

hopefully, "would pay well. Or two books. Two dollars a day is a good sum."

The tired eyes looked around the scantily furnished room, over the threadbare clothes on her family, down at her own rusty garments, and then grew rested again as they contemplated the two dollars. It was a very good sum indeed.

Still, he did not so consider it. His eyes again sought the list of recommends, and his mind roved along the route he should take, including forty visits, and he began to think that in fixing on five sales a day he had done an injurious thing. What if there were ten? It was a pretty good leap. But was it unreasonable? If there were fifteen it would be better. It would be a good joke if he was, in his highest flight, getting way below the mark. And it might possibly be so. A smile unconsciously crept into his face as these thoughts filled his mind.

"I ain't felt so encouraged in months," he said to his wife. "We have bemoaned our ill-luck, but how do we know but that my being thrown out of work was the best thing that could happen me?"

"I hope so," said his wife. Poor woman! She had need of encouragement. And it was a good thing to see the tired eyes brighten. It was a long time since they had. He looked into her expectant face, and his own grew brighter under the inspiration. Presently he aroused himself with the remark,—

"Well, I must get abroad early to-morrow morning, as I'll have a long day's work."

Whereupon his wife prepared the children for bed, and pretty soon the father and mother retired, but hardly to sleep.

At nine o'clock the next morning he was ready to start. There was not as much enthusiasm as on the evening before, but that could not be expected. Daylight is eminently more practical than lamplight. His patient wife had made his old suit look really presentable, and had prepared him a lunch of bread and butter to eat at noon, for he expected to be too busy to come home to dinner. The lunch he carefully stowed away in his pocket, and his canvassing books he put under his arm. He was hopeful, having just stimulated himself by another careful glance at the recommends. Still, the expression of weariness was there, and the faithful woman who stood before him looking into his face saw it more plainly than was good for her. His features showed thinner with the sunlight streaming upon them. She saw in all their lines the effects of a long sickness that had taken all the earnings, and of a brooding and worry that had come from days of unsuccessful search for work. From wedded life, and she saw in their record a

steady, uncomplaining fight, and a constant, this her mind went back over the year of their tender love for her. Then she looked quickly into the careworn face again and by an impulse which she could not control, threw her arms about his neck and sobbed aloud.

"Lizzie!" he cried, dropping the books to fold his arms about her.

She made no reply, but only clung the tighter to him.

With that delicacy of feeling, occasionally found among the poor even, he stroked her hair in silence, waiting patiently for the paroxysm to pass away. He had no need to ask her why she cried. Every sob that convulsed her weak frame was eloquent of a past full of bitter struggling. But it hurt him to hear her, not that he minded the memory, as far as it affected himself, but only as it told of her suffering.

"Oh, John," she murmured in a broken voice, "we are so poor, we are so poor. God help us!"

Then she lifted her head, wiped away the tears from her face, and smiled as she did it, to show him that she was herself again.

Thus reassured, he took his books again, and sallied forth. And the pitying husband was left behind, and a book-canvasser appeared instead. Striking off to another part of the town, his malignant presence soon darkened a doorway. The servant appeared in answer to the summons. She looked into his lean face, which, to a prejudiced person, had a somewhat sharkish aspect, and then at the parcel under his arm, and shook her head in a very depressing manner.

"We don't want nothing," she said, and carefully closed the door. Owing to the lack of presence of mind on his part, he neglected to put his foot in the way and prevent the door from being closed, until he had had his own say, and thus the first opportunity was lost. He sighed, and went to the next door.

Here he rang the bell twice, but there was no response. The occupants had seen him approach.

Somewhat weakened in faith, he went to the third house. The family received him, thumbed over the specimen book, admired the pictures, and said they were not prepared to subscribe now, but could tell better in the spring. He had received considerable strength and hope from this reception, but he left it behind when he withdrew. He thought of his waiting wife and children, and instinctively wiped something from his eye, which, were he not a book-canvasser, might have done very well for a tear.

At the fourth house a woman came to the door, gave him a hard look, and immediately