A FIVE CENT SERMON.

Lulu Linton.

A five-cent grab-bag had created much merriment at the annual New Year's party of the Stowell family. Each member of the family had been notified beforehand to bring some article, the price of which must not exceed five cents, and they had vied with each other in trying to find things useful, ornamental or unique for that smaill sum. Mrs. John Stowell declared that she had expended more time and thought on the four five-cent articles contributed by her family, than upon her entire list of Christmas gifts. After helping Gladys and Grant select articles which suited their tastes, and selecting a third one for their father, who was too busy to attend to so small a matter, she had finally decided for her own contribution to be a small copy of "A Morning Prayer," that had descended to a five-cent counter in a bargain sale of left-over Christmas goods simply because of the logening of one corner of its passe-partout binding. The glass was whole, the printed words very clear and artistic, the coloring dainty, and Mrs. Stowell felt that she had secured a bargain, for she fastened the loose binding by merely moistening it a bit.

On the evening of the party one of the younger Stowells was blindfolded, and called out the name of some member of the family as each article was brought forth from the capacious bag. Mrs. John Stowell's name was the last to be called and the family party shouted with laughter at the look on her face when she unwrapped her own contribution to the bag.

"I don't care," she said, laughing with them. "I liked it so well that I was almost tempted to keep it after I had wrapped it up. I'm glad I got it back."

When it came to hanging it up at home, the plain little prayer seemed out of place in the parlor, and its coloring did not harmonize with the library walls, so Mrs. Stowell hung it up on the kitchen wall, in the little space between the cook-table and the sink. The coloring harmonized with the dull background, and she liked to look at it as she went about her work. It came to be a habit with her to glance up every morning and read the little prayer as she worked at the kitchen table. It was so true—those first words: "The day returns and brings us the petty round of irritating concerns and duties," especially true of a housekeeper's monotonous round, she thought. Gradually, as she read it day by day, she came to think less of the first line, and to dwell longer on the words which followed: "Help us to perform them with laughter and kind faces; let cheerfulness abound with industry." No one had ever doubted that Mrs. Stowell was industrious, for everything about her was kept in spotless condition, but, lacking the strength to do all this work easily, she was always overworked,, nervous, and often fretful and impatient, because her family did not care as much as she did about having everything in order.

Those words, "Let cheerfulness abound with industry," seemed meant for her. It meant that she ought to perform the duties, even though they were petty and irritating, with laughter and a kind face. She thought of it every morning after she had read the prayer, and one can not entertain a good or helpful thought constantly without being helped by it, and Mrs. Stowell noticed, as the days of the new year passed, that the round of the daily cares seemed to grow less irritating, and her family noticed that, somehow, home was growing more pleasant, and that mother laughed oftener, and seemed less nervous and tired out.

Mrs. Stowell did not realize how often she glanced at the little prayer, or how much strength she gained from it, until one morning she found it lying upon the floor with the glass shattered into bits from striking the corner of the sink, when the paper loop at its back had given way. She cleared up the broken glass and put the little printed slip in the drawer of the kitchen table. She did not mention the accident to the family, but all morning she would find herself glancing up to the place where the little prayer had hung.

When Gladys came into the kitchen at noon, her first words were: "Why mother, where is the little prayer?"

"It fell from the wall and the glass broke," Mrs. Stowell answer- briefly, thinking that it had not meant anything to the others as it had to her.

Grant came in the back way from school, paused in the kitchen a moment, then came blustering into the dining-room saying: "Mother, what made you take down that litttle thing-a-ma-jig, that little sermon you got out of the grab-bag?"

"I didn't take it down; it fell and the glass broke," she replied.

"I missed it too," Mr. Stowell said. "Strange—isn't it?—how a person will get in the habit of reading a little thing like that, hardly knowing that he has looked at it, and yet miss it so when it is gone."

"Oh, I'm so glad you missed it too," his wife exclaimed. "I felt I could hardly do my work this morning without it."

