

CARRIE THORNE'S OPPORTUNITY.

BY MRS. L. E. THORPE.

"Be ye also ready." Matt. 24: 44.

Carrie Thorne was an earnest Christian, yet, Martha-like, "cumbered with much serving" for her family, and ever bemoaning her lack of opportunity to engage in any charitable scheme, so thickly was her path set with small duties and general home care.

One bright spring morning as she finished sweeping her spotless north porch she hesitated a moment for one look out.

Her next-door neighbor, a kindly but coarse and ignorant woman, approached, and in response to Carrie's greeting said, "Yes, it's a nice morning, and them as can enjoy it ought to be thankful. I've just seen one poor creature as'll never look on the like again, or I miss my guess. The poor woman who lives in the basement at Mrs. Ryan's," she continued in reply to Carrie's anxious inquiry; "it's just across the creek there. They're strangers, and she's been a-laying flat of her back ever since they came there, nigh ten weeks, with consumption. No, they're too poor to have help, and she works at the iron-works all day and does up the housework nights; and she alone all day in that damp, dark place, with three little children, and that gang of Ryan boys a-stampin' like a drove of horses overhead! No, I didn't know of it either till I happened to mistake her door for Mrs. Ryan's as I stopped of an errand. I thought I'd just come by and tell you, and maybe you could run in a spell and take her some readin' and cheer her up a bit, she's so lonesome and sufferin'."

"Indeed I will, Mrs. Cope; I am so glad you told me. I am cleaning my bedroom, but I'll hurry and get things replaced and try to see her this afternoon."

While thinking over the matter when Mrs. Cope had gone, a strange conviction came over her that this woman needed Christian counsel. Now Carrie had never had much faith in "spiritual impressions," believing them to be too nearly allied to imagination and superstition, and that it was a safer way to follow the plain teaching of the Word of God; yet there was something in this burning desire that filled her heart to speak to that sick woman of Jesus that she knew was not of her own mind, and with it the most comforting and appropriate texts of Scripture presented themselves so vividly she was completely overcome, and, falling on her knees, she cried out with tears, "Dear Lord, I do believe this is thy will; I will go and speak to her of thee." Oh, how she was filled with a sense of God's presence! She seemed to hear him saying, "Go and call my lost one back home," and she felt so willing while waiting at his feet for strength, and she thought with rapture how doubly precious was this call, as it witnessed also her own acceptance with God.

But other duties followed the room-work, and baby Ralph was so fretful that at last she decided the visit must wait till morning. Then new cares and company kept her home again. The next day Mrs. Cope had to be away washing and could not keep Ralph, and as there was a rumor of measles she feared to take him. But Mrs. Cope had promised to stop and inquire, and Mrs. Thorne hastened out when she saw her returning.

"O Mrs. Thorne, I never pitied anybody so in my life! I fixed up the room and washed the children, but if I could only talk to her like you could! She's such a lady, and I've got no learnin'."

"Do you know if she is a Christian?" ventured Carrie (alas, so timid are we in speaking of Christ even to our nearest neighbor!).

"I asked her if any one talked to her of bein' ready to go, and she said only Mrs. Ryan, and she is a Roman Catholic, and she would not listen to her, and that she wasn't goin' to die. It's just pitiful to hear her tell how she'll take care of the children and can up fruit when she gets well! You know that bunch of lilacs Mrs. Case gave you and me; I took her mine, and you just ought to 'a' seen her, it cheered her up so! She cried over 'em, too, and said they made her think of home."

"If you'll keep Ralph, I'll go to-morrow and take her that pot of red geraniums; they are the only flowers I have yet. I think Mrs. Case might send her some every day," and Carrie looked wistfully over the fence at her neighbor's rich lawn.

"I went and told her a-purpose, and she

said she would, but she keeps a-puttin' it off."

The next day brought incessant rain, and on the morning following Carrie was making hurried preparations for her visit; when Mrs. Case called her to the fence to see a lovely white wreath and cross.

"A poor woman died last night down at Mrs. Ryan's, and they sent here for flowers. Alice made these, and I'm going over with them, as she is to be buried this afternoon."

