HOME MISSION READINGS

By ALICE M. GUERNSEY

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FOR USE IN
MISSIONARY MEETINGS

BY

ALICE M. GUERNSEY

AUTHOR OF "UNDER OUR FLAG"

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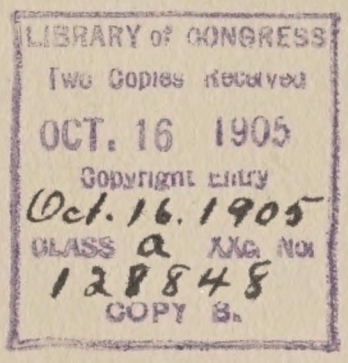

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HOME MISSION READINGS

A PACKAGE OF LETTERS

I

"'AND *what's* a Traveler's Aid?' I can imagine, my dear Isabel, the tone of wonder and the half curl of your lip as you ask the question. I've seen and heard you before. Don't I know that you are in a perpetual state of bewilderment over my deaconess vocation, half vexed and wholly puzzled that I should spend my life in this way? All the same, dear, I am expecting you to join me. No, don't protest. Just think about it.

"But to your query. Suppose, instead of being Miss Lawrence, of Madison Avenue, an up-to-date young woman, who thinks nothing of packing her trunk for a tour across the continent on an hour's notice, you were a poor sick mother with half a dozen babies—I use the words advisedly—clinging to your skirts; suppose after two days of travel you found yourself in all the noise and confusion of this great station, and were bluntly told by the gateman—he means all right, but he hasn't time to 'bother,' and he's a *man*—that

your train didn't go till midnight; suppose the children were dusty, yes, dirty, and tired, and hungry, and that you had exactly fifty cents and your railroad tickets in your pocket. Wouldn't you be glad to have a little woman no bigger than I am, with the black bonnet and white ties that you think so dreadful, walk up to you and say, 'Let me take the baby while you cool off by washing your face and hands, and then we'll see what we can do for the children'? You know babies always approve of me. At first the mother keeps one eye upon me faithfully, but by the time she is through with her ablutions—and the other children always get a share—baby is either fast asleep or smiling into my face, and that is enough to open the door to the mother's heart.

"'What do I do for them then?' Sometimes I take the children out for a walk, sometimes I get them something to eat—the restaurant people are always so kind to me when I come with 'cases'—and sometimes I have a good time with the children, telling them stories and keeping them happy while the mother rests. You haven't any idea, Isabel, of the change in that mother's face after an hour's rest.

"Or suppose you were a fresh young girl from the country without the least idea that wolves were dogging your footsteps and watching to seize you. Yes, human wolves! I know them, but they man-

age to keep just within the law, so I can't have them arrested. The only thing I can do is to cheat them out of their prey by keeping watch of the girl. Many and many a time I have done this, saving the girl from a fate worse than death.

"I've written this between times, when there seemed nothing to be done. Now a through train is coming, and I must to duty. Good-by, dear. It's lovely to be a Traveler's Aid.

"MARIAN GRAHAM."

II

"Well, my dear, after you put on that horrid bonnet I thought you would get over your habit of dreaming day-dreams. But you seem to be reveling in the most absurd of all—the possibility of my becoming a deaconess! Don't flatter yourself, little woman, that even your influence can bring that about, though I'll own I'm interested in the work as you write of it. You must be a perfect Godsend to those people, but isn't it awful to do? Don't you get dirt—and worse things? Aren't you afraid of smallpox or something of that sort?

"About those girls—that really touched me, for I actually saved a girl once—I know I did. It was on a ferryboat, crossing the North River. The girl sat next to me, and on her other side was a man—I have to call him so, I suppose, though

I never think of him as anything but a fiend. He talked loud enough for me to hear, and I saw he was trying to get that girl off with him. Such things as he said! Of course any carefully brought up girl wouldn't have listened to his barefaced compliments and evil suggestions for one moment. But this girl was a foreigner—she had evidently been having her 'afternoon out,' and was half flattered by being noticed and half inclined to think it was a custom of the country. I don't think she understood what he said—certainly she didn't take in what he meant.

"As we rose to leave the boat he told her to wait outside and he would come for her in a moment. That was my chance, and I asked her if she knew him. When she said 'No,' you may imagine that I said some other things, and the way I hustled that girl on to the street car that she said would take her home was a caution. I met the man on my way back to the railroad station, looking as if the earth had opened and swallowed up the girl. I don't think he ever knew how she escaped, but I've thanked God many a time that the scoundrel talked loud enough for me to hear.

"So keep on, old chum. You began helping other people 'way back in our boarding-school days. Maybe your faith will bring me, after all.

"Lovingly ever,

"ISABEL LAWRENCE."

III

"My Dear Isabel: I couldn't have told a better Traveler's Aid story myself. Surely the Lord helped you, as I know He has helped me many a time.

"You ask if I'm not afraid of 'catching things.' Why, dear friend, I gave my whole self to the Lord when I took up deaconess work, and it's His part of the business to take care of me. When I began work down here I used to wear gloves, but they wore out so fast I found I couldn't afford to keep supplied. Then I gave my ungloved hands to the Lord, and it's all right.

"I must tell you about a family I had to-day. There were four adults and one little crippled girl—Poles. They just missed the Western train and had to wait here ten hours. They were genuine peasants, in queer dress and with queer ways. But the man talked a little English, and we made up in signs what we couldn't speak, so I found out that he wanted to take a ride on the street cars. He handed me a dollar and I undertook to pilot the party.

"I assure you we were the 'observed of all observers.' When anything pleased them, they hugged each other. That seemed to be their special way of expressing delight. I was only afraid they would think it necessary to go

through the same process with me, right on the car.

"The signboards seemed to give them more delight than anything else. How they laughed and hugged over the great, glaring pictures! The old grandmother hung on to the back of the seat and talked—no, screamed—in Polish till the tears ran down her cheeks. Conductor and motorman and passengers had a rich treat on that trip.

"We got back safely, however, and they were so delighted. They kissed my hands over and over, and I knew they said 'Thank you,' though I could not understand the words.

"It's incidents like this, my friend, that brighten some of the days that might otherwise be monotonous. But it's all good work, and I am very happy in it. Yours as ever,

"MARIAN GRAHAM."

IV

"Oh, that I had been there with a kodak! I can appreciate the scene, for I've just visited the Immigrant Station and Immigrant Girls' Home. I declare I half wished—but never mind!

"Our good pastor has inveigled me into visiting down on Harbor Street, and I'm getting interested in spite of myself. Those poor people! They need so much more of the real thing than I

know how to give them. Write me how to help them best. Yours sincerely,

"ISABEL LAWRENCE."

V

"DEAR ISABEL: Go to the training school. You can take a course of study that will fit you for church work if you don't want to become a deaconess or a missionary. Who knows what open doors the Lord has waiting for you!

"Lovingly,

"MARIAN."

VI

"DEAR MARIAN: I'm going! Maybe I'll wear the white ties yet. Do you think they would be becoming? And I want you to know, dear, that it's your little word about girls who need help—that and my own experience—that has done it all. If I can give to girls who need it some of the sheltering love and care that has blessed my life I shall be so happy. What do you suppose my dear mother says? 'I gave you to the Lord, my child, when you first lay in my arms, and I knew He would lead you.' Isn't that enough to make a girl break right down?

"My next letter will be written from the training school. I feel like saying, 'Hold the fort, for I am coming.' Yours gratefully,

"ISABEL LAWRENCE."

UNCLE SAM'S "HOW D'Y' DO"

"WE, the people of the United States," give cordial welcome to all immigrants who are good and true, to all who come as honest, respectable citizens to help develop and strengthen our land. But we look askance, as we have the right to do, upon those whom the law pronounces "not qualified" to enter the country. To these we say, "We want no paupers—we have enough of our own—and no criminals—we can manufacture them, alas, faster than we can take care of them. You who come from lands where labor is ill-paid and ill-cared for, you must not come here under contract to work, for by so doing you would take the bread from the mouths of our own working people. Stand aside—you here and you there—until we can speed you on your way or decide who of you would be a burden or a menace to us and so must be sent back to the land from which you came."

The larger part of this sifting process goes on at the Immigrant Station on Ellis Island, in New York Harbor. The building looks out upon a panorama that has few equals in the world. To the northeast lies the great metropolis, its jagged

horizon line telling of toil and struggle, but the green lawn of Battery Park in the foreground suggesting that there is rest as well as labor in this New World. Back and forth ply the ships of all nations, great steamers pass up the rivers to discharge their passengers and cargoes, and steam outward on their return voyages; trading vessels from all over the world ride at anchor or sail majestically by; ferry-boats, the shuttles of the city's life-web, glide back and forth between its shores, and saucy tugs and stupid canal-boats add variety to the scene.

Enter the gallery of the main hall of the Station, and watch the steerage passengers—two thousand and more—landing from a European steamer. Are those heavy-browed men, those dull-faced women, good material for American citizenship? Look into the "detention room," with its dirt, its smells, and its general disagreeableness, and you say, "America for Americans."

But Uncle Sam is wiser. He knows that through just such unpromising material the Western deserts have been made to "bud and blossom as the rose," that by it railroads are built, canals are dug and mines are worked. He realizes that those sturdy youngsters, entering our public schools, will find opening before them a world of possibilities that could never have been theirs on

the other side of the sea. He knows that they will grow up into typical American citizens.

The long line of immigrants passes in single file before the alert eyes of two physicians. "Hats off" is the order, as a steady glance from the doctor seems to pierce to the very soul. It is not a bad thing that the first lesson taught on this side is to look a man straight in the eye and not be afraid. On this inspection by the doctors depends the first sifting process, for signals from them separate the sick from the well, give a woman who needs kindly care and attention into the hands of the waiting matrons, and place by themselves those whose condition requires that they should be separated from the others.

Still further division is made when the registry clerks are passed. Here is a man with his family. They have answered all questions promptly and satisfactorily; they have tickets through to the far West; they are in perfect health, and there is no reason for detaining them. They may go on as promptly as steam will carry them; such people are needed out there.

But they are not turned adrift, strangers in a strange land, to find their way to railroad station or ferry-boat. To do that would be to invite disaster. An agent of the railroad company sends them directly from the island to the railroad station, and places them on the right train.

