

When the Deacon Talked in Church.

(By Rev. William T. Gunn, in 'C. E. World.')

We weren't expecting anything unusual that Sunday, but we got it. It was a warm Sunday in June, and our annual foreign missionary sermon and collection were to be given. But that didn't excite us any; for we had slept, I may say, through both sermon and collection many a time before. It wasn't the sermon, either, for that didn't seem so different from usual; but that time it just happened to come home to the deacon. As far as I can remember, the preacher took for his text the old verse about 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;' only he dwelt considerable on the 'Go ye.' He said it didn't say anything about taking up a collection, but it did say to 'go,' and that the Lord would never be satisfied until we went.

Our collections, anyway, he told us, didn't amount to much, and always reminded him of a story he had heard of a little boy. It seems the little fellow was saving some of the best meat on his plate for his dog; but his mother noticed it, and told him to eat that himself, and after dinner he could take what was left on the plates and give that to the dog. So after dinner he picked up the little bits of fat and bone and gristle that were left, and took them to the dog. When he got to the dog, some one heard him say sadly, 'I meant to bring you an offering, Fido; but I've only got a collection.'

Well it did kind of hit home, for most of us hadn't ever given much of a collection, only just enough to look respectable when the plate passed. But the preacher went on till he showed us that this command 'Go ye' meant just what it said, that we had to go. And he told us that it meant everybody had to go, too. Now I always thought there was some special kind of call that came to one here and another there; and, when they felt the call, they had to be a missionary. But he said that wasn't in the Bible, and that everybody was commanded to 'go ye' unless they had a special call to stay at home. And, even if they had a call to stay at home, they were bound to do their best to provide a substitute to go for them, and to help everybody to go that could. Then he just asked us how we would feel if we hadn't any Jesus to go to for forgiveness of our sins, or for help in our trials, or strength against temptation, or comfort in sorrow, or guidance in our perplexity; no Jesus to tell us about the love of God and where our loved ones went when the darkness of death shut down on them. This was what made life so dark and hard to the heathen, and in our gifts we were to think of the Lord's command to us and the heathen's need for us to go.

Then he prayed a bit; and the choir didn't sing any that day, but the organ played a soft voluntary at first while the collection was taken. Old Deacon Bright, he got up to pass the plate on his side. The old deacon was as fine a man as you'd meet in a day's journey, as good a neighbor and as honest a man as ever lived. Nice two-hundred-acre farm on the fifth line, and a fine family, all members of the church. Jim, he ran the farm; Jack, the second boy, just ready to go to college; and Mary had her diploma as teacher, and was studying in the Toronto hospital to be a nurse. The mother, too, was just as nice a woman as you could find anywhere.

The old deacon had been getting considerable deaf of late years, and always sat alone in the front pew. I guess he got kind of dreaming over the sermon; for, as he rose to get the collection plate, he began to talk to himself and to do it out loud. But, bless you, he couldn't hear himself, for you have to shout to make him understand anything. So, as I was saying, he took up the plate, and began to talk; and, as far as I can recollect, this is just about what he said:—

'So that "Go ye" means me and every one of us, and this is the Lord's plate, and what we put in is our substitute for going ourselves, and shows how much we love Him and how much we think we'd have been worth to Him, seein' we don't go ourselves.'

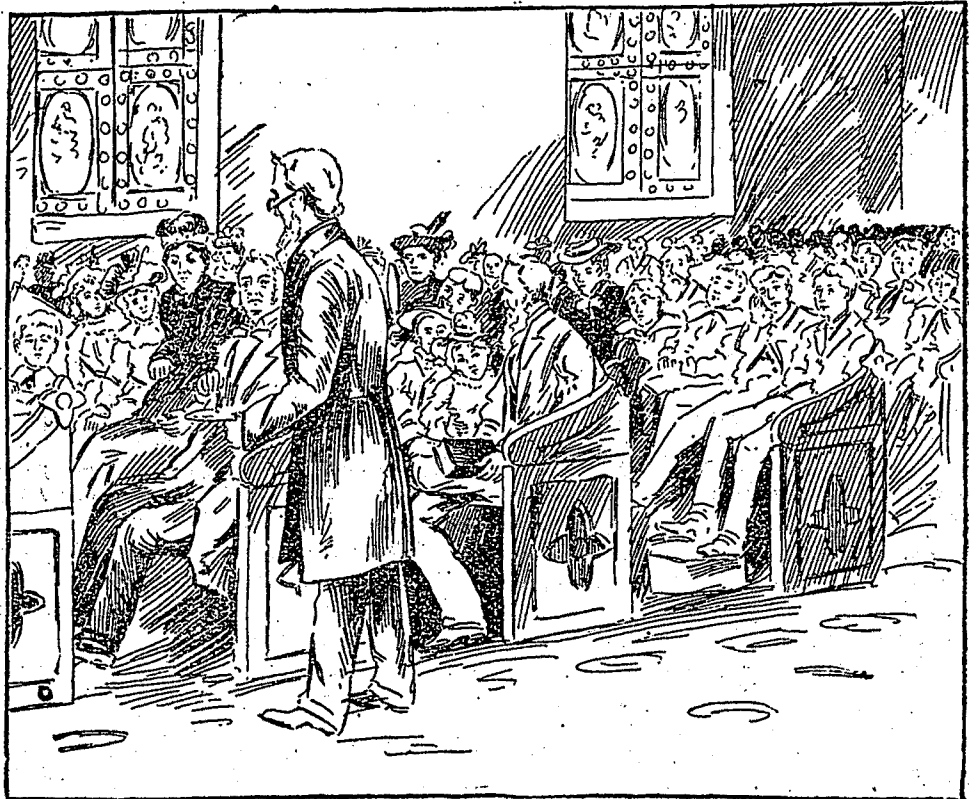
Then he got to the back seat, and passed the plate. Now our back seats are almost always full of young men; and, as they put their money in the plate, the old man went on. 'Twenty-five cents from Sam Jones. My boy, you'd been worth more than that

