



SUNDAY READING

THE MINISTER'S MONEY.
Conscience in this Case was Strong and Won the Battle.

It is hard to wish for books and have no right to buy them. This long, narrow shop, propped between two fashion stores, and seeming to bulge behind with the weight of leaning on its shelves, tempted the minister sorely. Two volumes he wanted especially. His heart leaped up to see the dear old covers. They had been familiar long ago. Within was treasure that, poured into the mold of his mind, should yield distinction to many a sermon. The dread that haunted him of death when he stood in his pulpit. He had no critic so cruel as the Rev. Richard East.

His thin, white fingers went over the roughened call with a strange, caressing touch. He removed the first and looked at the price. His guess was a scholar's shot and close to the mark. The books were rare and £3 was asked. The minister could not haggle. It was an art beyond him. Nobody gave him discount in Stokeley.

"You'd get more of a gloss on living if you'd clip the edges of the tradesmen's bills, as they deserve and expect," said Mr. Pankhurst, his forehead wrinkled.

"Yes—thank you," said the minister. His weak, blue eyes were full of dreams and his mouth wore a smile. The thing was impracticable—cut off from him.

So was the right to delve into those mines of erudition and eloquence. Three pounds ten was exactly the sum he had saved with a struggle to spend in London. The odd shillings were gone already, and the series of meetings he had come up to attend only began yesterday. The sterile talk at a conference was before him now. There the pity of it all met him and made a sigh leave his lips. He had ceased to hope that the session which was his business would help him; but he knew that if he had these two tall folios he would be a broader man and a fuller preacher. Poverty pressed him back toward threadbare schemes. Even if the trader would take less he was forbidden to buy.

The minister buttoned his coat about his spare, stooping figure, and was soon seated in an omnibus. He had wasted time, and the city clocks convicted him.

"Crowded out, but in good company; two laggards together."

Behind was the dark face of Caleb Pankhurst, a young man, and a girl, and a pitiless. The minister's nerves were awry, and the whisper, which was a suppressed shout, shook them. The odd dream smile, that came and went by a law remote, unfathomable, was his only answer. But he sat down where his elder pointed.

When the sitting Richard East felt for the small watch-case purse which held his £3 and the shilling he had destined for the box to-day. It was not to be found. The flush came up and the veins of the minister's forehead were darkened by the quick tides of fear.

"Gone—stolen!" he cried, hoarsely. "What do you mean? Had your pocket picked? Oh how much?"

Caleb Pankhurst's pity was vastly like scorn to a fine ear. But he meant well by the minister.

"Talks well. Don't know the world a bit," was his usual verdict. "How much have you lost? You'll never see a cent of it again, you may depend on that. It is really gone, I suppose?"

They stood in the lobby now. The minister was slow in answering. "Of course I'll help you. The money's missing, don't you say?"

"Yes."

"Five pounds? One—two?"

He measured the shy man's means too accurately to suggest large figures. It was a meagre salary in Heber Lane.

"Three pounds and a shilling or two over."

It was a queer, choked gasp. The minister was violently trembling. Masterful inattention regarded him with surprise, and forgot the count.

"Tut, man, never mind! Don't addle your head over it. There are worse troubles for some of us. I'll give it you out and out; not a loan, as you understand. I'll run me close, but I am at Stokeley tonight, so no matter. I insist on your taking it!"

The minister put out his hands, as if to wave back the gleaming gold coins. But he failed, and he knew that he was glad to fail.

"A gift!" That was what he repeated many times as he went up Chancery Lane and down Holborn. He said himself there. It was like a rock in the shadowy sea. Beyond were perplexities.

He stopped at the old book-shop, and the books were not gone. He had had a lively dream of this, and it had winged his feet. The haste and anxiety were alike gratuitous. He breathed more freely as a glance reassured him. But a fever was in his fingers as he lifted out both volumes and went forward.

"I will take these," he said. As the string snapped the vendor looked into the white, eager face with a half smile. It was as though he knew somewhat and words were near. But he said: "Thank you," and the minister supposed that untold cash pleased him. Perhaps he found the unquestioning customer rare.

In the retrospect it seemed to Richard East as if he were mere mechanism than electing, determining man throughout the crucial episode of his career. In a way it went with that theory that he never remembered the route he had taken to Finsbury and his hotel. There is, however, the other hypothesis, that the moment when the floods of life were so supreme that trifles were erased. He may have forgotten because brain and heart staggered.