It was with difficulty Carrie restrained her feelings until she regained her room. Sinking on the carpet she moaned and wept in disappointment and self-accusation. All her prayers and pleadings for an opportunity to do something for Christ came before her; how he had called her to this duty; how she had said, "I will go," and went not; of all her neglect might mean to that precious soul just ushered into eternity! Then, like burning coals on her conscience, fell the words, "A stranger, sick and in prison, and ye visited me not," until she sobbed in remorse that seemed bitter as death. Most terrible of all was the thought, "I can't pray!" Never before had she had a sorrow she could not take to Jesus. Ah, she must have realized in those moments something of the anguish of a condemned soul when it knows for the first time that it can nevermore pray. An eternity of sorrow and no Jesus! O God help us to pray while we can pray!

After a time Carrie felt again the assuring love of Jesus and in a measure comforted and quieted; but all the prayer she could offer for days was the one, now too late, pleading with him to have compassion on the precious soul she had neglected, and for weekshumiliation and sorrow overshadowed her, and it seemed like a special mercy that this consolation came to her a few days before leaving that city.

"I had a long talk to-day," said her husband one Sabbath evening, with the Rev. B—, who preaches for our church on South Hill, and I happened to mention your feelings in regard to that woman who died at Mrs. Ryan's. He knew all about the circumstance, was summoned there with a brother minister the night she died, as she became distressed for her soul, and he told me to tell you she obtained mercy, and sweetly fell asleep whispering the name of Jesus." This was joy indeed, but Carrie wonders if God will ever give her another opportunity. —*American Messenger.*

THE STORY OF A HARD FIGHT.

"What can those two boys be talking about?" said Mrs. Upton to her husband one morning. "They look as wise and mysterious as though they were eighty years old instead of seven and eight. I hope they're not planning any mischief." With this the good lady sighed.

Indeed, she too often had cause to sigh over her two frolicsome lads. They did not mean to be troublesome or disobedient, but somehow they had a way of making plans which often brought annoyance to their mother and disgrace upon themselves. This time, however, they were not plotting mischief. They were simply considering how they might help in the work of a Mission Band which they had joined the day before. This Band had pledged itself to the support of a little boy in a school in India, and each member had promised to give something from his own earnings or savings for this purpose. Let us listen a moment to the two brothers as they whisper together in the corner.

"We can't give anything from our savings," says Henry, the elder, "for we have nothing to save. But I'll tell you what, Charley, I've a plan for making something."

"What is it?" asks Charley, while his eyes sparkle.

"Well, you know that nice-looking old gentleman who has just moved next door. I saw him yesterday out looking in the fields for greens, but it was terribly hard work for him to stoop over. I guess he has the rheumatism or something. He asked me if I knew what yellow-dock is, and I showed him some. Now, suppose we should go there this morning with a basketful. Don't you think he'd buy it of us?"

"In course he would," answered Charley, "specially if we should tell him what the money is for."

So the plan was made and carried out most successfully. Children who live in the country do not need a description of the

slender-leaved weed called dock, which grows so abundantly in our fields, and is by many prized as an article of food. The two boys filled a good-sized basket with this spring delicacy and offered it to their new neighbor, who not only promptly bought it for the sum of five cents, but ordered a supply for every morning for a month.

"Whew!" exclaimed Charley, as they were scampering home to report their good success. "How he must like greens! But never mind. It's a good thing for us. Isn't it, old fellow?"

"To be sure it is, to be sure. Why! we'll make enough to buy that little boy's clothes, I should think, for a year. I wish I knew enough 'rithmetic to count up how much it will come to. Let's ask Bill when he comes in at noon."

Bill, the "hired man," when applied to, dutifully set about the calculation. He reckoned thirty days to the month and announced that the sum would be exactly and precisely one dollar and a half. "And that's a good deal," he added, "for little 'uns like you to make."

"But you haven't taken out the Sundays," said Charley. "Of course, we can't work on Sundays."

"Of course not," said Henry, "that would be what mother calls 'doing evil that good may come,' and maybe she won't let us work when it rains."

"Well, never mind. If you stick to your bargain every day when you can, you'll be able to do your part, and I'll count up your money when you get it all together." This from Bill, who was the boys' oracle. You may look up that word in the dictionary, if you do not quite understand what it means.

The boys did stick to their bargain. One five-cent after another found its way into the little box set apart for the treasured earnings. There were but two very rainy days that month. Making allowance for these and the four Sundays there must have been, how much was in the box?