Here is a woman who was cautioned before leaving home to answer no questions and hold no conversation with strangers. Frightened at the unaccustomed surroundings, she refuses to answer the entry clerks, and is detained for investigation by the Board of Special Inquiry. Fortunately for her, a kindly missionary will get the truth of her story and see that the officials understand it. In this room is another—a pitiful case, a mother with helpless children clinging to her dress, and one in her arms. Her sole provision for them all is fifty cents in money, and she has no friends in this country. What dreams of streets in which money lay for the picking have sent the poor woman across the seas? And what can lie before her but return to the land that is responsible for them all!

Dark-browed anarchists, fugitives from justice, men under contract for labor in the new land, indeed, "all sorts and conditions" of humanity are found here, and it requires almost infinite patience to deal with them justly and yet kindly. To the credit of the United States government and its agents be it said that but rarely is there evidence of impatience among those who handle these motley and often repulsive crowds for seven days in the week and fifty-two weeks in the year, barring a rare holiday.

But only one side of the work, interesting as

it is, will be seen if we fail to accompany the missionaries on their rounds. The Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and many other organizations maintain regular workers on Ellis Island. But the visitor need not look for prayer meetings and preaching services. To begin with, this is but a halting place; few remain longer than twenty-four hours, except the small minority detained for probable return, and most of the arrivals go forward with but few hours' delay. Differences in language make it possible to talk, in most cases, only through an interpreter, and even the printed Testament or leaflet would often be useless because its receiver could not read.

But the language of Christly love is universal. And when a gentle, motherly woman provides a bath for the little one who is clothed in rags and covered with dirt, the baby's mother knows that it is done in the spirit of the Christ, even if she thanks, perhaps in unknown patois, the Virgin Mother.

With the best intentions in the world, the government authorities can give but little individual succor; that they do as much as they do is a wonder to the looker-on. But without the aid of the missionaries many a poor woman would suffer life-shipwreck of hopes and dreams, many

a troubled heart would find its cup of sorrow needlessly bitter. "I cannot thank you enough for what you did for me" is a common message from those who, helped to go on their way rejoicing, remember in brighter days the helping hand that was outstretched in their hour of special need.

On Bedloe's Island, a little south of the Immigrant Station, is the statue of Liberty, a memorial of our centennial year. Hard by where the Pilgrims first set foot upon New England rock stands another sculptured woman form. Passing the Liberty statue on our homeward way, we may well fancy it signaling to the statue of Faith on the Plymouth coast—a wireless message to which comes the response—a good word that the Immigrant Station on Ellis Island is helping to fulfill:

> "God's in His heaven,
> All's right with the world."

THE IMMIGRANT CHAPTER

DID it ever occur to you what a wonderful home missionary chapter is the second of Acts? In obedience to the Master's commands, the little company of disciples were waiting in Jerusalem

for the "promise of the Father." They were about to be sent forth as missionaries of the Cross, but the work must begin at home—in Jerusalem, where the Master had taught, where one of His chosen had betrayed Him, where He had suffered and died, and where, thank God, He had risen; in Jerusalem, where the opposition was most bitter, the enmity most malignant, the Roman control most powerful; in Jerusalem, where it was most dangerous to side with Jesus of Nazareth, where it was most humiliating to stand for Him who had suffered the shameful death of a malefactor. And yet, "Beginning at Jerusalem," was the Master's word.

But then, as now, the work begun at Jerusalem was to extend through the earth, and in God's providence the means for this end were at hand. Look at the long list of immigrants in the ninth and tenth and eleventh verses of this chapter. "Parthians" and "Medes" and "Elamites," the men from all nations under the heavens, as then known, gathered there right where they might hear Peter's wonderful sermon.

"We need all the tongues of Pentecost," says the Secretary of a Missionary Board, "to preach the Gospel in the United States." And he adds as a corollary: "We must take care of this country for the country's sake and for the world's sake." "All the tongues of Pentecost" means to

us, to-day, Russian and Italian, Swede and Pole, Chinese, Japanese, Irish, Hungarian, African, Egyptian—the list is well-nigh endless, but the registry of immigrants at any port of entry confirms the statement. What shall be done with them? They are coming in record-breaking numbers. There is danger in their coming unless we meet them as did the disciples of old, telling, "as the Spirit gives utterance," of "the wonderful works of God."

Read Peter's first home missionary sermon, and take into your hearts the meaning of that wonderful missionary verse: "The promise is unto your children, and to all that are afar off."

WITH A NURSE DEACONESS

THE day begins at midnight. "The baby's awful sick. Won't the nurse come?"

Of course! What else are nurses for? There's a hurried telephone call to the police station, a question if there is an officer on that block—for there is danger in going, even if the deaconess has no fear—a donning of cloak and bonnet and a walk in the darkness.

The baby is sick, indeed. It's a bitter cold

night, and the mother is shivering in front of a tiny fire, with the little one in her lap, and nothing in the world to give him but sips of tea. At earliest daybreak the deaconess starts out to find some milk for the little one, reaching the milkman's door just in time to see his wagon disappearing around the next corner. Nothing daunted she rouses the house, and to her inquiry a woman looking down from an upper window answers, "I haven't a drop of milk in the house. My man has taken it all."

"But I must have some for a sick baby. He'll die without it. Can't you come down and find me a little?"

She could and did, after a little persuasion, and the sick baby lived and became a strong and healthy boy.

"Such a time as I had in that house," says the deaconess as we pass a rickety, miserable tenement. "An old man and his wife lived there, both foreigners who couldn't speak a word of English, and the man was sick. I didn't wonder when I found he hadn't had a bath for six months!

"He was between two feather beds, of course, and I had a hard time to get consent to take off the upper one in the daytime. They wouldn't hear at all to keeping it off at night."

"I can appreciate your trouble," says another nurse. "I believe the worst time I ever had was with a patient who was inside a feather bed! Yes, actually inside. They were so poor that they had but the one bed, and between feathers he must be, so what else could they do! It's pitiful, but it's funny, the way we have to talk by signs in lots of cases. I almost had to pull the patient out myself before I could get them to understand what I wanted."

"Do the people ever offer to pay you?" asks the friend by their side.

"Very often. Nothing brings the tears to my eyes so quickly as to have a man say, 'Well, nurse, what do I owe you?' But it gives me the chance to say, 'Nothing, but to love Jesus.'"

"If you want me at any hour of the night be sure to send for me." It was the parting word in a room where the husband lay in the last stages of consumption. The night's rest was short, for at daybreak the message came. The listening ear caught the familiar footsteps before they entered his room, and the sick man cried eagerly, "Oh, there's Miss R.! She'll feel my pulse and tell me how long I have to live. Don't fool me!" he added, his earnest eyes looking into those of the faithful deaconess. And she—they were solemn words to speak as her fingers

closed over the fluttering pulse—she said, "But a very short time." Solemn but not sorrowful, for when the death angel left that home he bore with him a redeemed soul to a home in the "many mansions."

EVERYDAY SERVICE

"FLOWER HOUSE"—that is what the children of the neighborhood call the Deaconess Home. Could there be a sweeter name?

But the children are not the only ones who share the ministry of the flowers. Coming home one evening after church, with the pulpit flowers in her hands, the deaconess passed a group of young men lounging on a corner. Something in their faces arrested her attention, and she turned back.

"Would you like a rose?" she asked with a smile.

Would they? You should have seen their faces. "Thank you, ma'am," was the chorus of reply, and one added, "We don't get them very often."

The deaconess put one of the beautiful blossoms into each waiting hand, and then said, "Now, boys, you won't go into the saloon to-night,

will you?" The clear, determined "No, ma'am," that answered her was a welcome assurance.

The roses had been destined for sick beds the next day. Who shall say that they did not do more good where the deaconess gave them?

. . . . .

"Miss A, will you come around to our house to-night? We want a little talk with you."

It was the request of a teacher. One hardly thought of trouble in her home, but there was a shadow in the face and a tone in the voice that were indexes to the sad story—alas, so often told—revealed to the deaconess.

They were orphaned girls, the teacher and her sisters, one much younger than the other two, and impatient of the restraints their love and wiser thought knew to be necessary. "Can't you get hold of——? She is beyond our reach already, and we know she is in the path to ruin. Oh, do help us!"

The end is not yet—but—there is the deaconess.

. . . . .

"Is it all downright hard work, the work of a deaconess? Are they always going into dark streets and up broken stairways, and all alone? Don't they have any good times like other folks?"

So asks a looker-on. Let Miss L. answer:

"I'm working in the ideal church. There are

a lot of young people in it, working men and women, and real downright Christians. They believe in doing the Lord's work in business-like ways, not in getting up fairs and things to meet church expenses. When money is needed they put their hands into their pockets and take it out to the best of their ability.

"They're ready for other Christian work, too. The other night a company of them went with me to hold a prayer meeting in the home of an old lady, ninety-two years of age. She was so happy she wanted to talk all the time."

"No fun in that"? Ah, but do it for Jesus' sake, and then see how it seems.

. . . . .

"No, I didn't want to live any longer. Why should I? It's nothing but misery. My man will drink, and I can't get enough for us to eat to hold body and soul together. Many's the time that I've put the bits I could scrape up on the table for him and the children, and then gone out and sat on the floor at the top of the stairs lest I should eat some of it in spite of myself. There wasn't enough to go around.

"And how do you think, miss, I'm going to take care of another one, when it comes? The poor children that's here now is starving."

It was a pitiful case, indeed, one that stirred the sympathies of the deaconess to their depths.

The immediate needs must be relieved, and, somehow, hope and courage and cheer must be imparted to the worn and weary mother-heart. With unceasing pains the deaconess visited that poor apology for a home, gradually making it cleaner and more inviting, and caring for the little new-comer, whom God in mercy soon took back to Himself. Then the same gentle caretaker dressed the tiny form for its blessed sleep, brought a minister, and stood by the mother to the last of the sad services. Better still, she continued to "stand by," helping and cheering in such ways as angels know.

. . . . .

A still hunt—that is it! Just calling from house to house, making a canvass for church letters. "Why, where is mine? I haven't seen it for an age. Really, I must hunt it up. You see, when we came here we were strangers, and we sort of drifted from one church to another, and lately we haven't gone anywhere very much."

Of course not! When did drifting bring a mariner safely to port? But the children will be welcomed at Sunday-school, and an aroused conscience will do its work with the parents.

. . . . .

"No," answers the deaconess in reply to a question, "no, I have no regular class in Sunday-school, I'm a substitute teacher. Of course I

don't enjoy it as well as I should a regular class, and it's more difficult to prepare your lesson when you have no idea what grade you will teach. But then a deaconess, you know, is a *filler-in-of chinks.*"

. . . . .

