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sea wireless messages of faith, hope and courage.

In this day of great tribulation we shall lose our chance to help, unless we carefully cherish the spirit and habit of prayer. We must not hurry through our prayers carelessly, as if they were only an outward form. We must not permit them to be pushed aside altogether when other things claim our attention. The men at the front need our prayers, and prayer—like other arts—requires practice. We want to give them the strength of trained praying, and we can only learn to pray by praying.

Do you think Christ does not feel the sorrow of His friends? When you kneel in Gethsemane, fighting for strength to say, honestly and willingly, "Thy will be done," He is kneeling beside you. The dullest, saddest circumstances can be glorified by the sunshine of His Presence. Habits may seem commonplace enough while we are forming them, but good habits are priceless. He is beside you now.

"When in the dull routine of life
Thou yearnest half for pain and strife,
So weary of the commonplace,
Of days that wear the self-same face,
Think softly, soul, thy Lord is there,
And then betake thyself to prayer."

DORA FARNCOMB.

Gifts for the Needy.

Money has poured into the Quiet Hour purse this week. Five dollars from "a friend," and another five-dollar bill from M. K. H. have been entrusted to me for the sick and needy. A splendid parcel of children's clothing, from one of our readers, will gladden the hearts of many poor mothers; and a package of S. S. papers has already carried good cheer into a hospital ward.

It is more blessed to give than to receive; therefore, I feel sure many of our readers find plenty of happiness, for they give a great deal of happiness.

DORA FARNCOMB,
52 Victor Ave., Toronto.

Our Serial Story

An Alabaster Box.

BY MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN AND FLORENCE MORSE KINGSLEY.
By arrangement with McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, Publishers, Toronto, Ont.

Chapter II.

A church fair is one of the purely feminine functions which will be the last to disappear when the balance between the sexes is more evenly adjusted. It is almost a pity to assume that it will finally, in the nature of things, disappear, for it is charming; it is innocent with the innocence of very good, simple women; it is at the same time subtle with that inimitable subtlety which only such women can achieve. It is petty finance on such a moral height that even the sufferers by its code must look up to it. Before even woman, showing anything except a timid face of discovery at the sights of New York under male escort, invaded Wall Street, the church fair was in full tide, and the managers thereof might have put financiers to shame by the cunning, if not magnitude, of their operations. Good Christian women, mothers of families, would sell a tidy of no use except to wear to a frayed edge the masculine nerves, and hand-painted plates of such bad art that it verged on immorality, for prices so above all reason, that a broker would have been taken aback. And it was all for worthy objects, these pretty functions graced by girls and matrons in their best attire, with the products of their little hands offered, or even forced, upon the outsider who was held up for the ticket. They gambled shamelessly to buy a new carpet for the church. There was plain and brazen raffling for dreadful lamps and patent rockers and dolls which did not look fit to be owned by nice little girl-mothers, and all for the church organ, the minister's salary and such like. Of this description was the church fair held in Brookville to raise money to pay the Reverend Wesley Elliott. He came early, and haunted the place like a morbid spirit. He was both angry and ashamed that such means must be employed to pay his just dues, but since it had to be he could not absent himself.

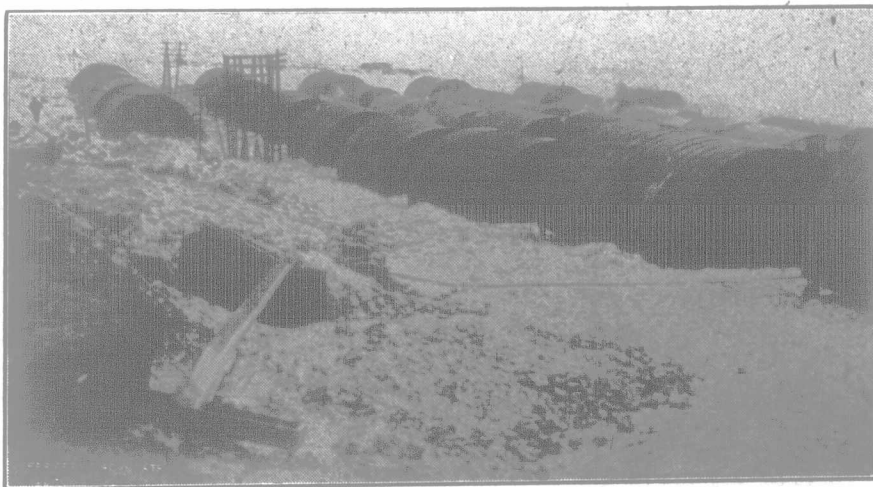
There was no parlor in the church, and not long after the infamous exit of Andrew Bolton the town hall had been destroyed by fire. Therefore all such functions were held in a place which otherwise was a source of sad humiliation to its owner: Mrs. Amos Whittle, the deacon's wife's unfurnished best parlor. It was a very large room, and poor Mrs. Whittle had always dreamed of a fine tapestry carpet, furniture upholstered with plush, a piano, and lace curtains.

