

HOW THE SUBSCRIPTION WAS STARTED.

WAS there been anything done about starting the mission?" It was the minister's wife who asked the question, seated beside the study window.

"No," the minister replied, looking up from his desk at which he sat writing close to her chair; "no, there has been a good deal of talk about it, and it is about decided to start a subscription paper as the best way of finding out how much we can depend upon getting. I wish that it could be started immediately," he added, passing his hand over his head with a sigh; "the building is so sadly needed that we should not delay, and yet I know that the congregation has already given a great deal of money for one thing or another during the past two years."

Beneath the window the sexton's little daughter was playing in the churchyard, as she often did on Saturday when her father was in the church, and, without at all intending to listen, she heard the conversation quite plainly, and though she did not understand it exactly, two or three things impressed themselves upon her loving little heart.

In the first place, the minister, who was the greatest person in the world to little Agnes, wanted something, and that something was money, though what the meaning of the long word "subscription" was, she had no idea. In the second place, the money was for the new mission, about which she had heard a great deal. In the third place, the minister seemed to think that if this same subscription paper was once started it would be all right. With these ideas firmly fixed, Agnes started across the lawn to the church. Her father was sweeping in one of the aisles, and Agnes went in and sat down in a pew near him.

"Father," she asked, "what is a subscription paper?" She pronounced the long word very slowly and carefully, and it is no wonder that her father looked up from his sweeping in surprise at such a question from such a little girl.

"A subscription paper!" he said with a laugh, "why, it's a paper on which people write a promise to give a certain amount of money for some special object. What makes you ask, Aggie?"

"Then would a subscription paper for the new mission be promising to give money for that?" she asked, not noticing his question.

"Yes, of course. But why?"

"O, I was just wondering," she answered. And then she got up and went out into the churchyard again; this time not to her play, however, but over to a certain shady corner where she seated herself at the foot of a grave—her mother's grave—and began to think aloud, as she often did in that one spot.

"It's a great, great deal of money, but I 'spect they need a great deal," she said. "I saved it a long, long time to buy mother a stone for her grave, and it's grown to be fifty cents—forty cents and two five-cent pieces. Mother dear," she whispered, leaning down over the grave, "mother dear, would you be willing to wait a little longer for your stone, so that the poor little children down at the mills can have a Sunday-school like ours here at the church? Perhaps it will be a good while before I can save fifty cents again, mother dear, but the minister wants so much to have the paper started. Shall I give it to him, and will you wait a little longer for the pretty stone with your name and the nice little text?" And then she laid her little cheek to the soft grass of the mound, and presently she sat up with a satisfied smile on her lips.

"Then I'll give it to him, mother," she whispered. And getting up she went out to the road and on down to the pretty little cottage where she lived with her father and grandmother.

All the rest of the day Agnes was very busy with pencil and paper, and it was almost dusk when, with a deep sigh of relief and satisfaction, she folded her paper and laid it away. The next morning, just before time for service, any one watching might have seen a little girl slip through the open door of the church and, mounting the steps to the pulpit, lay a paper there and go quietly away, for Agnes went always to Sunday-school in the morning, and then home, as her father thought that quite enough for so little a girl at one time, particularly as she always went to the afternoon service.

That particular morning the service proceeded as usual till the minister went into the pulpit to preach the sermon, but then, instead of announcing his text immediately, he paused, lifted a paper, and having opened and read it, looked up and said:

"I have just found this note, and though I am quite confident that it was intended for no eyes but my own, I think that perhaps it may help a good cause if I read it aloud to you, as the little writer is not present." And then he began to read; and this is Agnes' note just as it appeared, only that it was printed in very straggling letters:

"Dare mister Arnol mother an I spoke about it together to day an mother was willin to wait a little longer fur her stone with the pretty tex asleap in jesus on it so i could give you mi fifty cents to build the nue mission sos the little mil girls and boys can go to sundy school, 'cause I kno you want it prety quick and so this is mi surscription paper that Agnes Roe is going to giv fifty cents.

"Realy and truly you know Mother couldn't anser me but you dont think shel mind waitin due you when they don't have any sundy schol down to the mil."