It is midnight in the lowest dive of New York City—that is what the officials call it, in unconscious imitation of Dante's Inferno. Is it safe for a party of Christian workers to enter? Is it ever unsafe to go where work may be done for the Master? Through dark alleys and still darker hallways they have passed, but the horror of the scene within makes physical darkness seem daylight.

But there are girls here who long to escape—girls who have been decoyed and betrayed. One of them has kept a two-dollar bill hidden in the toe of her shoe for weeks, waiting for an open door. "Oh, you may get them away," cry the wretched occupants of the dive, "but for every one you take we'll get a dozen more, and those who go will come back."

"I cannot describe it," says the deaconess who tells the story. "We looked into hell." And in that horror of great darkness, that utmost depth of sin and shame, they sang, "Let a little sunshine in." Sang—breathed up to God the prayer they might not speak—and left results with Him.

A DEACONESS IN THE MINING REGION

"HAVE you ever been in the heart of the mining regions? If not, you cannot understand the conditions surrounding the workers there. In C——— where I was stationed, the winter winds sweep down the mountain sides with terrific force, while in summer the electrical storms are fearful. My work was not only in the town itself, but among the people of the 'patches.' These are little groups of miners' cabins, with no stores, no churches, no schools, but with countless saloons—'speak-easies,' most of them.

"It used to seem to me that these were the people the Master meant when He spoke of those for whose souls no man cares. They were mostly foreigners, and of the lowest types. I have seen in the streets of C—— Poles, Huns, Italians, Indians, Syrians, Chinese, and even Moors. There were 'Little Italy,' 'Little Hungary,' and so on, and the people were practically ignored by the law as well as by schools and, almost, by churches. Thefts and murders, though of common occurrence, were unnoticed so far as any attempt at discovery and punishment was concerned.

"I must tell you about Lazarus Row. It was a long line of houses, each rented by a man who, in turn, sublet lodging rooms to other men. Each house had three rooms on its lower floor, the middle one being dark. This space and that on the second floor—one room, or two, as it chanced —would be rented out to forty other men, each of whom, by paying one dollar a month, had the privilege of sleeping on the floor and a chance to cook his own food in the common kitchen. You may imagine the results from such herding!

"But the strikes were the worst. I could hardly eat my own food for the thoughts of the starving faces that I could see even when my eyes were closed. I remember one mother who lived in a cellar with three little children. One day, in desperation, she walked over the mountains to try to find her husband who was at work there and get a little money from him. She reached the place only to learn that he had just been killed in the mine! When I found those children they had managed to get some cold potatoes, and were devouring them like wild animals.

"I went to the editor of one of the papers in town, and told him the story. He would not believe it.

"'Oh, no,' he said. 'I don't doubt they were hungry, but you don't mean people are actually starving here.'

"'I mean exactly that,' I said. 'Come with me and see for yourself.' We went together, finding that the only thing the family had to eat was some chicken corn!

"'It is awful!' said he. 'You can have my paper for anything you want.'

"The story was printed with big headlines, and we organized relief work. The school children helped by each bringing something, if only half a dozen potatoes or a loaf of bread. A member of the corporation sent us fifty dollars, and there was generous response from the citizens. How the supplies poured in! I felt like a miniature edition of Clara Barton. Every case was personally investigated, and such a task as it was! Bare-footed children with handkerchiefs over their heads would follow me in the street, crying:

"'I want some eat! That eat all gone. I want some eat!'

"I came near getting into trouble with Mike Grass. Mike lived in the middle room of a house on Lazarus Row. His fellow-inmates were Italians, rough, coal-marked workmen who could speak no English. The case was reported to me as that of a man with several children; but the 'children' were these Italians, who were 'baching.' I learned the truth about it, but it would have been unsafe to make Mike and his Italians my enemies, so I had to give him something, if

not more than a few potatoes. The Italians, as a rule, live on greens and macaroni, the Poles on beer and dry bread.

"Then there was Tasco. When I went to his house the door was locked, and there was a long delay before it was opened by a girl of the pure Italian type. A boy as beautiful stood behind her. I asked for their mother. A man appeared, and then others, till in two minutes the room was filled with black-haired, handsome Italians, in low-necked, red woolen shirts. The one woman among them, her babe in her arms, looked like a veritable Madonna. But they couldn't talk English, nor I Italian, so I left without much satisfaction, though I fancy they understood me better than they seemed to.

"That afternoon a tall, fine-looking young fellow came to the office and said: 'I villa see voman.'

"'And who are you?' I asked.

"'I Tasco Alfan. I no nodings to eat.'

"'You bach?'

"'Yes, I bach. I no—I no—I plenty mad! They can English, but they no favor me!'

"Then I understood that for some reason the other inmates of the house would not share with him.

"'What do you want?'

"'Vat you give me?'

"'I give you some potatoes.' He took the potatoes, and by degrees I learned his story. 'Why not go home to your mother?' I asked.

"'When I get money,' he replied, 'I go to my mother. I no eat from my mother.'

"'Company stores?' Oh, yes, the amount due the men was credited on the books of the company, and they had to buy there whatever they bought or lose their jobs—and the stores often charged double what the same goods could be bought for elsewhere.

"These foreigners do not lose their old country customs in coming to America. Indeed, there is no opportunity for them to lose them through contact with Americans. Women, for instance, always walk some three paces behind their husbands when they go out together. The only foreign Protestant church in C—— was Lithuanian, with a handsome young Bohemian as its pastor. He spoke six languages, and seemed very desirous of being on social terms with Americans of the better class. But in spite of his intelligence and of quite a romance connected with his marriage, it never occurred to either of them that his wife was his social equal.

"My 'white ties' attracted attention, of course, and often served as an introduction and a protection. We frequently held services at a place to which the people were accustomed to go on Sun-

days, spending the day in drinking and gambling. They gathered around us in crowds, especially the 'breaker boys.' By the way, I made a great fight for a night-school for my 'breaker boys.' Think of it—overgrown boys of fifteen and sixteen years of age, who knew not the form of a letter, to say nothing of reading!

"Perhaps Scotch Geordie and his friends were my greatest delight. It seemed as if they were taken directly from the 'Bonnie Briar Bush.' Geordie worked in the 'breast' next to Jamie, and one day he came to me with a petition. Jamie's father was sick—would I go and see him? I went, of course, but learned little of his needs, for the Scotch are too proud to receive help if possible to avoid it. For the first visit or two they answered only in monosyllables; but I prayed with them, and kept on going. One day the mother left me alone with her husband while she gathered a bouquet of poor little flowers for me—and I knew I had found the way to her heart.

"'Marget,' the husband would call if she were out of his sight.

"'Yea, Willum, I will come,' was her quick reply. Her heart was breaking with anxiety and fear, but never a word of it did she speak, or make any demonstration of affection.

"'Willum' recovered, and I went away for a

brief vacation. On my return I found Marget had been taken sick and was dying. She was passionately fond of birds, and as I entered her room she cried:

"'Do you hear the birds? Hark! the birds are singing. Isn't it sweet? Do you know what they are singing? They are singing, 'Sleep, sleep, sleep.'"

"On the last day both Jamie and his father were at home. It was pitiful to see the sorrow of the strong man and hear him cry: 'Do you know me, Marget? Do you know me?' Then, turning to me, he would ask wistfully: 'Do you think she hears?'

"The next morning Jamie and his father opened the door for me and led me into the front room where Marget lay—the birds had sung her to sleep."

"IT DON'T MATTER NOTHIN'"

THE dear little people in the kindergarten, sunny and bright-faced even though they came from the want and suffering of tenement houses, knew nothing of death save as a time when people are especially distinguished—a time

for a "free ride." One day "the angel whom men call death" lingered in a poor, mean little room in the heart of the slums. But a moment he tarried, but when he passed on the wee baby was beyond all suffering. The children who crowded the stairs had never come into personal touch with this strange visitant before. They had known the baby—had kissed his dimpled hands and laughed to meet his gleeful cry as they came. And now he was so still!

Small wonder that when "Nurse Pansy" came they clung to her dress with an unvoiced feeling that she could keep them from all harm. "Nurse Pansy" and "teacher" represented for them all of hope and good cheer that the world held for little people. They had named her themselves, the day she brought pansies when the baby's mother was sick. It was her first visit, but she had been there many times since.

The children were very quiet. Even Tommie, the irrepressible, leaned against the wall without pinching his neighbor or trying to push Jamie downstairs. And "Nurse Pansy's" heart went out to the little waifs, face to face with life's great mystery. The stairs were very dirty—so were the children. But right down among them she sat, and gathered them into her dear, motherly arms. "I want to tell you," she said, and the children caught the tone of tears in her voice,

and it made them still more quiet—"I want to tell you about the baby. You remember the Christmas story, about baby Jesus in the manger, and of how God loved him and took care of him."

The sober faces brightened. The Christmas sunshine was not all spent, though many a week had passed since they frolicked around the Christmas tree.

"God loves all the babies," "Nurse Pansy" went on. "Sometimes he sends them, as he did here, into homes where it is very hard to live. Do you know why? I think one reason is to make people better by loving them. When you've played with the dear baby upstairs haven't you felt a little warm glow of love in your heart?" Oh, yes, they all knew what she meant, though they could no more have put it into words than we older folk can find language for our deepest feelings.

"But God knew that baby would have a hard time if he grew up here, for he wouldn't be able to run about and play as you do—his little limbs were not strong as yours are. So God only lent him to his mamma and his papa and to you for a little while. And now he has called the baby to come back to his beautiful home in heaven. Aren't you glad?"

Back to her own smiled the child faces, glad

with the new sense of protection and love—all but Tommie; and he, wise with the superior wisdom of one year more than the others, and the sharpened observation of a hard life, cried: "They puts 'em in the ground, they does! I seen 'em when my little brother died. That ain't heaven!"

"Oh, no, Tommie," cried the deaconess, her face all aglow with love as she eagerly caught up his words. "No, indeed, for heaven is a beautiful place; a great deal more beautiful than any place you and I ever saw; more beautiful than any place on earth. I'll tell you how it is. When I was a little girl I had a pretty red flannel dress. It was so warm and bright that I always liked to wear it, and my mamma used to call me 'Robin Redbreast' when I had it on. But I grew so fast that the pretty dress had to be put aside before it was half worn out. If you should go to my home you could see it safely laid away in a box, but I can't wear it, for it wouldn't fit me now. That is the way with these bodies of ours—they are just dresses for the real Katie and Tommie and Jamie and Florence and Mary. When you look at the baby, as you may pretty soon, you'll see his little body, all white and beautiful, but the real baby, the part of him that was alive, has gone to God. It is just baby's body, the dress for his soul, you

know, that will be put into the ground. But baby is with Jesus."