"Sam," he said, "I am glad to see you. But how did you find me out?"

He stepped toward the boy with outstretched hand. A scowl and a pair of flashing black eyes repelled him, and he stopped half way, irresolute and surprised. Young Pankhurst was a sad scamp, but he had never before shown want of respect to the minister.

"Father told me I should find you at Temple's Hotel," said a surly voice, through which an agony rang. "This is it, Mr. East; father gave you £3 to-day or, at least, he said so. He couldn't help me—till to-morrow. Then it will be too late, and I shall be a rogue and ruined. I stopped the money in the office. It was only for a few hours. I knew father was coming up and was sure of getting it. I never did such a thing before, and didn't mean to now. I hate myself!"

"Did you tell Mr. Pankhurst?"

"I did not dare. He would never forgive me. Now, there is the Thame—un- less you can do something. £15, sir, and not a word to father? But you won't."

In the midst of his own shame and misery he was puzzled by the minister. He searched for reproach, and there was none. The dream eyes cleared, the pallid face slightly twitched, and then Richard East bent over his books and unfolded a gray wrapping paper. Was this coldness and indifference a calculated condemnation?

The prodigal's gorge rose. "I see. A minister is less than a man. He is a prig. And the brotherliness he preaches is a lie!"

The words were missiles, hot from a furnace of despair and indignation. But they did not scorch. The minister's outer ear received them, but not the inner. When he stood up he was curiously erect, and the worst spasm of soul-darkness had passed.

His tones were richer and sweeter than any worshipper had heard them in Heber Lane.

"If you will go with me a little distance—it is not far," he said, "I think, perhaps, I can help you. Yes, in any case I will promise to help you. Do not fear on that score. There is a resource."

The minister's hand touched the watch, which was a present from his first charge. Watches can be pledged. It is a gold lever. And still no rebuke, no lecture, no warning. It was very strange.

Through the streets the two picked their way. The journey was longer than the minister's words had led his companion to suppose. It ended at a bookshop, and now it appeared to the lad that a bargain was to be struck for two tarnished folios. He had a poor opinion of old books, and his trust once more wavered.

"Can I speak with your master one minute?" said the minister to the brisk salesman, who bustled down through a maze of book heaps.

"Certainly, sir."

Something in the manner quickened obedience, and soon the short, bespectacled figure of the proprietor stood at his desk. Richard East fought a battle as he faced him. Was so great a humiliation really necessary? The watch would meet the difficulty and save Sam Pankhurst, and it could be redeemed. Silence was still possible. But not, as he judged, silence and any lofty life. With a Puritan's eyes he surveyed the situation, and with a Puritan's purpose he spoke.

"It is an unpleasant errand," he said; "I want you to take back my purchase of this morning."

"We never do that. It is impossible."

"No, I suppose not, as a rule. I quite see; but I ask you especially to favor me now. I had no right to buy them. It was not a mistake. It was worse—far worse than that. This morning I looked and looked until I dared to covet. Then, I went away to an important meeting and forgot them. I unfortunately forgot some- thing else. Putting my hand in my pocket I suddenly missed my purse. A friend was with me—this young man's father. He will substitute much of my story. You know this?"

"Yes." The problem as yet was insoluble to Sam though he replied readily.

"I cried out that my purse was gone, stolen. At the instant I thought so. And my good friend at once came to my rescue and proposed to make good my loss. He would not have me a penny the poorer. Then it was that I fell into temptation."

The voice trembled, the blue eyes were shadowed by the cloud. But the minister's will triumphed.

"I cannot say that I did not know what I was doing," he said. "The light was with me, but I put it away. Two things I distinctly remembered. One was that £3 would buy those books, precious when I was a student. The other was that my money was not lost at all. I had changed its place, before I left my hotel, for greater security. I could have produced it. Instead, I left the word unrecalled and took the money under false pretences. And— that is all. Except that I am very sorry to have to make the request, but if you will take back the books I will not fail to remit to you when I return home at the end of the week the margin, whatever that may be, between your price to me and your price of me. I will give you my name and address."

The minister had gained in presence and in dignity as he proceeded, though he knew it not. He waited the decision, but no power on earth could have made him resume possession of the load he had laid down.

