

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

DEACON LEE'S OPINION.

Deacon Lee, who was a kindly, silent, faithful, gracious man, was one day waited upon by a restless, ambitious, worldly church member, who was laboring to create uneasiness in the church, and especially to drive away the preacher. The deacon came in to meet his visitor, who, after the usual greetings, began to lament the low state of religion, and inquire as to the reason why there had been no conversions for two or three years past.

"Now, what do you think is the cause of things being dull here? Do you know?" he persisted in asking.

The deacon was not ready to give his opinion, and, after a little thought, frankly answered, "No, I don't."

"Do you think the churches are alive to the work before them?"

"No, I don't."

"Do you think the minister fully realizes the solemnity of his work?"

"No, I don't."

A twinkle was seen in the eye of this troubler in Zion; and taking courage, he asked.

"Do you think Mr. B— a very extraordinary man?"

"No, I don't."

"Do you think his sermon on 'Their eyes were holden,' anything wonderfully great?"

"No, I don't."

Making bold, after all this encouragement in monosyllables, he asked, "Then don't you think we had better dismiss this man and 'hire' another?"

The old deacon started as if shot with an arrow, and, in a tone louder than his wont, shouted:

"No, I don't."

"Why," cried the amazed visitor, "you agree with me in all I have said, don't you?"

"No, I don't."

"You talk so little, sir," replied the guest, not a little abashed, "that no one can find out what you do mean."

"I talked enough once," replied the old man, rising to his feet, "for six praying Christians. Thirty years ago I got my heart humbled and my tongue bridled, and ever since that I've walked softly before God. I then made vows solemn as eternity, and don't you tempt me to break them!"

The troubler was startled at the earnestness of the hitherto silent, unmovable man, and asked, "What happened to you thirty years ago?"

"Well, sir, I'll tell you. I was drawn into a scheme just like this of yours, to uproot one of God's servants from the field in which he had planted him. In my blindness, I fancied it a little thing to remove one of the 'stars' which Jesus holds in his right hand, if thereby my ear could be tickled, and the pews filled with those who turned away from the simplicity of the gospel. 'I and the men that led me—for I admit that I was a dupe and a fool—flattered ourselves that we were conscientious. We groaned because there was no revival, while we were gossiping about, and criticizing, and crushing, instead of upholding, by our efforts and our prayer, the instrument at whose hand we harshly demanded the blessings. Well, sir, he could not drag on the chariot of the gospel with half-a-dozen of us taunting him for his weakness, while we hung as a dead weight to the wheels; so we hunted him like a deer till, worn and bleeding, he fled into a covert to die. Then God came among us by his Spirit to show that He had blessed the labors of His dear rejected servant. Our own hearts were broken, and our wayward children

converted, and I resolved at a convenient season to visit my former pastor and confess my sin, and thank him for his faithfulness to my wayward sons, which, like long-buried seed, had now sprung up. But God denied me that relief, that He might teach me a lesson that 'he who toucheth one of His servants toucheth the apple of His eye.' I heard my former pastor was ill, and taking my oldest son with me, set out on a twenty-five miles' ride to see him. It was evening when I arrived, and his wife, with a spirit which any woman ought to exhibit towards one who had so wronged her husband, denied me admittance to his chamber. She said, 'and her words were arrows to my soul,' 'He may be dying, and the sight of your face might add to his anguish!'

"Had it come to this, I said to myself, that the man whose labors had, through Christ, brought me into His fold; who had consoled my spirit in a terrible bereavement; and who had, till designing men had alienated us, been to me as a brother—that this man could not die in peace with my face before him? 'God pity me!' I cried, 'what have I done?' I confessed my sins to that meek woman, and implored her for Christ's sake to let me kneel before His dying servant, and receive his forgiveness. What did I care then whether the pews by the door were rented or not?"

