

A Thanksgiving Day Incident

(A True Story.)

A young man, who shall be named George, was making a heroic effort to prepare himself for college, and ultimately for the Christian ministry. His difficulties were many. His parents were unable to help him to any considerable extent; and besides, there was much covert opposition in the family to his entering the ministry. The younger members of the household laughed at his lack of natural qualifications for the work, and pictured him preaching on 'Starve to Death Circuit,' and, to their great merriment, and to his great discomfiture for the moment, they found an old medical almanac in which was a horoscope. This predicted that a young man born in his month, would 'study divinity, and turn out to be a horse-car conductor.' These things, however, did not trouble George seriously, for he expected that the first stroke of success would sweep away opposition. And he felt that with a fair opportunity he could succeed, with that divine help of which every man has the promise.

His greatest difficulty was to secure the means necessary to support himself in college. He knew he could help himself in two ways: First, by studying at home so as to shorten his term in college. So every evening found him busy with Latin roots and with algebraic problems. Secondly, by saving as much money as possible. So winters found him teaching school, and summers working on the farm or pulling an oar in the fishing boats.

At last he stood on the spot toward which his thought had often been directed—the college campus. Now his anxious question is, 'Will my home study admit me to the college class?' His heart was too full for expression when a kind teacher informed him that he was admitted to the freshmen class; and almost as great was his joy two months later, when the same sympathetic tutor told him that, by hard work, he could be at the head of his class by the Easter holidays.

But it is not possible to enter into the details of his college life. The struggle with poverty is bitter enough at the best, but he who has to fight with his hands, tied, earning his bread at odd times, while he gives himself to study, the serious business of life, knows how heavy are these blows that there is no hand to meet and ward off.

George passed successfully through three years in college and found himself at last a senior; it seemed that the goal of his ambition was almost reached. But a feeling of sadness began to pervade his heart. As the days passed it became more and more evident that, unless something extraordinary occurred to succor him, he must leave college before the year was out for want of means. He had husbanded carefully the sum he had at the outset, and by laboring during the long vacation, on Saturdays and other odd times when others were at sport or at rest, he had managed to get along and keep out of debt. But now the sum he had at starting was exhausted, and he must depend upon the little that he can pick up at odd times to pay his board. This he soon learns is painfully insufficient. Now he must face the necessity of leaving school and of not graduating with his class.

One that knows the close associations that grow up among college class-mates can sympathize with him in his sorrow. Not only that, but George felt it probable that if he left college and engaged in business, he might become so entangled in it as not to be able to return and finish his course.

Thanksgiving Day drew near, and he thought, without telling anyone of his intention, that he would take the occasion of the short vacation at the time to leave college not to return. He kept up his work, but with little heart in it, and arose on Wednesday morning before Thanksgiving Day with a dazed feeling, trying to realize that perhaps this is his last day in college. What depressed him still further was, his landlady sent in a bill for board for the last month, requesting a settlement by evening.

Scarcely knowing what he did, George directed his steps to the post-office and inquired for mail. Two letters of more than usual bulk were handed to him. The first one revealed the handwriting and postmark of the home people. He opened it, and to his surprise found a twenty-dollar bill enclosed with these words:—

'Dear Brother George:—We are to have a "home coming" on Thanksgiving Day, and as you are the only one that will not be with us, and as you no doubt will miss us very much, we thought we would remember you with something more substantial than even roast turkey and pumpkin-pie. I hope you will not forget us on that day, as we will not you. Accept the enclosed from your brothers and sisters.

'YOUR SISTER JULIE.'

This was quite too much for George, coming from those whose opposition he supposed had not yet died away, and he broke into tears.

It was some time before he turned his attention to the second letter. It bore the handwriting of a beloved friend and former pastor who had often encouraged him with cheering words. It reads:

'Dear George,—I send you a note of comment on Psa. xxxvii., 25, "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Please accept the enclosed as a Thanksgiving Day token of love. Excuse brevity; I am writing this over a half-finished Thanksgiving sermon.