The odd smile, a trifle graver, glimmered on the bookseller's face. He gathered up books and wrapping and threw them aside.

"I saw the fascination grip you this morning," he said, dryly. "I know what it is. Books are my wine. But I did not expect you come back. But I did not expect you twice—and thus. It is unusual; but here are £3."

"Pay it, please, to this young man—my friend's son."

When Sam Pankhurst was gone it occurred to the minister that he had said nothing to him in reprobation of his own conduct. He had done infinitely better. An object lesson is more than a homily. Shame

had called out shame, and courage courage; and Sam told his father everything in his blunt, boyish way.

"I shall overlook it this once in Sam's case because of his youth and his confession, and this once only. He knows my mind on that point," said the Elder of Heber Lane, to the minister, with a cold pity, "but I think you see that we can't do that with the minister. It's different."

"Yes," said Richard East, with a quiet assent that sucked the wind from the Elder's sails.

"There's the scandal," he stammered. To his astonishment he respected at last the man whom he had come to coerce and cast out as a moral ruin.

"Quite so, and to deliver Heber Lane from that I have resigned. You will find my letter at your house when you get back. Good-bye, Mr. Pankhurst, and thank you. You were very generous, and I do thank you sincerely."

The two men shook hands and the minister's clasped was cordial.

Was he hero, or inveterate dreamer and weakling? The Elder could answer most questions that raised the issue of character with a confidence all his own. But not that one. He grappled with it, and, metaphorically, it rent him. The next day, before the breath of impending change had stirred the sluggish air of Heber Lane, he was again in the minister's study.

"Don't go away through me, sir," he said. "I can keep a secret, and Sam shall."

He was in earnest and at length prevailed. When he reached home he burned a simple little note that vacated a pulpit. All that a scanty congregation of sectaries knew, was that the minister seemed remade since the London meetings. Pain had taught him the passion thrill, which was more than eloquence.

SEVEN AND THREE.
Numbers that Occur Frequently in Sacred and Secular History.

The Bible mentions seven as the first total: the six days of creation and the one day of rest. Seven fold vengeance is to be inflicted on the supposed slayer of Cain. The king and the ears of corn in Pharaoh's dream are the same number.

Balaam demands seven altars, seven bullocks, seven rams. Seven years Jacob served for Rachel and for Leah. Seven times he bows himself to Esau. The turn- time was heated seven times for the faithful Hebrews. Other instances, many in fact, may be quoted from Holy Writ. One thinks at once of the seven churches, the seven golden candlesticks, the seven stars, seven trumpets, seven plagues, &c.

The "Seven against Thebes" comes to us from the Greek poet. Three notable constellations have each seven prominent stars—the "Pleiades," the "Hyades," and the "Seven Sisters." There are the seven hills of Rome, and the seven kings of Rome. Seven sages, seven wonders, seven labors, seven virtues, seven vices or deadly sins, seven ages, the seventh heaven—a long list, but capable of being made longer.

There is next to seven, a notable number. The Trinity stands ever first as the wonderful and sacred mystery. The writer from whom we quote notes that great men have been raised in groups of three: Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; Greek poets; Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the philosophers; Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio; Homer, Virgil and Milton.

There are the three great religions Christianity, Islam and Buddhism; the three Kingdoms, mineral, vegetable and animal. Mythology gives us the three goddesses, three Graces, three Muses, and the three Fates, three dimensions of space. Adjectives have three degrees; verbs three kinds; verbs three persons, voices, tenses. Every proposition consists virtually of three parts—subject, copula, predicate. Mathematics, the consist of arithmetic, algebra and geometry. We speak of the three R's. We speak of kings, lords and commons; of bishops, prelates and deacons; of faith, hope and charity.

Convent of the Holy Name.
On Tuesday, June 6th, the Chapel of the Holy Name, Malvern Link, of which the foundation-stone was laid by the Duke of Newcastle just two years ago, was solemnly dedicated to Almighty God, under the invocation of the Holy Name. The office used on the occasion was taken almost verbatim from the Roman Pontifical. The chapel, which was built from the plans of Messrs. Burkill and Comper, former pupils of Messrs. Bodley and Garner, is capable of accommodating about 200, including the Sisters, and is a very beautiful structure. There were present, in addition to a full lay congregation, some 150 clergy. The Sisters, who have charge of the rescue work of the diocese of Worcester, began their labors on this site in 1879. They have established at Vauxhall, London; Parkstone, Dorset; St. Alban's, Birmingham; Wednesday, in the Black Country; Walden, Herts; and St. John, New Brunswick. In addition to penitentiary work, their labors embrace attendance on the infirmly sick, the care of orphans, visitation of the poor, etc.—London Church Times.