"As I entered the room of the blessed warrior, whose armor was falling from his limbs, he opened his languid eyes, and said, 'Brother Lee! Brother Lee!' I bent over him, and sobbed out, 'My pastor! My pastor!' Then raising his white hand, he said in a deep, impressive voice, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.' He was unconscious of all around; the sight of my face had brought the last pang of earth to his troubled spirit.

"I kissed his brow, and told him how dear he had been to me. I craved his pardon for my unfaithfulness, and promised to care for his widow and fatherless children; but his only reply, murmured as if in a troubled dream, was, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm!'

"I stayed by him all night, and at daybreak I closed his eyes. I offered his widow a house to live in the remainder of her days; but, like a heroine, she said: 'I freely forgive you; but my children, who entered deeply into their father's anguish, shall never see me so regardless of his memory as to take anything from those who caused it. He has left us all with his covenant God, and He will care for us!'

"Well, sir, those dying words sounded in my ears from that coffin and from that grave. When I slept, Christ was there in my dream, saying, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm!' These words followed me until I fully realized the esteem in which Christ holds those men who have given up all for His sake, and I vowed to love them evermore for His sake, even if they are not perfect; and since that day, sir, I have talked less than before and have supported my pastor, even if he is not a 'very extraordinary man.' My tongue shall cleave to the roof of my mouth, and my right hand forget her cunning, before I dare to put asunder what God has joined together. When a minister's work is done in a place, I believe God will show it to him. I will not join you, sir, in the scheme that brought you here. I would give all I own to recall what I did thirty years ago. Stop where you are, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you."—Selected.

ACT ON THIS SUGGESTION.

A beautiful young mother said in my hearing, "I was in at a neighbor's yesterday. She was telling me how appreciative her husband was. He would always compliment her cooking, especially when there was anything extra on the table. Any little extra touch about her dress he would never fail to notice and compliment. He was always observant, appreciative and demonstrative."

"I said to her, 'My husband eats what I eat before him and says nothing about it one way or the other. He seems not to care what I wear; at least he never says anything about it.' I do wish he would sometimes say something."

"When I told him what my neighbor said, he replied, 'You always give me something good to eat. You are always tidy when I come home. You are never otherwise. If you were not tidy, then I'd say something about it.'"

There was a hunger in her words, "I do wish he would say something." To never hear a word of appreciation is almost as bad as to be criticised. And it is cruel for a husband to criticize his wife's cooking, especially before other members of the family or before guests. No doubt she did her best. If there was some little mishap during the getting of the meal; or if everything was not just like mother's cooking, let him not mortify her by a criticism at the table. If he must say something, let it be done privately and very tenderly and lovingly. And he should not permit, but forbid, any other member of the family to make unfavorable remarks about the cooking.

Husband, how is it at your house? Don't be stingy with your compliments. Don't flatter, but do show yourself appreciative. It will put smiles on the lips, maybe roses on the cheeks, certainly gladness in the heart—unless your long silence or criticism has killed all desire for your approval.

TRAIN BOYS TO BE ORDERLY.

"It is a curious fact," commented a man recently, "that almost no mother realizes the importance of bringing her son up to orderly habits. She impresses upon her daughters from the time they are old enough to recognize any responsibility the necessity to keep their rooms tidy, put away articles after use, and care for their belongings at all times. The boy, however, is exempt from any similar requirement, not only in his own room, but throughout the house. He reads newspapers and throws them on the floor, gets up from a divan leaving the cushions racked and shapeless, without the slightest reproach, the only notice taken of the occurrence indeed, being asked a sister, if he has one, to pick up the one and straighten the other. The women of the family follow in his footsteps all day long, removing whatever disorder he creates. Yet there is no business occupation upon which that boy will presently enter in which order is not a fundamental necessity. Girls, on the other hand, do not, as a rule, suffer so seriously from a lack of order, or at least consequences are not so continually disagreeable and costly as is the case with boys."—American Boy.

Better the good that we can do,
Than applause that we can win;
Better the lowly deed, when true,
Than the high rewards of sin.

The "well done" of your conscience is worth more than the praise of all your acquaintances.