The awe and mystery of it all was in the little eyes, echoed in the tiptoeing footsteps, and sounded through the silence as "Nurse Pansy" led them to the bedside. Did they understand? Oh, no! Neither do we, who are older and wiser grown. But as they turned away Tommie whispered, "It don't matter nothin', does it, what they does with 'em, 'cause they's gone to Jesus!" And the deaconess knew the sweet old lesson had reached one little heart.

"SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS"

"SEEMS to me everybody is determined I shall be a deaconess or a missionary of some sort!" Nell Munson threw herself down upon the lounge in her own sunny room with a trace of most unusual peevishness in her voice. "When I said I thought we ought to do some highway and hedge work in our young people's society, Flossie Williams asked if I was planning to be a missionary. And when Tom saw me coming out of the boarding house down on Smith Street he cried, 'Halloa, sis! Turned deaconess? Where are the white ties?

They'll put you out if you don't wear them.' I do hate to have Tom get started on such a strain —he never lets up on it.

"But the worst was Mrs. Rose. 'I've been waiting for you, dear,' she said as I came down the aisle after prayer meeting. 'I wanted to tell you that it seems to me the Lord has a special work for you. Have you ever thought of being a deaconess?' Have I ever thought of it? As if it hadn't haunted me day and night ever since my visit to the training school. I was hateful, yes, real mean. Somehow, the question touched such a sore spot that I couldn't seem to answer properly. I just said, 'It takes saints to be deaconesses, and I'm not a bit of a saint, Mrs. Rose.'

"Oh, dear, I don't want to think of it, for I'm afraid, way down in my heart, that my conscience would have something to say about it if I'd give it a chance. I wonder how it would seem. I don't want to give up pretty clothes, and I don't believe father and mother would let me go, anyway. I guess"—and just then the puzzled brain stopped thinking and went on a dreamland search.

Stopped thinking—but it did not stop working. Brains are curious things. Who can tell how it is that when consciousness is paralyzed conscience can still speak? Who knows through what realms of the fancy that is close kin to reality the

brain seeks for explanations and reasons that have baffled its powers hitherto? We talk of dreams —but there are some things difficult to explain unless we remember that to One of old, soulworn and weary, "angels came and ministered."

Be that as it may, Nell Munson will never forget the dream that came in that afternoon sleep on a fair June day. "I thought I was standing in a great hall"—so she tells the story—"a hall that was wide open at the side to every wind that blew. It was empty, or seemed so to my eyes. But there was a curious consciousness of a Presence not far away, and the echo of voices. Pillars were set in regular order around the outer edge of the floor, supporting the roof, but the room was bare as well as tenantless.

"A strange sensation of loneliness, of being left out of things, came over me. I found myself fighting back tears, and just as they began to fall in spite of me, I saw a crowd of people outside. There were men and women—'all sorts and conditions' of them. But oh, so weary, so hopeless! I am sure I shall never see such faces in my waking hours as I saw in my dream. Crowding into the hall, they swept past me and on toward the place where I had fancied there stood an unseen Presence. Just a moment they paused there, and then the great procession passed on, but with such a change! It is impossible to describe it. Every

face was lifted, every step was firm and steady; the light of a new hope and a glad new purpose was in every eye.

"Then I saw a band of little children come slowly on—slowly, when their feet should have kept time to the music of happy years. Hand in hand they came, and I said to myself, 'Oh, more sorrow! They must unclasp their hands to pass these great pillars, and some of them will fall. If I could but help them!' But the pillars checked no whit their onward coming. Past me they surged, pale little faces and crippled forms, some with crime and all with suffering writ large upon them. I stretched out my hands to help them, but the eager fingers touched only empty air, and still the children came.

"Then I turned toward the Presence, but I saw it not. Only as the little children passed where I thought One was waiting for them, each was caught up as with tender, loving arms—caught and held for a moment, and then set down. But the moment had within itself all possibilities of help and cheer that earth can know. Little feet bounded away in sheer delight of living, and ripples of childish laughter floated across to me.

"Again I turned toward the outer air, but only to shrink back in terror. No word was spoken, but I knew that the great company before me was frantic and perishing from hunger and thirst.

'Oh, take this,' I cried in agony, holding out the tiny flask of water that I had carefully saved for my own needs. But they thrust it by with impatient hands, and when I looked I saw that it had become stagnant with long keeping. Then I, too, grew thirsty, and with the thirst came an overwhelming desire to help these, my brothers and sisters. I tried to move forward, but my feet refused to obey my will. Then I turned and followed, and my feet bore me swiftly toward the mighty Presence.

"I know not what I saw—or if any vision came to my eyes. I only know that I cried out, 'Dear Lord, let me minister to these, Thy children,' and that I felt no more soul-hunger or soul-thirst; and I was lifted up and a Voice whispered softly, 'Inasmuch as ye help these, ye do it unto Me.'

"I wakened to find the question of my lifework fully settled. I had heard the Master's voice, I had seen what His hand could do for men and women. Like the little children I had been lifted up in the 'everlasting arms,' and I knew that from thenceforth my greatest joy would be the telling of His love to those who knew Him not. And that is how I came to be a deaconess."

A PERSONAL INVESTMENT

"OH, yes, I'll give you a dollar, if that's what you want. But I haven't a minute of time to spare, and it's simply impossible for me to come to the meetings. You mustn't expect me."

Dear Lady Bountiful, have you ever said this? Or were the words spoken by that busy neighbor of yours who has a household so well regulated that she is the envy and wonder of her friends, is the teacher of a flourishing Sabbath-school class, is never absent from the church prayer-meeting, and is an officer in a half-dozen church societies?

"Of course not," you say. "The more that woman has to do, the more she seems ready to do. And she looks supremely happy through it all. I wish I had her secret. I get so tired sometimes that life doesn't seem half worth living, and yet I don't seem to do anything worth while."

Ah, my Lady, you have given away your own secret, all unconsciously, perhaps. It is the "worth while" that counts, that brings the light to the eyes, the elasticity to the step, the courage to the heart. Never mind the things you have been doing. They may all be good things, excel-

lent things. What I want to show you now is that you are suffering heavy personal loss by not becoming familiar with home missionary work. If familiar with it, interest in it will follow as a matter of course, so we'll leave that out of account. Never mind, either, the good that you may do for others. Let us look at the question simply from the selfish standpoint for a moment.

You are an American woman, an American citizen. As such, anything that touches the honor of your country, anything that safeguards your country, is a matter of keen personal interest to you. When the nation sprang to arms for the rescue of Cuba, you wore, with thousands of others, the tiny flag that told its silent story of patriotism —wore it until the Spanish flag gave way to the banner of Cuba Libre, and the nation began the no less important study of the ways of peace.

Why did you stand with the Government then? Why did you not say: "I have no time to read the newspapers, or to inform myself concerning events in the Caribbean Sea—if you want a dollar towards the affair, here it is."

"Men, women and children, my brothers and sisters by the ties of humanity, were being tortured unto death," you answer. "And, besides, a fever demon lurked in those islands that threatened our own land, and we were forced to act in self-protection."

To-day women and little children are tortured even unto death, and with worse than physical torture, in Chinese slave-dens and Alaskan topeks. To-day illiteracy in the South, and a growing illiteracy through foreign immigration in the East, threaten the very life of the body politic. Is it nothing to you?

"I hate," says Emerson, "the prostitution of the name of friendship to signify modish and worldly alliances. I much prefer the company of plow-boys and tin-peddlers to the silken and perfumed amity which only celebrates its days of encounter by a frivolous display, by rides in a curricle, and dinners at the best taverns." But it is not necessary to seek "plow-boys and tin-peddlers" in order to enlarge our field of vision, to embrace within our circle of acquaintance an entirely new set of those whom we may call friends.

Suppose, for instance, little Carmelita in Porto Rico, or Fernanda, speaking the soft Spanish tongue in New Mexico, or Rosa of the Navajos, or Magnolia from a Southern cabin, knew you as one who really cared for her, and you knew her as a child from a home that was no home, a child whose open door to life with its possibilities had been set wide by your hands—would not all life have a richer meaning thereby? And while you are coming to know Carmelita, by the same token you are sitting down by the side of your sisters in

the *patios,* and your own life is strengthened by ministering to their weakness, your own gratitude is deepened by contrasting your home with theirs. As you enter, if only in imagination, the small adobe hut that Fernanda calls home, as you see her mother smoking the inevitable cigarette—and doing little else—your own heart goes out in sincerest pity for the dwarfed lives that God meant should blossom in beauty and fragrance. Is it a small matter thus to think God's thoughts after Him?

Another word from Emerson: "I am not so ungrateful as not to see the wise, the lovely, and the noble-minded, as from time to time they pass my gate." Dear Lady Bountiful, the truest friendships of life are those made with the co-workers of God. If I could but show you what you miss by not knowing the sweet souls who are struggling, 'mid difficulties manifold, to uplift the nation's life through the slow, gradual uplift of its homes, you would bow your head in solemn gratitude to God for giving you the blessed opportunity of standing by their side, of really knowing about the work. And never again would life seem other than a sacred trust.

HEADLINES

THE editor was thinking—and talking. "What shall I call this—'Florida Fragments'? Yes, that will do. Here are notes from Michigan — 'Michigan Moanings—Mutterings—Meanderings'? Well, hardly. There is nothing mournful or doubtful about the Peninsular State. Curious conundrums, these headlines. Sometimes I can write an article easier than I can find a suitable title for it. Mary," and the editor turned to his wife, "give me a heading for this stuff from Michigan."

A merry laugh greeted the appeal, and the words, "Thank you, my dear, that is just what I wanted."

"What under the sun!" cried the editor. "What have the headlines of the *Globe County Journal* to do with your home missionary work —for of course that is what you are getting at?"

"Of course. Aren't you glad your wife knows where she is 'at'? It's a paper for the district convention, and I hadn't an idea about it till you spoke."

"Worse and worse," replied her husband. "Do give me a synopsis of the idea."