Her dreams had never been realized. The old tragedy of the little village had cropped dreams, like a species of celestial foliage, close to their roots. Poor Mrs. Whittle, although she did not realize it, missed her dreams more than she would have missed the furniture of that best parlor, had she ever possessed and lost it. She had come to think of it as a room in one of the "many mansions," although she would have been horrified had she known that she did so. She was one who kept her religion and her daily life chemically differentiated. She endeavored to maintain her soul on a high level of orthodoxy, while her large, flat feet trod her round of household tasks. It was only when her best parlor, great empty room, was in demand for some social function like the church fair, that she felt her old dreams return and stimulate her as with some wine of youth.

The room was very prettily decorated with blossoming boughs, and Japanese lanterns, and set about with long tables covered with white, which contained the articles for sale. In the center of the room was the flower-booth, and that was lovely. It was a circle of green, with oval openings

worshipped, and she tucked on an absurd little bow of ribbon, and she frizzed tightly her thin hair, and she wore little posies, following out the primitive instinct of her sex, even while her reason lagged behind. If once Wesley should look at that pitiful little floral ornament, should think it pretty, it would have meant as much to that starved virgin soul as a kiss—to do her justice, as a spiritual kiss. There was in reality only pathos and tragedy in her adoration. It was not in the least earthy, or ridiculous, but it needed a saint to understand that. Even while she conferred with her friends, she never lost sight of the young man, always hoped for that one fleeting glance of approbation.

When her sister-in-law, Mrs. Daggett, appeared, she restrained her wandering eyes. All four women conferred anxiously. They, with Mrs. Solomon Black, had engineered the fair. Mrs. Black had not yet appeared and they all wondered why. Abby Daggett, who had the expression of a saint—a fleshy saint, in old purple muslin—gazed about her with admiration. "Don't it look perfectly lovely!" she exclaimed. Mrs. Whittle fairly snapped at her, like an angry old dog. "Lovely!" said she with a fine edge of sarcasm in her tone, "perfectly lovely! Yes it does. But I think we are a set of fools, the whole of us. Here we've got a fair all ready, and worked our fingers to the bone (I don't know but I'll have a felon on account of that drawn-in rug there) and we've used up all our butter and eggs, and I don't see, for one, who is going to buy anything. I ain't got any money to spend. I don't believe Mrs. Slocum will come over from Grenoble, and if she does, she can't buy everything."



Missen Huts.

Huts for soldiers used on the Western front. They were invented by a British officer named Missen, and are very cozy and warm. The roof and sides are made of corrugated iron.
—Underwood & Underwood.

"Well, what made us get up the fair?" asked Mrs. Dodge.

"I suppose we all thought somebody might have some money," ventured Abby Daggett.

"I'd like to know who? Not one of us four has, and I don't believe Mrs. Solomon Black has, unless she turns in her egg-money, and if she does I don't see how she is going to feed the minister. Where is Phoebe Black?"

"She is awfully late," said Lois. She looked at the door, and, so doing, got a chance to observe the minister, who was standing beside the flower-table talking to Ellen Dix. Fanny Dodge was busily arranging some flowers, with her face averted. Ellen Dix was very pretty, with an odd prettiness for a New England girl. Her pale olive skin was flawless and fine of texture. Her mouth was intensely red, and her eyes very dark and heavily shaded by long lashes. She wore at the throat of her white dress a beautiful coral brooch. It had been one of her mother's girlhood treasures. The Dix family had been really almost opulent once, before the Andrew Bolton cataclysm had involved the village, and there were still left in the family little reminiscences of former splendor. Mrs. Dix wore a superb old lace scarf over her ancient black silk, and a diamond sparkled at her throat. The other women considered the lace much too old and yellow to be worn, but Mrs. Dix was proud both of the lace and her own superior sense of values. If the lace had been admired she would not have cared so much for it.

