

The Empty Pocketbook.

The congregation worshipping in the Presbyterian church, in a certain small city, no matter how often, was composed of those who, while living comfortably in their homes, were by no means a wealthy people.

"Five dollars every week! you don't say so!" exclaimed a score of voices, lifting their hands in holy horror at the bare idea.

"It is true. But the most remarkable part remains to be told. On Monday morning, rain or shine, cold or warm, before we eat our breakfast, which, you know, is served very early, the gentlemen of the family may leave for business, the door bell rings, and Mr. Seabright appears and hands back \$5."

"Why, how strange! What can he do with it? If he spends it, how can he get it to refund so soon?" said one of the ladies.

"He cannot spend it," said another. "No," said a third, "the stores are closed on Saturday evening at 9, and you say he does not come, until half-past 9!"

"Not until half-past 9," said Mr. Leroy. "Then none open until some time after we have our breakfast on Monday. I tell you friends, it puzzles me."

"How does he appear on receiving it?" asked another. "Deeply grateful. He thanks us, on returning it, with all his heart."

"After considerable talk, Mrs. Hurst said: 'Mrs. Leroy, did it ever occur to you to mark the bill lent him, to see whether it passes from his hands or not?'"

"No," was the reply. "I mean to propose it to my husband this very night."

"Did you do it?" "Yes, I did, and to our utter amazement the same bill came on Monday morning."

"That is too funny. What can it mean? How shall we solve this mystery?" were exclamations that passed from lip to lip.

Finally Mrs. Leroy agreed to have her husband ask an explanation the next time he came on this singular errand and report the result.

Saturday night arrived and with it Mr. Seabright at the door of the elder's house. He always declined entering, pleading the lateness of the hour; but this time Mr. Leroy would not take a refusal.

Drawing the reluctant clergyman in to the warm well lighted parlor, the good man gently told him that his curiosity was aroused to know why he so regularly borrowed that money.

"Because, my kind friend," was the reply, "I absolutely need it."

"How do you know that I do not spend it?" "Because I have marked the bill, and the very same one came back, beside, no stores are open while you have it in your possession."

"It is too true. I do not spend it at all!" "Then why in Heaven's name do you borrow it?"

"There was a long pause, then the pastor replied: 'Since you press me so hard, I will tell you, though I would rather not. When I first came here I found that articles for daily use in a family were much higher than I had been accustomed to. My salary by strictest economy—doing without a servant, going partially fed and clothed—could only supply our pressing wants and educate the children. Every Saturday night found my pocket-book empty, absolutely empty! The human mind is most singularly constituted, varying in different individuals. My own mind became distracted when the last week went, to such a degree that all animation and life left me, and I seemed to become a mere machine, grinding out sermons. This was noticed by my people, and a committee was appointed to speak to me upon the subject. I knew the case exactly, and made a plan at once to oblige it. I that week borrowed \$5, to place in my pocket-book. Knowing that I had \$5 in my possession imparted the needed life. At once once the effect and consequently have repeated the experiment. Please continue to befriend me in this innocent way, or I shall again lose heart and fail to please my people.'

Mr. Leroy pressed the bill into the good man's hand, giving it to him as a sympathetic witness which showed that he fully appreciated the situation. That very week, without waiting for the sewing circle to meet, Mr. and Mrs. Leroy visited every family in the congregation, telling all to what a strait poverty had reduced their pastor. Sympathy was at once enlisted in his behalf, and in a few days his salary was more than doubled, and the congregation at large rejoiced over the improved appearance of the inmates of the manse.

A strong, capable woman was at once introduced into the kitchen, and Mrs. Seabright was at once released from that bondage, and so was enabled to lead the ladies a helping hand, and encouraging them, not only by her activity, but by her genial presence in their midst.

Even the looks of the children improved; their thin, wan cheeks became full and rosy, while happiness sparkled in the eyes of all.

As for the pastor, his every step grew light and springy, his very gesture full of life, while his sermons, became so striking in form and delivery that they impressed the whole community to such a degree that the church rapidly filled, every pew was rented, and very soon a warm revival of religion had many hearts glad, and made all to say: 'Nevmore shall a minister of this church go into his pulpit on Sunday morning with an empty pocket-book.'

"What can it be?" asked several voices at once. "I do not know as I ought to tell it, for fear of harming the poor man. We, as you all know, think everything of our pastor. We like him as a man, socially, and we are delighted with his preaching; yet we would like to have our curiosity gratified in one respect. It is this: Why does he borrow money so often?"

"Borrow money! You surely are not in earnest. We never heard of his being the least debt," exclaimed two or three in breath.

"That is where the mystery comes in. He never stays in debt by any means; but I will tell you what happened, and see what you think of it. For the last six months, every Saturday evening, about half-past nine, Mr. Seabright comes to our door, asks for Mr. Leroy and borrows of him \$5."

"Five dollars every week! you don't say so!" exclaimed a score of voices, lifting their hands in holy horror at the bare idea.

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Sheriff's Sale.