

## A DREAM THAT IS NOT ALL A DREAM.

A merchant at the close of a day during which, in addition to uncommon business perplexity, his patience had been sorely taxed by repeated and inopportune applications for donations to various charities, found himself in his favorite retreat—his library. Wrapped in a sumptuous gown, his feet clad in easy and richly-wrought slippers, he had flung his wearied frame into his study chair, and, exhausted by the cares of the day, he fell asleep. In his sleep he dreamed. In his dream he saw a stranger standing before him, who, drawing a paper from his bosom, thus addressed him:

"My friend, I come to beg of you, in view of the special necessities of our Master's cause at this time, an increase, for this year, of one-third upon your ordinary subscription to the cause of Foreign Missions."

"Sir," he replied, "this year will be to me one of uncommon expense. My new house is just finished and furnished, and such are the demands upon my purse, that I shall hardly be able to give as much for that cause as I did last year."

The stranger then drew forth a second paper from his bosom, and made the same request with reference to the Domestic Mission work.

The merchant, annoyed at this, repeated his reply with additional emphasis and in briefer terms.

No way disconcerted by the rebuff, the stranger, laying the two papers upon the table, and drawing another from his bosom, made a like request in behalf of the Bible cause.

To this the half-angry merchant gave a short and not over-kind response.

This paper the stranger laid upon the table, and drew still another from his bosom, and asked the same favor for the Colporteur work.

This request being answered with a frown, the stranger laid it upon the table, drew forth yet another, and asked for a like increase to his ordinary subscription for that. And so he continued his appeals, until quite a pile of subscription papers lay upon the merchant's table, while the irri-

tated, and, in his own view, insulted man, looked on in sullen silence.

At last the stranger, more in sorrow than in anger, yet in a tone that thrilled the listener to his very heart, said:

"Look at me, and listen! *Five years ago* you were on the very verge of bankruptcy. Your fortune seemed just spreading its wings to leave you penniless, and your family without means to buy even bread to eat. And in that dark hour, O! how you prayed—prayed for relief from the threatened ruin! Who was it that pitied your distress, heard your prayer, and rolled the dismal cloud away?"

"*Seven years ago*, you lay upon what you deemed, and your weeping friends considered, a bed of death. The physician had given up all hope. And when you thought of that woman soon to become a widow, of those children soon to become orphans, and of their probable struggles, with privation and want, you turned your face to the wall and wept. O! how bitter were those tears! And you cried out for reprieve—reprieve until you might make some provision for their wants. Who was it heard that piteous cry, and gave you what you asked?"

"*Ten years ago*, your oldest boy sank into the grave. As the hour drew on, you saw that he was dying in despair. And as you thought of the awful future that awaited him, you remember the anguish of your spirit. Entering your closet, you locked the door, and spent one long night in agonizing prayer. You prayed not for the life, but for the soul, of your darling! 'O God!' you cried, 'save, save, for Jesus' sake, save the soul of my dying child!' Who was it heard that prayer and sent your son to heaven in the triumphs of faith and the joys of a brilliant hope of everlasting bliss?"

"*Fifteen years ago*, you were in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. A sense of your guilt seized you, and for days and weeks there seemed to be no ray of hope for your poor soul. The darkness became more intense. Comfort forsook your spirit by day, and sleep your eyes by night. But just when a settled despair seemed to seal up your spirit to an awful doom, the light broke, and you sprang from despair to the arms of a forgiving