"I'm not sure that I can. It isn't worked out yet, but—why, lots of people read the paper, or much of it, by the headlines. If those attract them, they go through the entire article. If they do not promise anything interesting, they go on to the next. So I'm going to write about the headlines we put into our lives. There's good Pauline authority for my figure—'Ye are our epistles, known and read of all men.'

"Now I know a woman—I won't call any names, but nobody would ever dream she was interested in home missionary work. She is, in a way. She comes to the meetings quite regularly and gives her dollar a year, but she never takes any part, or asks any questions, or looks a bit enthusiastic. Her headline is utterly uneventful, something like 'Notes,' without the least intimation that anything worth reading follows.

"Then there is Mrs. X. Why, she just lives and breathes missionary work. You are not in her presence five minutes without discovering where her interests lie. She has the story of her work at her finger-tips, but you never think of her as obtrusive. Her headlines run, 'Latest returns! Important news!' Of course people respond to such an announcement.

"Mrs. K. is of a different make-up. Her way is just as valuable to the work as that of Mrs. X.

Her devotion to the cause is just as real, but not quite so obviously on the surface. She can talk upon almost any subject, and talk well, but before she is through she is pretty sure to get in her quiet little word about home mission work. She has just been on a trip to Porto Rico, and her descriptions of the island and its people are delightful. She was invited to speak about it before the Woman's Club the other day, and everybody expected a treat. They had it, too, but the very best thing in her whole talk was the account of a day spent with our deaconess in San Juan. I don't believe there was a woman there who didn't want to help that work along when she was through. I know more than one slipped money into her hand for it, though she hadn't said a word about contributions.

"The Club never would have asked her to come for a missionary talk, but they got it just the same, and enjoyed it, too. It was like your headlines that start off on one theme and end up with an entirely different one—headlines with a snapper, so to speak. Mrs. K. always has a home missionary snapper.

"The moral? Why, wouldn't your paper look very funny if it had no headlines? And since all papers and all lives have headlines, isn't it quite worth while to think about what they shall be?"

The editor kissed his wife and turned to his desk without a word. He knew what her headlines were—the blessed little woman—he was not so sure about his own.

THEIR ADOPTED MEMBER

"How many are there?"

"In the Circle? Just six of us—seven, including Miss Minard. She sort of directs us, you know. It began with our Sunday-school class, but we let in Grace Forest because she's with us in everything else."

"And you're pining for something to do?"

"Well, not exactly that, auntie, but for ideas. We've been dressing dolls for Christmas, and making things for girls in the industrial schools till we're—well, sort o' tired, I guess, and want something new. Miss Minard asked us to think it over, but I haven't a single 'think' in me, so you'll have to be my good angel and help me out."

"Why not adopt a member?"

"Of the Circle? That sounds nice. Who is it? You?"

"No, though I should be very much compli-

mented if you asked me to join. But I was thinking of a girl of about your own age whom I met while I was visiting in Nebraska once on a time. Her father was a minister away out there on the frontier, where there was precious little money, and not much to make life enjoyable. But there was work to be done for the Master—plenty of it—and minister and family were not only willing, but also glad that they could do it.

"I think that Ellen was the bravest girl I ever saw. She expected to attend school some twenty miles away from home the winter after I was there, and you can't imagine how she was 'lotting,' as you girls say, on going. But crops failed—the old story out there—and the little money they had saved to send her to school had to be taken for bread, without much butter, and Ellen stayed at home through another long Nebraska winter—how long you have little idea.

"Did she grieve over it? Never when her father and mother could know. Her father told me afterward that she was the sunshine of the home all through the cold, stormy season, and never by word or look let them know how disappointed she was. But after she went away—for God had something better for her than earthly schooling—they found a little brown paper book

among her few treasures, and in it, after notes that told of her happiness in the prospect of going to school, and what she hoped and meant to do in the world, there was a page spotted as if water-drops had splashed on it—and just these words: 'One more chance to be brave—but oh, I *did* want to go.'"

There were "water-drops" in the eyes of Elinor Tennys as she listened to the story. Brushing them away, she said, softly, "I didn't know there were such girls, Aunt May. Where can we find one? And will you tell the other girls, so they'll want to adopt her, too?"

. . . . .

Harvest Sunday dawned bright and beautiful, a day to make one wish to help everything and everybody, because of sheer, overflowing thankfulness. It was natural that Elinor should tell the story of the prairie girl to her friends in the Sunday-school class, though, she added, "I can't half tell it, girls—you must hear it as Aunt May says it." But five pairs of eyes flashed questions and replies to each other, in the old wireless telegraphy whose first stations were in the garden of Eden, when the superintendent said:

"I have here the descriptions of the families to whom the teachers propose that Christmas boxes be sent from our school. The first one is in North Dakota—a minister with five children,

living in a sod house, with no church but his own in a radius of ten miles around. The oldest child is a girl of fifteen; then come two boys of twelve and ten, a girl of eight, and a baby. We have thought that perhaps some of the classes would like to provide Christmas cheer for the children near their own age."

And then and there Elinor spoke "right out in meeting"—she told the superintendent afterward that she just couldn't help it—and said, "Oh, we'll take the oldest girl; won't we, girls?" And every one of them said "Yes" right out loud.

Monday was Circle night, and the girls were invited to Elinor's home, with her Aunt May as honored guest. They chattered as only girls can chatter when hearts are touched and eager to help.

"Must we send clothes, Miss Raymond?" asked Belle Foster. "Of course they're nice, and I s'pose she needs them, but seems to me if I lived away out there and some girls were going to send me something I'd like to have it more like what they would have at Christmas—pretty things, you know, or books—not everything real useful."

"Can't we do both?" asked Elinor. "Mr. Farwell has her measures, and they are just like mine, and yours and mine are the same, Belle.

Mamma says I may send my last winter's cloak. It's good enough for me to wear, but this reckless auntie of mine has brought me a new one, so I don't need it."

"I'd like to send her a hat," said Kate Williams.

"And I'll send gloves—some real warm ones," added Charlotte Kean.

"There, Miss Raymond, you see," cried Belle, "she'll have clothes enough, especially as I know some of the mothers are going to look out for her, too. So mayn't I send some real 'frivoly' things—a scarf for her bureau, if she has one, and a pincushion. I don't mean fussy ones, but pretty. Then, of course, she'd like hair and neck ribbons. We never get enough of those, you know. Don't you think that would be nice, Miss Raymond?"

"I think it would be very nice, Belle. And if you'll let me I'd like to help you 'frivol' by sending a package of the Perry Pictures. Many of them, you know, are fine reproductions of famous pictures, or from photographs of buildings and places and people that we all like to know about."

"Splendid!" came in chorus from the girls, and Elinor added, "And if you don't mind, auntie, I wish you'd tell her that I've seen a good many of the places and paintings, and if she'll

let me know what specially interests her I'll be glad to write a letter about them."

"Oh, Nell, that's fine!" cried the girls, as Miss Raymond smiled a happy consent to the plan that meant the expenditure of a little time. Money is often much easier to give—or we think it is.

. . . . .

Never was there more fun over a missionary box! The Circle had a special meeting for packing its share, and if a phonograph could only have caught the merry laughter and gay comments as one thing after another was added, and then transported the same to the Dakota home, it would have been a source of unbounded wonder. But it could not have given more pleasure than did the contents of the box that a good-natured farmer brought to the door on Christmas morning.

"Mornin', parson! Th' agent over to the railroad said maybe you'd like this to-day, and asked me to bring it along. Looks as if 'twere chuck full of Christmas."

. . . . .

"Oh, girls, there's a letter! It came last evening, and Aunt May won't let me read it till you come. She says it belongs to all the Circle, so be sure to come to-night!"

No need to ask where the letter came from, or to urge the girls to be prompt at the Circle meet-

ing that night. They had been eagerly watching for a letter with a Dakota postmark almost from the day the expressman took away the box freighted with so much of love and cheer. They came early, and perched on cushions or snuggled down on the rug before the open fire, each settling herself cozily and comfortably to hear the letter from the new friend:

"DEAR MISS RAYMOND, AND DEAR GIRLS: How did you come to do it? What made you think of it? It is all so beautiful! I can hardly write about it. I'm going to leave the telling of the rest of the story to mamma, and just write you about my own personal share.

"Please think that you see me writing by a kerosene lamp, in a sod house, with the snow outside piled almost to the roof, and the wind whistling around as if it would find its way in, in spite of us. But it can't find a crack or a hole, and I am snug and cozy. I have dressed up, too, for I am going visiting, to meet some new friends whom I seem to have known for a long time. I have on a blue cashmere dress—how did you know blue was my color, Miss Raymond?—and the daintiest white apron. That Grace will recognize. Can you guess, Belle, who embroidered the pretty collar and tie, and would Florence, I wonder, remember the handkerchief tucked into my belt? How cute, Elinor, to put your initials inside of the leather belt. Somehow it seems as if you were at my side when I wear it.

"The blue hair ribbon just matches the dress, May, and makes me feel so fine I am afraid I shall be

proud. And I'm writing with Kate's pen, on Charlotte's lovely paper that seems too pretty to use, and —but here I am rattling on as if I knew you all and 'belonged.' You'll have to excuse me this once, for I'm too happy to be proper. I can only say one great big 'Thank you' that is meant for all of you together and for each of you, as well.

"You ask me to tell what I have done with the pictures, but my letter will be quite too long if I try to tell it all. Three of them I have put where I can see them when I waken in the morning—the lovely Madonna, the ocean glimpse, and the view on the Rhine. I look at them and imagine I am really seeing the places and the painting. With the others I'm going to have a picture evening. You see, the young people 'round us—that means anywhere from five to ten miles away—have very little chance to see and hear about things. We'll look at the pictures, and talk about them, and, though there'll be a lot we do not know about most of them, it will be worth something to find that out, and to think that we can look it up some time, in the great, beautiful future. I can't ask you to do one thing more for me, in spite of your tempting offer, but if you do have time to write me a little bit about any of the pictures it would be such a help. And do you know, those pictures are going to get our young folks into Sunday-school! They really are, for father'll put in a word about the school, and I'm sure they'll come.

"I can't write half what I want to this time. May I come for another chat? You see the postage stamps tucked away in that cunning little box are so tempting. And they seem to belong to you.

"Very gratefully yours,

"MARGARET RANDOLPH."