Suddenly a little woman came hurrying up, her face sharp with news. "What do you think?" she said to the others. "What do you think?"

They stared at her. "What do you mean, Mrs. Fulsom?" asked Mrs. Whittle acidly.

The little woman tossed her head importantly. "Oh, nothing much," said she, "only I thought the rest of you might not know. Mrs. Solomon Black has got another boarder. That's what's making her late. She had to get something for her to eat."

"Another boarder!" said Mrs. Whittle. "Yes," said the little woman, "a young lady, and Mrs. Solomon Black is on her way here now."

"With her?" gasped the others. "Yes, she's coming, and she looks to me as if she might have money."

"Who is she?" asked Mrs. Whittle. "How do I know? Mrs. Mixer's Tommy told my Sam, and he told me, and I saw Mrs. Black and the boarder coming out of her yard, when I went out of mine, and I hurried so's to get her first. Hush! Here they come now."

While the women were conferring many people had entered the room, although none had purchased the wares. Now there was stark silence and a concentrated fire of attention as Mrs. Black entered with a strange young woman. Mrs. Black looked doubtfully important. She, as a matter of fact, was far from sure of her wisdom in the course she was taking. She was even a little pale, and her lips moved nervously as she introduced the girl to one and another. "Miss Orr," she said; sometimes "Miss Lydia Orr."

As for the girl, she looked timid, yet determined. She was pretty, perhaps a beauty, had she made the most of her personal advantages instead of apparently ignoring them. Her beautiful fair hair, which had red-gold lights, should have shaded her forehead, which was too high. Instead it was drawn smoothly back, and fastened in a mat of compact flat braids at the back of her head. She was dressed very simply, in black, and her costume was not of the latest mode.

"I don't see anything about her to have made Mrs. Fulsom think she was rich," Mrs. Whittle whispered to Mrs. Daggett, who made an unexpectedly shrewd retort: "I can see. She don't look as if she cared what anybody thought of her clothes; as if she had so much she's never minded."

Mrs. Whittle failed to understand. She grunted non-assent. "I don't see," said she. "Her sleeves are way out of date."

For a while there was a loud buzz of conversation all over the room. Then it ceased, for things were happening, amazing things. The strange young lady was buying and she was paying cash down. Some of the women examined the bank notes suspiciously and handed them to their husbands to verify. The girl saw, and flushed, but she continued. She went from table to table, and she bought everything, from quilts and hideous drawn-in rugs to frosted cakes. She bought in the midst of that ominous hush of suspicion. Once she even heard a woman hiss to another, "She's crazy. She got out of an insane asylum."

However nobody of all the stunned throng refused to sell. Her first failure came in the case of a young man. He was Jim Dodge, Fanny's brother. Jim Dodge was a sort of Ishmael in the village estimation, and yet he was liked. He was a handsome young fellow with a wild freedom of carriage. He had worked in the chair factory to support his mother and sister, before it closed. He haunted the woods, and made a little by selling skins. He had brought as his contribution to the fair a beautiful fox skin, and when the young woman essayed to buy that he strode forward. "That is not for sale," said he. "I beg you to accept that as a gift, Miss Orr."

The young fellow blushed a little before the girl's blue eyes, although he held himself proudly. "I won't have this sold to a young lady who is buying as much as you are," he continued.

The girl hesitated. Then she took the skin. "Thank you, it is beautiful," she said.

Jim's mother sidled close to him. "You did just right, Jim," she whispered. "I don't know who she is, but I feel ashamed of my life. She can't really want all that truck. She's buying to help. I feel as if we were a parcel of beggars."

"Well, she won't buy that fox skin to help!" Jim whispered back fiercely.

The whole did not take very long. Finally the girl talked in a low voice to Mrs. Black who then became her spokes-