John McClay's pew came. 'Worth a dollar a year to the Lord, and two thousand a year to himself,' said the deacon. 'Seventy-five dollars for a bicycle and twenty cents for the Lord don't match, Tommy McClay. Ah, Miss Ellen, it looks queer for a hand with a fifty-dollar ring to drop five cents on the plate.'

'Less than last year, James Stevens; and the Lord blessed you, too. A new house for yourself and an old quarter for your Lord, Alex Bovey.'

'You take in washing, and can give five dollars to the Lord. God bless you, Mrs. Dean. What! and Minnie has some, too, and wee Robie.'

'Fifty, seventy-five, eighty-five, ninety; ah, your dinner will cost more than you have all given, Mr. Steel. A bright new dollar bill, and spread out, too, Mr. Perkins; I am afraid ninety-five cents was for show. A cheque from Mr. Hay. It'll be a good one, too, for he gives a tenth to the Lord. Two



'THE PRICE OF ONE OF YOUR DINNERS DOWN-TOWN.'

to the Lord. Ten cents from Davie Brown, five from Tom Stone, and nothing from Steve Jackson, forty cents for four boys, and every one of them could go, too; and they're worth six hundred dollars a year each to their fathers, and only forty cents to the Lord.'

Next pew Mr. Allen and his family sat. Mr. Allen put on a dollar for the family, and the old deacon moved away, saying, 'The Lord died for the wife and little ones, too, and they have nothing to give.'

In front of them was Judge Purvis with his wife and two daughters. 'The price of one of your dinners down-town.' 'Half of that pair of gloves you wear,' 'Almost as much as you spent for ice-cream last week,' 'One box of candy,' were the deacon's comments as the coins fell from the hands of the judge and family.

Then farmer John Robb put on a bill rolled up, and Mrs. Robb put on another, Johnnie Robb a little envelope bulging with coppers, and Maggie helped the baby to put another little bag on; and the old deacon said, 'God bless them.'

You may be sure we were all listening by this time, though we didn't dare to turn round, and there were lots of us mighty glad the deacon wasn't taking up the collection in our aisle.

dollars from you, Harry Atkin, is a small gift to the Lord that healed your dear wife.

'Ah, Miss Kitty Hughes, that fifty cents never cost you a thought; and you, Miss Marion, only a quarter, and you could both "go ye" and support yourselves. Five cents from the father, and a cent each from the family; I guess John Hull and family don't love the heathen brothers very hard. Ah, Mrs. McRimmon, that meant a good deal to you: the Lord keep you till you join the good man that's gone. Charlie Baker, and you, too, Effie; I doubt if the Lord will take any substitute for you. Nothing from you, Mr. Cantlie; not interested, I s'pose? Heathen at home; p'raps you're one of them.'

'Five cents, Mr. Donald. I doubt you'd want to put that in the Lord's hand; and you, Mr. Jenkins, no more.'

Then the old man came to his own pew; and, as his wife put on an envelope, 'Ah, Mary, I am afraid, my dear, we've been robbing the Lord all these years. I doubt we'll have to put Jack and Mary, too, on the plate, wife. Jim, my boy, you'd be worth far more than that to the Lord.' Jack and Mary sat in the choir.

So it went on from pew to pew till the old man came to the front again, and there he stood for a moment, the plate in his left hand, fumbling in his vest pocket. But