

in the meantime, while straitened stipends are unavoidable, why should not those to whom the Lord has given abundance try to pay up a little of the Church's arrears, by sending a Christmas gift to some lonely and discouraged missionary? There are many such, and we need not go far to find them. With some hundreds of men on the domestic and French missions, receiving less than \$500 each for all purposes, one can hardly go amiss.

"Well," says one, "I would be glad to do something, but I don't know what to send or where to send it." As to the *what* there need be no difficulty. A ten-dollar bill, or even a five, is never out of place, and only those who have been in straits themselves know how much comfort and cheer such an amount can buy. As to the *where*, a note to the Chairman of any Mission District will quickly bring you all needed information; or, if there be no time for that, the Missionary Secretary could tell where such kindly remembrances would do the most good. "A word to the wise" ought to be "sufficient," and we hope it will be.

It is a common practice with many American churches to make up boxes of clothing (or materials for clothing) and other necessaries, which they send to ministers' families on the frontier missions. It is surprising how many substantial comforts can be packed into a moderate-sized case, and how much genuine warmth it will diffuse through a backwoods mission house when it has reached its destination; provided always that there is good judgment in the selection of the contents, and tact and delicacy in the bestowment of the gift. Don't bestow it as a charity, and don't make a parade of generosity; but send it in the same way in which you would like it to be sent if *you* were the missionary. Enclose a kindly-worded note,—if without your name, so much the better,—and above all, *pay the freight or express charges.*

Just after writing the above we fell asleep with our eyes open, and had a bit of a dream. We were in a backwoods parsonage, humble in structure, and not very warm, but scrupulously neat and clean. We had been kindly welcomed by the missionary and his wife, who wouldn't hear of our stopping anywhere else. A plain meal, the best the house afforded, was put upon the table; but somehow we could not resist the impression that reserve supplies were not abundant. The clothing, too, of both the missionary and his wife seemed scant and threadbare, and the rooms lacked many of those little articles which in most houses

would be regarded as necessaries. After dinner a glance into the pastor's study revealed a meagre supply of books, and there were no indications that he was a reader of the fresh, crisp literature of the day. There was no need to inquire the cause—he could not afford it; and we thought, here is a man of good natural gifts mentally starved because the Church is too poor or too mean to pay him a living stipend. How must it fare with his people?

We returned to the sitting-room, where the missionary's wife was busy with her needle making-over and mending garments that had often been mended before. We could not not but notice that there were far more "silver threads among the gold" in her hair than a woman of her years should carry, and there were lines on temple and forehead that had not been carved by time. As we talked, a couple of boys rushed in from school. Bright, sturdy fellows they were, but almost blue with cold, and evidently but thinly clad. The school, as we learned, was a mile and a-half away, and no better than backwoods schools usually are; a little better than nothing, and that was all. Just then a girl of perhaps sixteen summers entered the room. A single glance at her face—so like her mother's—told that she was the "daughter of the manse." Subsequently I learned that she had developed a strong taste for books, and especially for music; but, as her mother confided with a sigh, their circumstances would not permit her tastes to be gratified, and, unless some marked change should speedily come, she must grow up to womanhood virtually uneducated. The subject was painful, and we were not sorry that something occurred to change it.

There was a rattle of wheels and a clatter of hoofs without, and the stage from ——— railway station, fifteen miles away, drove up to the door. The missionary went out to see what was wanted, and there soon appeared to be a difference of opinion between him and the driver.

"There must be some mistake," said Bro. M., "I am not expecting a box from anywhere."

"I guess there's no mistake," said the driver, "your name's on it, plain enough, and, as the freight's paid, I guess I'll leave it anyway." And without more ado he dumped the doubtful box on the ground, and drove off, after wishing the minister and his family "a merry Christmas, and a happy New Year."

We all went out to see what was the matter, and it was unanimously resolved to bring in the box and open it, to see if the inside would afford any solution of the mystery that hovered around the outside thereof.