'Yours in Christian love,

'WILLIAM THOMPSON.'

'The enclosed' was a ten-dollar bill, a 'note of comment,' indeed.

Here was a change of prospect at once, and the revulsion of feeling in George was so great that for a few moments he stood non-plussed. But soon his heart began to lighten as he saw his way clear to remain in college until the Easter holidays. He would trust the Lord where he could not see, and hoped to finish the year.

But surprises were not yet over for George. He called at the post-office again in the afternoon and found another letter awaiting him. He recognized the writing of his father, whose hand was beginning to be cramped by age. With tears in his eyes (the experiences of the day had made him tender) he broke the seal and read:—

'My Dear Son,—You will remember the order you left with me to collect from Mr. Graham for the work you did for him in the brick-yard a year ago last summer. His business has not prospered, and I had given up the hope of getting the money. I went over to see him some weeks ago, but he said he had no money; was sorry to disappoint you, but that I might take the amount of the order in brick. So I hitched up Jerry, and drew home three thousand, at five dollars a thousand, making the amount of your order. This morning a neighbor came and paid me cash for them at six dollars, as bricks have risen in price. I make it twenty dollars, as Julie did not call me this

morning, when the children sent out their letter to you. This leaves us all well and anticipating a pleasant Thanksgiving, and though you cannot be with us, your name will often be on our lips.

'Your affectionate father, J. G. W.'

George now began to realize that the whole experience of the day was a commentary on the text, 'Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.'

George finished his course with honor to himself and his alma mater, and as he left conference to take up the work of his first appointment, his ministerial friend sat by his side and said:—

'George, you have had a hard struggle through college, but now that you are actually at work, no one will know or care what you did there. The question will be, "What can you do now?"'

And so he found it. But George cannot forget that Thanksgiving Day, and feels that it was a turning-point in his life. Thousands are struggling now as he was then. Can we not reach out a hand and help them? —C. E. Wilbur, in 'Methodist Recorder.'

A 'Gem for His Crown.'

(By Mrs. Linnie Hawley Drake.)

'And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, when I make up my jewels.'

'I'm almost discouraged and sometimes feel like giving up my class. Two whole years' work and not one little soul gathered into the kingdom!'

'Weary in well-doing?' came in soft tones from the invalid's chair.

'Not in the doing, but in the results,' answered Helen.

'These belong to the Lord of the harvest. You forget—you are but a seed-sower. But what of the little Italian girl that so interested you a few months ago?'

'Oh, nothing but disappointment there. That wretched creature she believes to be her father, because, as she says, he "beats her." Just imagine, mother, of talking to a child of the loving Fatherhood of God when that is her only idea of the relation! He nearly starves her, and still drags her about from one saloon to another every Sabbath that he is able to play that old fiddle. He is laid up with the gout, she says (whiskey, I think), part of the time, and then she slips away to the school, poor little ill-used thing! But I never seem able to hold her attention—nothing but the music can do that—I cannot even persuade her to carry away a lesson-leaf or picture card. But, oh, if you could hear her sing! At such times her poor little pinched face seems almost beautiful! But even then those big, sad, pleading eyes of hers make my heart ache!'

A moment Mrs. Cone held the bright face close to her own, and then watched her young daughter walk briskly away toward the mission chapel in the very poorest quarter of the great city.

'Our lesson, to-day,' said Helen, opening her Bible and looking kindly at the half-dozen little faces before her, 'is a hard one to teach, and a much harder one to practice—perhaps the very hardest one in the whole Word of God. Can any little girl tell me the golden text? I hope each of you have studied the leaflet!'

'Well!' said their teacher, patiently, 'some one can surely tell me the subject of the lesson. I told that to you last Sabbath.'

'Love yer inimies,' almost shouted a decently dressed child in the corner.

'Yes, "love your enemies." And, Polly, what do you understand by enemies?'