Mr. Stowell tossed a nickle into her lap, saying: "Get another one, by all means. I like to see it there when I stop at the sink."

"I can't, for it was the only one they had," Mrs. Stowell said regretfully, as she handed back the five-cent piece.

"Well, I'm glad we had it a few months, anyway," Gladys said, then added in her impulsive way: "It did me more good than any sermon I have heard this year. At first I read it just because it was right before me when I worked with the dishes, and then I grew to like the part of it where it said: "Give us to go blithely on our business this day.' It sounded so quaint and pretty—that idea of going blithely—it appealed to me every morning, and I decided to try it. Of course I always worked at school, but I fretted and worried and pouted over everything I had to do, and I couldn't do that if I was going blithely. I've had the best grades this term I ever had, and what do you s'pose Miss Ellis said to me to-day? She said that I had always done good work, but she had given me a higher grade this time because I had done my work in a better spirit, that I had seemed so cheerful and willing. I had to tell her what had helped me to do it when she was so nice to me, and she was still for a minute, then she said that if only more people would try going blithely about their business this world would be a much pleasanter place to live in."

Grant ate his dinner in silence, and Gladys wondered how it was that he did not tease her about her new motto. She usually kept all such things for her mother's ear, for fear of her brother's teasing remarks. Grant lingered about the house until Gladys had started to school. He wanted to tell father something, but he didn't intend for Gladys to know that he had been reading that prayer every day, too, and Mrs. Stowell, busy about the after-dinner work, overheard him saying: "I just happened to see it as I would pass, and I remembered the words: 'Bring us to our resting-beds, weary and content and undishonored.' I had a dandy chance to cheat in the examination, and no one would ever have known, but that word 'undishonored' just kept staring me in the face and I had to play fair. I'll tell you. I was passing two men on the street the other day, and I heard one of them say something about John Stowell—they didn't know I was your boy—and the other one said: 'You can always trust a Stowell.' Then I knew why that word just kept after me, and you had better believe I was glad I hadn't dishonored the name."

John Stowell sent his son away, happy over his father's hearty commendations,, then he confessed to his wife that the very same words in the little prayer had kept him from making a sharp business deal in which he would have been gainer in a financial way while a fellow who had always trusted him implicitly would have been a loser. Mrs. Stowell's eyes were filled with tears, and she patted his broad shoulders proudly, then, drawing the little paper from the table drawer, they read it over together.

"The print is not injured," Mr. Stowell said. "I wish you would get a new glass and binding for it, and it does seem that it deserves a better place than the kitchen wall."

Mrs. Stowell laughed happily as she replied: "It couldn't have a better place than this—right out here where we work—for you know that Susan Coolidge says:

'It is not in keeping the day's work
And the day's prayer separate so,
But by mixing the prayer with the labor,
That the soul is taught to grow.'"

—Christian Standard.

SELLING HIMSELF.

From his office window, Dr. Lepley noticed the boy drive his wagonload of corn upon the old-fashioned weigh scales directly opposite. He watched him, idly as he stepped down upon the platform, and then, while the near-sighted weighmaster was adjusting the scales, the boy put one foot back upon the hub of the wheel, and, seizing the back of the seat, swung himself free of the platform, thus adding his full weight to that of the corn.

"Ho, ho! Selling himself, eh?" exclaimed the doctor, adjusting his far-sighted glasses to be sure his near-sighted glasses were not deceiving him.

"Bless my heart, if it isn't Squire Giles' son Jack!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "The young rogue, to disgrace his good, honest old father by such juggling! But he'll square the deal with me, or I'll know why," he chuckled as he hurried across the back lot to the corn crib, where Jack was already shoveling the big, yellow ears into the huge, old-fashioned bin.

"Hello, chappie!" he called out in his jolly fashion. "Want me to give you a lift?"

"No, thank you," replied Jack, politely.