The Oldest Tree.
The oldest tree on earth—at least, so far as any one knows—is the Bo tree, in the sacred city of Anuradhapura, Ceylon. It was planted, of the record says, in the year 288 B.C. and is therefore about 2,000 years old. Its great age is proved by historic documents, says Sir James Emerson, who adds:

"To its kings have dedicated their kingdoms in testimony of a belief that it is a branch of the identical fig tree under which Buddha reclined at Uru, when he was undergoing his apostheosis."

Its leaves are carried away by pilgrims as relics, but as it is too sacred to be touched even with a knife, they can only be gathered after they have fallen.

At the annual meeting of the English confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament held in London on the feast of Corpus Christi the secretary general reported 90 Anglican priests admitted during the past year, and two priests-associate have been made bishops. The number of associates in the English branch is now 15,000, and the work of the confraternity is extending rapidly in Canada and South Africa.

Messages of Help for the Week.
Sunday.—Psalms, cxvii: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."
Monday.—Matthew, vi: 28: "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow."
Tuesday.—Matthew, ix: 13: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
Wednesday.—John, xiv: 14: "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it."
Thursday.—Galatians, vi: 1: "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted."
Friday.—Ephesians, vi: 11: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."
Saturday.—Revelation, iii: 20: "Behold I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh I will grant to sit with me in my throne."

There is a project for printing the Talmud in the English language. Rabbi Isaac M. Wise believes that a transaction of it could be made and an addition of it printed for the sum of \$100,000. This Rabbi says, however, that, as there are only 6,000 words in the Hebrew language, any person can acquire a full knowledge of it in six years by learning twenty words of it each week.

At a meeting of the Religious Tract Society recently, Miss Ashburner, who was about to return to mission work in Mongolia, referring to the great power of the mother-in-law over Chinese women, declared that she knew even a Christian preacher who had had to beat his wife in order to please his mother.

The sums of money given to the Pope during his episcopal jubilee by bands of pilgrims, by Catholic orders and by individuals amounts to 9,060,000 francs. The American pilgrims gave 600,000.

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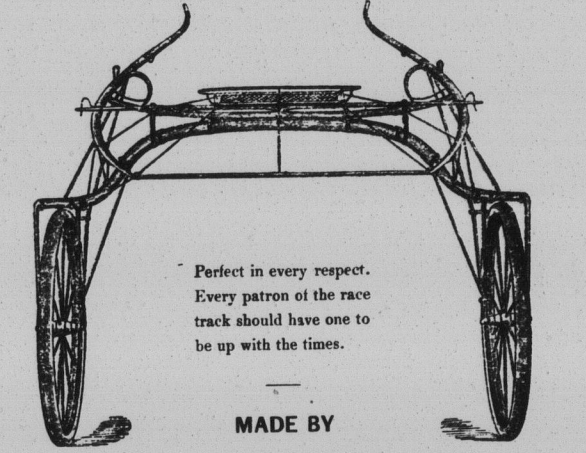
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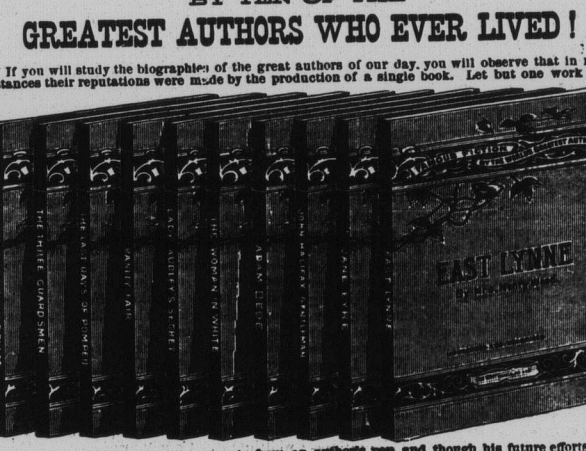
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