"Miss President"—it was Belle's voice that broke the little hush following the reading of the letter—"I move that Margaret Randolph be made an adopted member and Miss Raymond an honorary member of our Circle." The motion was seconded and carried quicker than one can write it, and the next mail to the West bore not only descriptions of the pictures, but full assurances that the new member need never try to be "proper" with the other members of the Circle.

. . . . .

I wish I could tell you more of the true story of which this is a part—of the magazines that found their weekly way to that prairie home; of the letter party that brightened a birthday; of the love and friendship that came to one girl like a glimpse of heaven, and was no less a blessing to other girls who had known little of sacrifice or deprivation.

Out West, in that dim, mysterious region we vaguely know as "the frontier," there are other girls who might be adopted by other classes and other Circles. Have you an adopted member? If not, the girls of the Home Missionary Circle of E——— are sorry for you, for they know what you are missing.

GIRLS AND GIRLS

"GOOD-BY!" The words were spoken in a low, caressing tone, as if the love of the beautiful blue waves had become a part of the speaker's life. "The last Sunday of rest," she added. "A week from to-day the Junior meeting and my Sunday-school class."

"Why, you've never told me a word about your Sunday-school class," said her companion.

"Haven't I? Well, I have one—but I ought not to have it."

"Why not? I should say you were just the one for a Sunday-school teacher," replied her friend. They were from the neighboring city, the girl with the unmistakable air of up-to-dateness, and the quiet little deaconess spending her brief time of vacation in the same cottage by the sea. They had drifted together almost unconsciously. The friendship had stopped far short of intimacy, yet each sought the other at the hour for a twilight stroll on the beach or a morning dip in the white surf, and many a pleasant chat they had had in a cosy corner of the piazza.

"I do like teaching," was the somewhat unex-

pected response to the question of the deaconess, "but the results are so unsatisfactory that I fear I make a mistake in trying it. The truth is, I can't seem to get my girls out of a rut. They are dear girls, from good families—sometimes I think that's the trouble with them—they are so eminently respectable that they can't be moved. They come regularly, they know something about the lesson, and seem interested while it's going on, but it all seems to end there. I can't see that all the teaching really affects their lives, though every one of the six is a church member."

"Six, did you say? That's just the number in my class, and mine are dear girls, too. But I wonder how you would like them," added the deaconess thoughtfully.

"Why shouldn't I like them? Tell me about them."

"Well, two of them are artificial flower-makers, who work anywhere from eight to ten hours a day, for eight dollars a week, during six months of the year. How they manage to live through the other six months, only God knows. The most fortunate girl of the half-dozen is a silk-weaver, who has work ten months in the year, and earns about ten dollars a week. The others support themselves and help to support their families on wages that average five dollars a week."

"But, Miss Melville, how do they do it? Where

do they live? I should think they'd be hungry and cross all the time. How can you stand it to be with them? Talk of teaching them! I should feel as if I must turn my pocket inside out every time I saw them."

A merry laugh was Miss Melville's first response. Then, seeing that her friend was really in earnest, she said, "Excuse me, my dear, but the thought of considering my girls paupers was too funny. You'd say so if you knew them. They are bright, warm-hearted, self-respecting Christian girls. All they ask is the chance to work for themselves and for others, the chance to which every man and woman has a right. They live—to take your questions backward—on the east side of the city, and attend the Avenue A mission of Dr. M.'s church. How they live and help others on what they earn I cannot tell you. I know I should resent it if a millionaire friend (supposing I had one) should quiz me on my system of personal economics, and I believe they would feel as I do, so I have asked no questions. But I tell you frankly that my greatest wish just now is to be able to give them some knowledge of real home-life and girl-life on a higher scale than their own. But I can't see my way clear to do it."

"See here," cried her friend, springing to her feet, "why isn't that just the thing for my girls? I've been longing for something to rouse them,

and I believe that's why we came to know each other. Now listen," and she posed herself on the piazza railing as a more appropriate seat than the easy chair, for rapid talk. "We'll begin at home. I'll ask my girls to come, and you'll come, and you'll tell them about your girls; then I'll propose that we get acquainted with them. I know my girls—they'll do it, and do it just right too, not like giving charity, but as real friends.

"We'll have little evenings together at the different houses, and my girls will get a great deal more than they'll give. It's exactly what they need, only I didn't know it before."

There is no room for the rest of the story. How the girls learned to know and love and trust each other, how the Christmas tide brought special joy to each, how better work and better pay were found for some of the wage-earners, and how their lives were made happier and truer by the mutual helpfulness—is it not all written in the book of the Recording Angel?

DECORATION DAY BY PROXY

It was hot down in Long Alley. The late spring had rushed into summer with a bound, and the last days of May were as stifling as those of July and August ought to be. The Alley ran east and west, and that permitted the sun to send long lines of heat couriers through it without any resisting force to turn them back. No relief was possible without demolishing the tall buildings that shut off the river breezes and shut in the noisome smells and the general uncomfortableness.

"Seems to me 'zif I couldn't stand it," moaned Mother Barnum as she rocked slowly to and fro in the little old chair by the window. "Jest seems 'zif I couldn't nohow! Dear, dear, if I wuz only back to Tompkinsville! I know what they'll be doin' thar. Thar'll be a band, an' a percession, an' flowers, an' speeches, an' all the graves'll hev flags on 'em, an' "—and here the tremulous old voice broke into sobs with which were mingled the words, "Jim—my baby Jim—'n p'raps they'll fergit him—'n won't put no

flag ner no flowers—cause it's way off in the corner—oh, dear!" and the words became inarticulate as Mother Barnum sobbed herself into an uneasy doze.

It was hard—to come to the city after a lifetime spent in God's free country air—to come because all were gone at home, and only Tom was left of all her kith and kin. It had not been so bad when she first came to Tom's house. They had lived where the windows looked out on a bit of greenery, and the breezes now and then told them that God had not forgotten the world. But sickness and out-of-work-ness, and the troubles that always follow in the train of these two enemies of the poor, had given a downward start, and the result was Long Alley, and an aching heart that lived over the Memorial Days of the past.

It was hot on Dale Avenue—at least they called it so, those bright young girls in their cool muslins and lawns, dainty with lace and ribbons. "Almost too hot to think," sighed Nell Fairbank as she waved a palmleaf fan lazily across her face.

"That's so, Nell, but we're bound to think, for Ray has a plan," responded Floy Foster.

"Oh, if it's one of Ray's plans that's called this extra meeting, I yield to the inevitable. I know

her of old. Only do give me another glass of that lemonade, just to fortify myself for the attack. Now, Ray, let's hear," as the girls, following her example, settled themselves comfortably and prepared to listen—who could help doing so when Ray "had the floor"?

"Why, I haven't much of a plan, girls," said Ray, smiling. "I'm looking to you for that. I've only found a need. I went with the deaconess down into Long Alley yesterday. Yes, I know," as a chorused groan rose from her audience. "It *was* dreadful. But it is worse to live in it. And one of the saddest things I found there was not the suffering babies and mothers, though they are bad enough. But, girls, they know in Long Alley that Decoration Day is coming."

The girls looked puzzled. What if they did? Didn't Decoration Day come every year? What difference could it possibly make to the poor folks down in Long Alley?

Ray went on with her story. "Dear old Mother Barnum," she said, with a little tremor in her voice, "the patient old soul, couldn't keep the tears away when she told me of her son Jim who was killed in the Spanish War, and whose grave is in a corner of the cemetery in the little village where they used to live. 'I'm afeared they won't find it,' she sobbed, 'an' thar won't be so much as a flag on it, an' I allus used ter hev it kivered with

flowers—laylocks an' pinies, the kinds Jim used ter love.'

"Then there was Phil, the lame newsboy, you know. I stopped to buy a paper of him, and he said, 'Miss Ray, can yer tell me—duz they give away any flowers anywhere now? 'Cause, yer see, me father was a soldier an' thar oughter be some flowers on his grave if he did die jest las' year. He was as brave as any of 'em.'

"'What would you do with flowers if you had them?' I asked.

"'Sure, an' I'd put them on his grave wid me two hands,' he said.

"'Why, you couldn't walk so far as that, Phil,' I answered. 'It's more than three miles to the cemetery.'

"'I knows it, ma'am, but I'd try it fer me father's sake,' was his answer.

"Then I saw Mrs. Raymond, and do you know, girls, her Fred has enlisted. 'I minds me of Decoration Day, Miss,' she said, 'an' I thinks o' my boy, an' it allus seems ter me 'zif the live soldiers oughter hev some flowers 'z well as the dead ones.'

"'Why, Mrs. Raymond,' I said, 'what made Fred enlist? He ought to take care of you.' You should have seen the look that came into her wrinkled old face. ''Twas the recruitin' officer, honey,' she said, 'that told him he was a likely

lad, and his country wanted him. An' indeed, Miss Ray, I wouldn't hev him stay ter home if that's so. It's this blessed country that's given a home ter me an' mine fer many a year, that's a-callin' him. An' ef it needs him I haven't a word ter say agin it.' Yes, I know what you think," added Ray as a smile went around the group. "Of course it's a piece of restlessness and recklessness on Fred's part, but with his dear old mother it's true patriotism. But that wasn't all she said. 'I minds me, too,' she went on, 'that like as not Fred won't never hev ter go inter any fightin', an' so I've bin thinkin' an' thinkin', an' I tells yer, Miss Ray, it jest comes ter me that thar's other sorts o' soldiers—live ones, jest's I said—who'd orter hev flowers for their own selves. Thar's Miss Kate, now—bless her white bonnet-strings that's jes' like a picter frame for her face—don't she fight 'gainst a lot of thin's every day of her life—dirt an' smells an' cross folks, an' dark stairs an' thin's—oh, I knows all about it, if I does live in it meself 'cause I can't help meself—an' she alluz as brave an' bright as the sunshine. I tells yer I wisht I hed a whole lot o' flowers fer her this day when the soldiers hev 'em on their graves, an' I'd tell her she wa'n't ter give one of 'em away, too.'"

No one spoke for a little while. They all loved the sweet-faced deaconess who went in and out among them, a messenger between them and that

other, the submerged world, of which they knew so little by practical experience. They had helped her to help others, many a time. Somehow, it seemed to them now, they had forgotten that she, too, needed personal refreshment and help now and then. And then there were those graves—Jim's and Phil's father's—it wasn't Home Missionary work, of course, so they couldn't fall back on their treasury, but——

It was Clare who broke the silence—golden-haired Clare, with eyes like the blue of her Southern skies. "There isn't time for real committee-work, girls; but I'll be a committee of one to look after Mother Barnum. It's too far to take her back to the little village where Jim is buried, but the express goes there, and there shall be flowers on Jim's grave on Decoration Day, and his old mother shall put them into the box and cry over them and talk about Jim all she pleases. Yes," and the voice grew lower, "there shall be a flag on Jim's grave, too—the same dear flag that floats over my father out in the Philippines."

