

be freed even for one week from the necessity of sermon preparation was a very grateful relief to the young minister, and so, disencumbered from that care, he determined to utilize his rest by devoting the week to pastoral work. He could thus redeem the time to the best advantage, and even accumulate a little reserve fund in that department of duty which would enable him to return to his study with a clear conscience and better rest.

So he spent the week in such service, going from house to house in friendly-social interchange with his people, speaking words of sympathy and cheer, strengthening the bond which united them; and when the busy week came to its close he had the pleasant consciousness that it had not been spent in vain.

On Saturday evening he went to the station to meet and welcome his expected guest. In due time the train arrived and poured out a throng of passengers, among whom he elbowed his way, eagerly scanning the faces for the object of his quest. But he was not to be seen, and when the crowd had melted away the young pastor stood alone. Slowly and dejectedly he made his way to the post-office, where by the evening mail was a letter from his friend stating that he had been detained, and would not be able to fulfil his engagement. Bitterly disappointed, he turned his way homeward. All other sense of regret was swallowed up in the thought of his unprepared state for Sabbath services. There was no possible way of relief from the burden which pressed upon him so heavily. He had exhausted all the written material in his own possession. He had availed himself of all opportunities of exchange with neighboring ministers. There was no one to whom he could apply for help.

After supper, which had been delayed in consequence of the expected visitor, he went into his study. The evening was short and his time for preparation very limited. He had no subject in his mind. But he forced himself to a selection and, though hopeless of success, in a spirit of dogged resolution he entered upon his preparation, and applied himself to his work until long after the midnight hour, and until his tired brain refused to be spurred to further effort. He retired to his bed; but sleep was long in coming, and when it came was fitful and disturbed. When the morning came he awoke unrefreshed and heavy-hearted, and when the hour for service arrived he went to his church with that same prejudged sense of failure, and, as it seemed to him, discharged his duties in a most unsatisfactory manner, and when the service was over went back to his home, his cheeks almost tingling with shame at the conscious demerit of his sermon and its utter inadequacy to the requisitions of his audience.

Time, of course, wore away the sharpness of the sting, and abundant subsequent opportunities were given him for retrieving the reputation which, in his judgment, that service had damaged, though his own opinion of the service remained unchanged. In his estimation it was an abject failure.

Several weeks afterwards there came to him one day a letter bearing the postmark of a town in the western part of the state. The superscription was in an unfamiliar handwriting, and when he had opened the letter to ascertain the name of the writer he saw that it was from some one entirely unknown to him. But it bore a very direct message. It opened with the statement that the writer had passed that Sabbath, which had been a day of such trial to the young minister, in his village. He was an avowed unbeliever and had not attended any church

service before in many years. But some impulse he could not define led him to that church that day. From the very opening of the services to their close he had been deeply impressed. The invocation and Scripture lesson and hymns came to him with special direction and power. When the text was announced, "What is truth?" he felt it to be just what he needed to hear, and gave close attention to every word, and left the church under such a sense of the reality and power of spiritual things as he had never had before. Nor did the impression prove transient. That service and sermon remained in heart and conscience until a solemn resolution to become a Christian had been taken. And now, at the dictation of his own changed heart, he wrote to acknowledge the instrumentality by which that change had been effected.

For a few moments that pastor sat, after reading the letter, in mute surprise. But soon tears of joy and gratitude filled his eyes, and dropping upon his knees he sent up a song of praise to him who had seen fit thus to charge his extreme weakness with the glory of his divine power. And his eyes were opened to his own error. He saw how much of pride and self-confidence had entered into his estimate of his service; he accepted the tender discipline and laid the sweet lesson to heart.

As Samson found honey in the carcass of the lion, so out of our humiliations and disappointments the Lord can bring assurances of comfort and acceptance. We have no right to expect a blessing upon indolence or negligence; but under pressure of peculiar difficulties and circumstances apparently adverse God often commands light out of our darkness, and causes those who have sown in tears to reap in joy.—American Messenger.

What the Deacon Said.

'Yes,' said the deacon, 'there's many a man that calls himself honest, that's never so much as inquired what amount of debts heaven's books are going to show against him. I've learned that. There were years in my life when I hardly gave a cent to the Lord without begrudging it, and I've wondered since what I'd ever have talked about if I'd gone to heaven in those days, for I couldn't talk about anything but bargains and money getting here, and these wouldn't have been suitable subjects up yonder.