"He's a willing little fellow at any rate," soliloquized the doctor watching the boy's efforts at disposing of the heavy load.

"It's a fine lot of corn, certainly," he added good-naturedly, adjusting his far-sighted spectacles so as to have a better view of the heap of golden ears, piling up in the big granary.

With the last shovel of corn, Jack sprang down into the crib to gather up the "nubbins" scattered on the floor, and while he was at work the doctor stepped forward, and, closing the door with a thud, locked it and put the key in his pocket.

"Doctor! Doctor Lepley!" called Jack, thinking the absent-minded man had shut him in by mistake. "Please, sir, you have locked me in the crib," he exclaimed, when the doctor turned in his tracks and faced him.

"Yes, I know," was the reply. "Isn't that right? I bought you, you know."

"Bought me," cried Jack, not certain whether the grave man peering in through the bars was joking or crazy.

"Yes, to be sure!" returned the doctor. "I bought you and shall settle with your father in accordance with your weight. How much do you weigh?"

"Ninety-two pounds," answered Jack, sheepishly, beginning to see through the doctor's queer actions.

"Ninety-two pounds—a little more than a bushel and a half of corn. At eighty cents a bushel you are worth about one dollar and twenty-five cents," mused the doctor. "A cheap boy, certainly. You have not put a high price on yourself, Jack."

"I didn't mean—to sell myself," insisted Jack.

"You didn't!" exclaimed the doctor. "Then why were you so particular to have yourself weighed with the corn? I thought at the time you were discounting yourself; but a boy who will stoop to such low trickery is not worth much at best."

"I didn't think of it in that light," pleaded Jack, ready to cry. "It's the first time I ever did such a thing, and I am sorry that I acted so meanly."

"Sorry for the wrong-doing Jack, or sorry that you've been found out? Which is it, my boy?" urged the doctor.

"Both," answered Jack quickly. "I am sorry that I was so mean to try to cheat you, and sorry that you know of my meanness."

"Then if I let you go back on your deal will you give me your word of honor that you will never attempt such crookedness again?" said the doctor. "Will you promise?"

"Yes," answered Jack, eagerly. "And, doctor, I hope you will not tell my father of my—dishonesty," he added, as he stepped humbly out of his prison.

"I should be sorry to be the bearer of such news to your father, Jack," returned the doctor. "But my dear boy, do not let the fear of exposure overshadow the higher and more important one, of doing right for its own sake. Remember, always, that if you are to retain your own self-respect, you must put the highest valuation upon your honor; never, under any circumstances cheapen yourself by a sale to bidders."—The Young Churchman.

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Order Nisi.

Albert G. Towers, Assignee,
vs
John H. Bailey, et ux.

In the Circuit Court for Caroline County. In Equity. No 1420.

Ordered, this tenth day of May that the sale of the property mentioned in these proceedings, made and reported by Albert G. Towers, Assignee, be ratified and confirmed unless cause to the contrary be shown on or before the 12th day of July, next, provided a copy of this order be inserted in some newspaper printed and published in Caroline County once in each of four successive weeks before the 11th day of June, next.

The report states the amount of sales to be $288.00.

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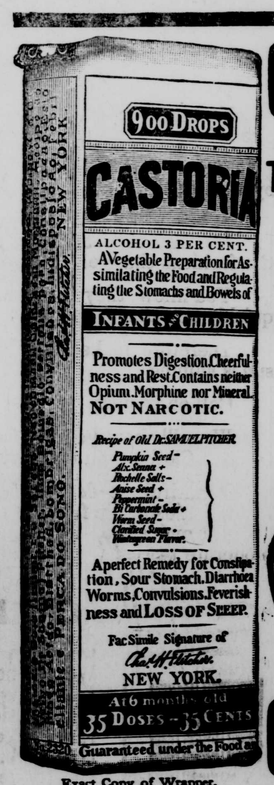
J. KEMP STEVENS,
Clerk.



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