some day'; so I replied somewhat shortly, 'Yes, John, I presume any one can have the use of the church who wishes it.'

'Was it my fancy, or did John really sigh heavily as he drew in the reins and soothed Mattie, the mare, who seemed inclined to shy and stumble in an unwonted manner, as she trotted briskly through the snow?'

'I guess Mattie must be sharp-shod to-morrow, John,' I said, coming somewhat out of my reverie.

'Aye, aye, sir-r! it's gude care ye gie the horse, no fear-r!'

Was there really a tinge of bitterness in the voice of my always respectful John? Oh, no! it was simply my imagination. There was never anything but hearty good-will in John's voice and John's answer. Only a little bridge to cross, and we should be at home; then I would tell wife all about the meeting, and ask her help in selecting some suitable object on whom to begin my Christian endeavors. Only a little bridge!—but how should I know that Mattie would suddenly plunge and rear, tossing us both like snowballs against the hard railing!

But she had not been sharp-shod in season, and the laborious effort at keeping her springing trot without slipping had fretted her in the first place, and the sudden up-starting of a man on the bridge had frightened the nervous creature beyond control; and the next moment she dashed home without either master or man, for both were prostrate on the bridge.

But John was only stunned, it appeared, for in a few moments he was carrying me in his strong arms to my house and my own room. The doctor was called, and my injuries proving only slight, in a few days I felt able to go out again. But wife acted strangely—evidently had something on her mind she dreaded to tell, but to my repeated request, 'Please send for John,' she at length said tearfully: 'Poor John! for once he could not come, sent we ever so urgently; he fainted away the other night just outside your chamber-door, and is now lying at the point of death. The doctor said you were hardly able to go out yet, so cautioned me against telling you; but oh! my dear,' she added, 'he so wanted to see the minister last night when he became conscious, that some one went for him in the night; and he told of having stood in the chapel that night of the meeting, and how on the way home he wanted you dreadfully to "say a gude word for his puir soul," as he expressed it; and Dr. Willard thinks he is a Christian, and fully prepared to die.'

But I waited to hear no more, as dashing from the room, regardless of needed caution, I sped with wondrous strides to the side street where John lay in his lowly bed. Ah! God be pitiful! I saw it all now. The man who sat by my side that night was longing for the pearls I was thinking of casting, as it were, before swine. My golden opportunity was close at hand, and I, too blind to see, too deaf to hear, had even been more solicitous concerning the needs of my fine horse than for the needs of this man's immortal soul.

But I was at his bedside. There he lay—his head thrown back on the pillow, his lips pallid, and the eyes closed. 'Dead! I

thought, and with a mighty regret too great for endurance I called aloud, 'Oh, John! come back!' As if impossible to hear my voice and not respond with prompt respect, the pale lips murmured feebly, 'Aye—aye—maister-r; an' I'll try, sir-r.'

And he did come back, my faithful John—came back to be the same dear old comfort he had been for ten long years. But I had missed the 'golden opportunity' of claiming him as my first convert, when alas! so easily it might have been. But now I never look around among my neighbors to discover, if possible, who most needs a word in season, and wife never has had to help choose a suitable person on whom to bestow my Christianizing endeavors; I always try the person nearest me, and never find opportunity lacking for constantly exerting a Christian's influence. And zealous and true in his great Master's service, among the most useful and valued members of our pleasant little church, ranks—my man, John.—Advance.

The Abuse of Christmas.

(By Helena Huntington.)

Into an elaborate piece of 'drawn work' she was evidently 'stitching' her very life blood—her bloodless fingers flew hurriedly over the work, pausing only occasionally to press the aching head and side.

'Christmas work?' asked a friend.

'Yes,' sighed the weary one. 'Actually, that word that once made my heart bound with joy, has grown hateful to me. The very word "Christmas" strikes a dread to my heart. You would not wonder at it if you knew the amount of work I have planned to do.'

'Why do you so overtax yourself? You have neither time nor strength for it; better buy everything.'

'Buying presents I cannot think of these hard times; that is, presents that would not be an insult to my friends, but I thought by hard work I could make acceptable ones at little expense.'

'Yes,' but it will be another instance of bricks without straw—your life is of more value to your loved ones than such intricate work.'

'Oh, dear! it is not for those I love best I am working so, it is to pay debts of obligation under which I have been placed. I despise this "You-give-me-and-I-give-you" system, yet I have not the courage to break away from it, but I am so tired of it all I wish the holidays could be blotted out, for me!'

As we listened to this conversation we felt as we have many times before, that it was high time that individuals, and the press, saw their responsibility in regard to this abuse of the day that ushered the Christ-child—the good tidings of great joy.'

Into my home there come fifteen of our best-known religious papers. I have recently noted in nearly all of them articles with the trite heading, 'What to make for Christmas.' Thus poor, weary women are constantly reminded to do, do! Oh, for more don'ts along the line. Is not so much gift-giving a desecration of that sacred day? He made the day by giving us Himself. It should be crowned with the gift of ourselves to Him. It should be a time of spiritual exaltation. But alas! perishable gifts so weary, or absorb us, that the heart, like the 'inn,' has no room for Jesus. The gift of gifts is forgotten!—Michigan Advocate.

Handsome Christmas Presents.

There is no reason why each reader of the 'Witness' should not obtain one of the Premium Bibles in time to give it to himself or to some one else as a Christmas present. The Bible can be obtained in the following ways:—

The Bible will be sent to every one sending \$2.25 for a subscription to the 'Weekly Witness' and the Bible, or to every one sending \$4.25 for the 'Daily Witness' and the Bible. This is not the best way. A better way to obtain the Bible is to send four dollars for a club of four subscriptions to the 'Weekly Witness,' or six dollars for a club of two subscriptions to the 'Daily Witness.' In either case the sender gets the Bible free.

Another way is to send six dollars for twenty 'Northern Messengers,' now published weekly, to separate addresses, or twenty dollars for one hundred copies of the 'Messenger' to one address, as in the

case of Sunday-schools or Bands of Hope. In either case the sender gets the Bible free. But perhaps the method which will prove most satisfactory to the subscribers and to the one that secures the subscriptions is that offered by the Midwinter Campaign.

Those sending ten dollars' worth of subscriptions at the advantageous terms of the campaign secure a Bible free as soon as the ten dollars has come in, and then have a prospect for one of the 120 valuable prizes offered in the campaign. The canvasser likes this plan because he finds it easy to get subscriptions to the 'Witness' when he can offer the 'Messenger' free as a premium, and because he has, besides the Premium Bible, which is a certainty, a prospect of obtaining one of the 120 valuable prizes offered in the campaign.

Study out each offer and work on the one that holds out the best prospects.

The Premium Bible is the one that has been described so fully of late in the 'Witness.'

The 'Northern Messenger' is an old paper, but in its new form and character a new paper. It has now twelve pages instead of eight, as before. It is issued every week instead of every other week, and the subscribers get, speaking roundly, three times as much reading matter for the same price.

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THOS. BRINSMEAD,
Secretary East Presbyterian Church Sunday-school.
Toronto, Dec. 7, 1896.

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