'Well, in those years I was telling you about, it was dreadful how I cheated the Lord out of his due. Once in a long time I paid a little to our church, but I didn't give a cent to anything else. Foreign mission Sunday was my rheumatiz day, regular, and I didn't go to church. Home mission day was headache day with me allers, and I stayed away from meetin'. Bible Society day I'd generally a tech of neuralgy so't I didn't feel like going out and I stayed at home. Tract Society day I'd begin to be afraid I was going to be deaf, and oughtn't to be out in the wind, so I stayed indoors; and on the Sunday for helping the Publication Society like as not my corns were unusually troublesome, and I didn't feel able to go out.

'Wife wanted me to take a religious paper once, but I wouldn't hear to't. Told her that was nonsense. I didn't believe any of the apostles ever took religious papers. The bible was enough for them, and it ought to be for other folks.

'And yet I never even thought I wasn't doin' right. I'd come into it sort of gradual, and didn't think much about givin' anyhow, except as sort of losing business.

'Well, my little girl Nannie was about

eight years old then, and I was dreadful proud of her, for she was a smart little thing. One Sunday night we were sitting by the fire, and Nannie'd been saying her catechism, and by-and-by she got kind of quiet and sober, and says she, "Pa, will we have to pay any rent in heaven?"

"What?" says I, looking down at her, kind of astonished like.

"Will we have to pay rent in heaven?" says she again.

"Why, no," says I. "What made you think that?"

'Well, I couldn't get out of her for a time what she did mean. Nannie didn't know much about rent, anyhow, for we'd never had to pay any, livin' in our own house. But at last I found out that she'd heard some men talking about me, and one of them said, "Well, he's bound to be awful poor in the next world, I reckon. There ain't much of his riches laid up in heaven." And as the only real poor folks that Nannie'd ever known were some folks down at the village that had been turned out of doors because they couldn't pay their rent, that's what put it into Nannie's head that maybe I'd have to pay rent in heaven.

'Well, wife went on and talked to Nannie and explained to her about the "many mansions" in our "Father's house," you know, but I didn't listen much. I was mad to think Seth Brown dared to talk about me in that way, right before Nannie, too.

'I fixed up some pretty sharp things to say to Seth the next time I met him, and I wasn't very sorry to see him the next day in his cart. I began at him right off. He listened to everything that I sputtered out, and then he said, "Well, deacon, if you think the bank of heaven's got anything in it for you, I'm glad of it; but I've never seen you making deposits," and then he drove off.

'Well, I walked over to my blackberry-patch and sat down and thought, and the more I thought the worse I felt. I was angry at first, but I got cooler, and I thought of Foreign Mission Sunday and the rheumatiz, and Home Mission Sunday and the headache, and Bible Society day and the neuralgy, and Tract day and the corns, till it just seemed to me I couldn't stand it any longer; and I knelt down there in the blackberry-patch, and said, "Oh, Lord, I've been a stingy man, if ever there was one, and if ever I do get to heaven, I deserve to have to pay rent, sure enough. Help me to give myself, and whatever I've got, back to thee."

'And I believe he's helped me ever since. 'Twas pretty hard work at first, getting to giving. I did feel pretty sore over the first dollar I slipped into the collection plate, but I've learned better now; and I mean to keep on giving "as unto the Lord" till I go to that heaven where Nannie's been these twenty years.—From a leaflet published by the American Home Mission Society.

An infidel named Barker was declaiming in Philadelphia in the hearing of a Quaker. The infidel said, in the course of his address, that all preachers were hypocrites and did not believe in the doctrines they preached. 'Let me ask thee a question,' said the Quaker. 'Thou wast a preacher some years ago: didst thou preach what thou didst not believe? Wast thou a hypocrite?' The infidel evaded answering, and the Quaker continued: 'If thou wast sincere when thou wast a preacher, there must have been at least one preacher who was not a hypocrite, so thou must be lying now. If thou wast a hypocrite, then thou mayest be one now. That is a dilemma, friend Barker.' The audience agreed, and the infidel was laughed into silence.