There were tears in other eyes as Clare's voice failed her. Then Nell said,

"I'll look after Phil. He shall have the flowers, and he'll not need to walk to the cemetery on Decoration Day, either."

"And Miss Kate," said Floy; "what is it, Ray? It's easy to see you have it all planned."

"Well," answered Kate, "of course we'll put our hands into our pockets and take out the money for the flowers. But wouldn't it be a nice thing to take them down to Mrs. Raymond's, because she thought of it, and have her ask the ones she wants to, to help her arrange them, and just leave them to give the flowers to the deaconess in the way they like best? They'll tell her that they're her very own, and that she mustn't give one of them away, and——"

"Good!" interrupted Floy. "But I move to amend by sending to her that morning, before she starts out, a silk flag for her room, and a big box of flowers that she *can* give away, for you know she'll want to do that."

Amid general approval the suggestions were adopted. And that is how a group of Home Mission girls kept Decoration Day by proxy.

WHAT WAS THE USE?

"WHAT'S the use?" The minister's wife wrinkled her forehead and twisted her fingers in an odd little way she had when half discouraged and two-thirds ready to give up.

"What's the use, Harry?" she repeated. "Listen! At precisely half-past two o'clock your wife will be in the ladies' parlor, ready for the home missionary meeting—and nobody else. She will fumble with her papers and books for fifteen minutes, and then Sister Brown will stroll carelessly in, moving as if she didn't really know if she was coming there or going to some other place. At three o'clock, when we've just finished the weather and the general church gossip, Sister Green will bustle in with, 'Oh, I know I'm late, but you must excuse me! I had so much to do. Why, you haven't begun yet? Dear me! Next time I'll wait till half-past three. I didn't anyway know how to get away this afternoon, but I knew you'd be disappointed, Mis' Foster, if I didn't come.' Then we shall take a hasty run over the weather and the gossip again, and her three-year-old Frank will be making life miser-

able for all concerned—that child absolutely cannot keep still—while Sister Green is getting seated and composed. By the time we reach the opening hymn Mary Gray will come in from school. I declare, she's the one redeeming tint in the whole color scheme of our church! She will smile and say, "Oh, I am so glad you're not all through, for now I can get some of the meeting.' Then we shall go through the motions in the same old way just as we did last month, and the month before that, and three months ago. We'll have the minutes, and Mary will read something from the *Herald,* and Sister Brown will waken from her brown study in time to 'move we adjourn.' What is the use of it all?"

"Precious little, I should say," returned the minister, gravely.

"Then you think just as I do, that we'd better give it up—don't you?" The question was an afterthought, called forth by a curious look that came into the dark eyes of the listener.

There was a perceptible pause before the answer came. When it did it was a surprise:

"I think, dear, there is a better way than doing things 'just as they've always been done.' You and I must study that part of it together. But you have reminded me of a story of my boyhood that I am sure I have never told you. It isn't much of a story, either, but perhaps it will

help to answer your question. When I was a little shaver, about the size of Frank Green, my mother used to take me to missionary meetings because there was no one with whom she could leave me. I suppose I was as restless as a boy could be, and I have no doubt I made life miserable for more than one of the good women who kept alive the little spark of missionary zeal in that country church. I played around, winding my way in and out among the old settees—I can see them now—having a fine game of hide-and-seek all by myself, and all unconscious, even to myself, of what was going on. I cannot to this day remember a single thing that was said or done at one of those meetings. I only know that even as a boy of three I felt that, somehow, they had to do with great questions—questions that I could not understand, but that God knew all about, and I was certain that my mother was helping Him to make the problems come out all right. I know now that in those missionary meetings, small, uninteresting as they very likely were, there came to be as a part of my very self the conviction that when I was grown up I, too, must have a share in the work of helping God.

"Dear, I honestly believe that I am a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to-day because my mother never missed one of those mis-

sionary meetings, nor failed to take me with her."

The minister's wife could not have spoken if she had tried. There was a soft caress of hand and lip, and then she went to talk it over with the Lord. And when she started for the missionary meeting that afternoon her face shone with the light that comes only from being on the Mount, with the Master.

MRS. WINN'S WAY

It lay on the table waiting for a leisure moment, and I wondered if the fair white paper and clear type were not so imbued with the spirit that, as I knew so well, thrilled in every word, that they, too, were impatient for the time to come when I could open the pages and read their delightful contents. It was morning, and I am a busy house-mother. There was no time for real reading then. But I could gain inspiration that would help me in washing dishes and making bread by a glance now and then at my new missionary paper.

Between sink and stove my eye rested on its heading—the flag of my country, accompanied

by the legend, "For the love of Christ and in His name." And I was a part of it all! The folds of that blessed flag tossed in the wind for me! And in the work for which that wonderful motto stood I had a part! Oh, I was so thankful, so glad, that in the ministries "for the love of Christ and in His name" I had a share.

My chance came at last—the few minutes that every housekeeper knows when she can rest her weary feet for a brief space, and rest her brain at the same time by giving it something new to think about. Then I opened my paper.

Did you never when a small child—at the Thanksgiving dinner, perhaps—feel that you must taste a bit of everything on your plate before really beginning to eat, with a half fear that some of the good things would slip away before you came to them in regular order? Something of that old childish difficulty comes to me whenever I open the tempting pages of my missionary paper. And this time, as I turned the leaves rapidly—for my time was short—there seemed an unusually abundant feast of good things.

"Alaska"—why, our society was just sending a barrel to the missionary Home there. That article must be read without delay, for we might need its information before starting the barrel! "Mormonism"—only yesterday I had read that missionaries of that dreadful faith were in our

very city, and seeking a chance to speak in our church prayer-meetings. I must know all I could on that subject.

"Porto Rico"—well, I thought there was work enough to do here at home, so I didn't care much about that, even if it did belong to the United States. And I usually skipped the deaconess part—somehow, I hadn't got up much interest in deaconess work. The children said, "Mother just skims the paper all over, and then goes back and reads a little piece here and a little piece there." So one day I "dared" them to examine me on it, and they said I "passed with 100 per cent.," so I thought my way was a pretty good one, after all.

Before I had "skimmed" this number it was time to get dinner, then the boys came home from school, and what with their questions and talk, I never thought of the paper till the oldest one said:

"Oh, where do you suppose Frank has gone?"

Frank is my nephew, a fine young fellow, in the regular army. He expected to be sent to Manila, and we had all been mourning about his going so far away.

"He's gone to Porto Rico," continued Clarence, without waiting for a reply to his question, "and Aunt May's had a letter from him. She's going to bring it over this afternoon. Say, I'd

like to be a soldier—you go to lots of places and see lots of sights."

The conversation drifted away from Porto Rico, and I did not think of the island again till my sister came with the letter. And this is what Frank wrote,

"DEAR MOTHER: As you know, we started under sealed orders, and most of us thought we were going to South America—down to the Isthmus, I mean—if not to the Philippines. But instead we're in Porto Rico, and shall have a fine place for the winter. But I'm not going to take the few minutes I have before the mail closes to describe the island, for I've somethink more important to write about. I must cut it short, too, so I'll just say that two of those deaconesses you think so much of are down here at work. They held a prayer-meeting the other night, and chum and I strolled in. Why, mother, I never went to such a meeting! There wasn't a bit of sentiment about it, but just plain, practical common sense. It made a fellow ashamed that he hadn't enlisted in the army of the Lord Jesus long before—especially when there'd been a recruiting station right in his home all his life. So I just gave in that night, and said I'd fight in that army as long as I lived.

"There, mother, I can hear you say, 'Those blessed women!' and I say so, too, for they led me to Jesus. Go ahead with your missionary work and your deaconess work! They've led your boy to Christ, and now he's going to work for other mothers' boys."

That was the letter—but perhaps we didn't

cry over it! And all of a sudden I remembered what I'd said about Porto Rico and the deaconess part of my missionary paper. Why, I could hardly wait for the chance to read those very things. I tell you, it makes all the difference in the world when it's your very own you're reading about. I felt then as if every deaconess was my personal friend, and I wanted to know all about what they were doing for "other mothers'" boys and girls.

"Mother doesn't do so much skimming nowadays," said my daughter this morning. "She reads every word of that paper, and then sighs for 'more worlds—of printer's ink—to conquer.' It's a pretty good way, though," she added, "to really read if you're going to do it at all."

STRATEGIC POINTS

Porto Rico is one of them, and with the building of the Panama Canal it will become still more important. Through that canal will pass a large proportion of the commerce of the world, the "open door" in China and the American possession of the Philippines vastly increasing the amount of traffic between the Atlantic and the

Pacific. On this highway, Porto Rican seaports will be the inevitable stations for coaling and other needs. They must be pre-empted for Christ and a Christian civilization.

More and more, with the drawing together of nations, the Spanish-speaking people of North and South America are coming in touch with the United States. The two continents are the only great world masses in which the mountain ranges run from north to south, and that fact indicates a tremendous responsibility for missionary work. How shall the needs of these regions, fast opening up to twentieth-century civilization, be met? The church, if awake to its opportunity, will push the Christian training of the Spanish-speaking people now within its reach, for the sake not only of the present but of the future.

Sometimes there is long and weary seed-sowing and patient cultivation before any harvest appears. At other times it is given to the workers to see results much more quickly. It would seem as if work on the hot, arid plains of New Mexico and Arizona must be almost the extreme test of courage. But one missionary reports great changes in New Mexico in the two years since she went to her post. Stoves have been put into the homes, superseding the old and inconvenient fireplaces; wooden floors are taking the place of mud floors that required frequent renewal through the

hard work of the women of the household, and even sewing machines are finding their way into the adobe homes. While these may not be altogether the direct result of missionary labors, the connection is very close between the opened vision that sees something better for hand and brain than it has known, and that other vision that discovers a new spiritual horizon.