"A dollar and twenty cents," somebody answers, and that somebody agrees with Bill, who slowly and carefully reached the same result.

"What a pity it hadn't been five cents more!" he exclaimed. "That would have been ten shillings. Guess I'll have to give you that to make the thing even."

Dear me! How guilty Charley looked then. What could have been the matter? I will have to tell you.

It had happened that that very morning he had gone alone to carry the last basketful of greens, and that the old gentleman who had proved such a good customer, had rewarded him with ten cents instead of five. Poor Charley! The temptation had been too much for him. He had put half of the money into his pocket and the other half into the box. Nobody would be the wiser, he thought, and he did so want to be able to buy some torpedoes for the coming Fourth of July.

Yet there were two who knew of his dishonesty. He knew of it himself and the knowledge made him unhappy. The Lord above knew of it, for no one can escape from His all-seeing eye. All day long Charley suffered from the reproaches of his conscience. He had deceived Henry, he had deceived Bill, and he meant to deceive the other members of the Mission Band, for Henry, of course, would tell them that they had put all their earnings into the box. He had a hard fight for some hours, but conscience won in the end.

After supper he went up to Bill, who was sitting outside of the kitchen door, and handed him the five cents which he could no longer keep in his pocket.

"Here, Bill," said he, "I'll pay you back this money. I ought to have put it into the box, but I didn't."

Then he stammered out the story of his temptation. Bill was surprised, of course, and so was Henry, who was standing near.

"You've done well," said honest Bill; "you've done well to bring back the money, for it really wasn't yours after you'd promised to give it away, and if you'd kept it you'd have been acting, to my thinking, very much like Ananias and Sapphira that your pa read about at family prayers this morning. Now we'll just put it into the box along with the rest, and there'll be so much more for your boy in India."

Charley went to bed happy, feeling that he had done right, though it cost him a struggle to do so.—*Cousin Lois.*

TEN MINUTES.

Take ten minutes each day, and devote it to the Bible, to one verse, following it through its marginal references, comparing the familiar with the revised text, thinking, for only ten minutes, of its central truth. Give ten minutes, morning, noon, or evening, to study of the lesson—real downright study, not mere perfunctory perusal. Let the piano, standing silent and unused in the corner of the parlor, for ten minutes each day, win you to the old finger-practice. From the shelf, where it stands forgotten or neglected, take the volume of essays or history, which you have long intended to read when you should have leisure.

For only ten minutes every day, if you honestly can give no more, sit down with your half-grown lad, just arrived at the Ishmael stage of existence, the period when he is at odds with all the world, and devote yourself to his entertainment; hear the story of his day, and talk over his school-life and its ambitions.

Believe me that the course will pay in each case. The experiment is worth trying. The blessed ten minutes with the Bible; the conscientious ten minutes with the lesson; the persevering ten minutes at the piano; the faithful ten minutes over the book; the loving ten minutes with your boy—will each, in its own province, result in that which will bring reward.—*Mrs. Sangster.*

Question Corner.—No. 16.

BIBLE QUESTIONS.

1. What ancient king employed dromedaries as mail carriers?
2. By whom was the first temperance society organized?
3. Who did the Lord help in battle with hailstones, which slew more than the sword?
4. What prophet was found ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen?

SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS.

1. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord."
2. "Our God hath not forsaken us."
3. "He careth for you."
4. "Good is the word of the Lord."
5. "My Lord and my God."
6. "Thou God seest me."
7. "God will provide."
8. "He will keep the feet of His saints."

The initials of the *Authors* of the above quotations give the name of a celebrated Israelitish judge.

ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS NO. 15.

1. Numbers 15: 32-36; 1 Kings 17: 10-16; Acts 28: 3-6.
2. 2 Samuel 17: 23.
3. Genesis 28: 8, 9.
4. 2 Chronicles 33: 10, 11.
5. Nehemiah 13: 16.
6. Ezra 1: 9.

A BIBLE ACROSTIC.—1. Faith. 2. Eternity. 3. Atonement. 4. Redemption. 5. Nathan. 6. Orion. 7. Triumph. 8. Pride. 9. Affliction. 10. Union. 11. Love.—"Fear not Paul" (Acts 27: 24).

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