"Oh, it is great riches to be able to read," said a poor Mexican woman, the tears streaming down her face as she spoke. An old Mexican lay dying when the news came to him of the opening of a school in which his people could be taught. Not venturing to ask the missionaries to come to him, he cried, "Carry me to the corner of the road, that I may see the teachers." They are waiting on every "corner," along every highway, the sick and the dying—waiting for the teaching that only Christian America can give. Shall we be true to our trust, or shall they die unheeded and unblessed?

Statesmen now admit that Secretary Seward was right when he prophesied that the next generation would pronounce the purchase of Alaska the most important act of the administration in which he was Secretary of State. Instead of being a region of perpetual ice and snow, the peninsula contains large areas of excellent farming land, with room enough thereon for three

million people. Add to the agricultural resources the gold deposits and the fisheries, and the importance of the territory becomes self-evident.

Wireless telegraph stations and cable connections are rapidly bringing Alaska into touch with the rest of the world. This means much to miners and whalers, and, through the consequent advance of commerce, much to Christian civilization. "Across the broken piers of the Aleutian bridge, Russian, Slav and Anglo-Saxon may yet struggle for world-supremacy." Be that as it may, Christianity cannot afford to neglect Alaska.

Through the Japanese on our Western seaboard and the thousands of representatives of the Sunrise Kingdom in the Hawaiian Islands, there will come a mighty force for the regeneration of Japan and of China. Eastern Asia is a strategic point in Christian civilization, and America holds the key. Is American Christianity "sufficient unto these things"?

THE PROBLEM OF ROBERT

"WHAT shall I do with Robert?" was a standing question in the Settlement. Miss Jones asked it in the wood-working class, where Robert's tools were never put away in orderly fashion. Miss Williams asked it in the Boys' Club, where Robert kept the boys in his vicinity in a state of perpetual giggle. The drawing teachers said, "Robert has talent, but he won't apply himself. He isn't patient enough to work up from the beginning. He wants to jump to the life class at once—and really, he has a good deal of skill in sketching from life. But he is so restless that I don't know what to do with him."

But Miss Steck had the most trouble with Robert—in the Sunday evening class, and the Tuesday night's Crusaders' Club. And, strange to say, Miss Steck was the only one of them all who really liked Robert, and wanted him to come, and missed him when he was absent. But matters grew so bad, Robert was such a demoralizing influence, that at last Miss Steck's patience gave way. And when one night he came to a class social with hair awry and hands covered with the dust of the street, it was too much.

"Come here, Robert," she said, beckoning him into the hall.

The boy, who was watching a game of chess, obeyed slowly. But he looked up with startled eyes when Miss Steck said:

"Robert, I shall have to send you home, and say that you mustn't come back." The boy stared at her, too surprised to speak, and she went on: "I've tried to be patient, but you know how you disturb the other boys and make it hard for me. And then to come to-night with such dirty hands and uncombed hair, to be with these other boys who are trying to be gentlemen! Don't you see, Robert"—the intent gaze was becoming somewhat embarrassing—"don't you see that we can't have you here because you are so careless?"

Robert found voice at last. Looking still into Miss Steck's face, with eyes more steady than her own, he said:

"If I can't come to the Home, Miss Steck, I know where I can go—where they are always glad to have boys."

Ah, Miss Steck knew, too well, of the welcome from the dozen saloons in that very block, each of whom would give glad greeting to so promising a recruit for the army of sin and crime. No, no, she could not let Robert go—he must not go. There was rapid thinking, rapid praying in that hallway; and then earnest words were spoken that we may not repeat. But Miss Steck won her boy.

THE "RUMMAGE" BARREL

I

"HAS the secretary any letters to read?"

You would never have taken her for a secretary, or dreamed that such a dainty bit of pink and white girlhood could keep official records. And, indeed, she did not know much about it; but neither did the rest of the girls, so it mattered little—to them.

The president asked the question at a meeting of the Queen Esther Circle—the first meeting after the long summer vacation. Not that all the members of the Circle had been out of town during the summer. As a matter of fact, very few of them could be away for more than the regular "fortnight's vacation," and more than one had been known to mourn the dullness of the place in hot weather. "It's neither sea-shore nor mountain, but just an in-between place," Rose Sinclair complained. "There's nothing to do but eat and sleep, with a sprinkling of croquet or lawn tennis when it isn't too awful hot." But it was the habit of Immanuel Church to close its avenues of out-reaching help during the summer, to let the needy world, for whose interests it

diligently cared the rest of the year, run for three months, so to speak, on the momentum thus acquired.

"Oh, yes, Madam President, there's a letter somewhere—here it is—from somebody who signs herself, 'Supply Secretary.' Who knows what in the world that means?"

The uninterested faces of the girls would have given poor encouragement to the writer of the letter, had she seen them. May Fremont continued:

"I believe you don't know any more about it than I do—and that's precious little. Well, here's the letter:

"SECRETARY OF THE QUEEN ESTHER CIRCLE OF IMMANUEL CHURCH.

"DEAR FRIEND: Among the calls at hand, I have one that I think will especially interest the girls of your Circle. It is for a minister's family in Wyoming, in which there is a girl of about your own age, Dorothy by name, besides several younger children.

"I am especially desirous to have a good box sent them this fall, for the prayer of Dorothy's heart has been answered in the opening of the way for her to attend school this winter in the nearest city—200 miles distant. The family resources will be taxed to the utmost to carry out this plan, and our supply department should furnish Dorothy a suitable outfit. Then, with her assistance withdrawn, the needs of the home will be still greater, and we should help to meet these by sending things for the rest of the family.

"May I rely on you for just such a box, or barrel, as is required? Address it to Rev. James Darling, Outpost, Wyoming.

"Please write me the Circle's decision in the matter —and please ask the girls not to decide till they have prayed about it.

"Sincerely yours,
"(Mrs.) J. P. Wells,
"*Supply Secretary for First District.*"

"Oh, goodness!" cried Maud Jenkins, breaking the moment's hush that followed the reading. "As if we hadn't had enough to do to get ourselves ready for the winter! I worked myself half to death all through the hot summer so's to have something decent to wear. If anybody thinks I'm going to send my new gowns to that backwoods girl, she's much mistaken."

"Why, of course not, Maud," said the president. "Nobody expects anything of that sort. It's only old stuff, that folks don't want, that goes into missionary barrels."

"That's so," echoed Floy Jennings. "They're nothing but rummage-savers, and I, for one, have some shirt waists that really aren't fit to wear here that I'd be glad to get rid of."

"So have I," "And I," "And I," cried one and another, till the secretary said, laughingly: "Well, girls, Dorothy won't lack for shirt waists, that's evident. Let's take account of stock. How

many? 'Three,' 'two,' 'one,' 'three'—how many, Florence? Oh, yes, 'five,' and 'three' and 'two' and 'one'—twenty, if I count right. All cotton, I suppose. I'll start another ball rolling with my old sailor hat."

"I'll send the white chiffon one I wore last year. It's mussed, but beggars mustn't be choosers, and she'll need something for a Sunday best."

"Count another for me—after I've taken off the roses on it. They're too lovely to give away, but the old hat may go."

"I'll give some ribbons, if anybody will wash them. I haven't time to do that," Kate Graham added, a bit ashamed of her offer.

"What's the use?" queried Maud Sinclair. "She's got ribbons, of course. Madam President, some of us have a tennis engagement at five o'clock. Let's adjourn."

"Oh, wait a minute, girls," said the secretary. "Mrs. Wells speaks of things for the rest of the family. We haven't said a word about that."

"Nonsense!" cried Floy. "How are we going to get shirts and trousers and sheets and pillow-cases—and napkins and tablecloths, even if they know how to use them? We just can't do it."

"But, what shall I write Mrs. Wells?"

"Why, haven't we all said what we would send —all but Miss Temple?" and the speaker turned

to a quiet girl, who had taken no part in the discussion. A careful observer watching her might have seen from time to time a flush creep from cheek to forehead as she listened to the chatter around her, and might, perhaps, have drawn certain conclusions therefrom. But no suspicions were in the minds of the Queen Esther girls, who looked at her inquiringly as the president added: "We are so glad to have you with us, Miss Temple, and we don't want you to feel left out in anything—not even in a rummage box."

"Thank you," was the quiet reply. "May I ask if these supplies are to be packed at our next meeting?"

"Why, I suppose so. Then the whole thing will be out of the way before Christmas. We'll have that meeting in the church parlor, and if we bring to the janitor the things we want to send before then he'll have a box, or barrel, all ready for us."

"Then, if you'll allow me, I'll look over my stock in hand before deciding," replied Miss Temple.

"Certainly," said the president. "May, you'd better write Mrs. Wells that we'll send some things to Dorothy, and you might add that if we can beg, borrow or—confiscate—any old clothes from our fathers or our brothers we'll put them in. Now are we ready to adjourn?"

"A question of privilege, Madam President," said Miss Temple. The girls looked at her in amazement. They had learned to say "Madam President" by dint of much effort, but that one of their own number should actually use that mysterious phrase, "a question of privilege," as if she understood it and was not a whit afraid of it—well, their respect for Miss Temple grew rapidly.

"A question of privilege, Madam President. May I ask that the secretary read again the last sentence of Mrs. Wells' letter?"

"Here it is," cried May, without waiting for the president's assent: "Please write me the Circle's decision in the matter—and please ask the girls not to decide till they have prayed about it.'"

"Thank you," was Miss Temple's only comment. But, somehow, the words of the appeal lingered with the girls, sounding through all the merry chit-chat of their separation, and louder than Maud's cry of—

"Rags, rags, old rags!
A penny a pound for your old rags!"

And somehow, too, there was a lack of harmony in the blending of the two refrains, "Rags, old rags!" and "Pray about it, pray about it."

Margaret Temple did not play tennis that evening. As our Quaker friends say, a call of duty was "borne in upon her." She went directly to her own room from the meeting of the Queen Esther Circle and sat down at her desk. Under her feet lay the bright stripes of a Navajo rug, a story in each thread, and the scrap-basket at her side was woven as only squaws have patience to weave. It may have been that some touch of the far prairie reaches, some subtle hint of sun and sand and quivering distances of atmosphere were in the letter, and made its words like familiar tones to the girl to whom they came. At any rate, this is the letter that found its way into Uncle Sam's mailbag that very evening:

S——, MASS., *Sept.* 10, 190—.

DEAR DOROTHY: Never mind how I know your name. I do know it, and I know more things than that about you. I know, too, your "Great West," for am I not a child of the prairies and the mountains, cradled in a hollow tree-trunk and educated through my early years with the birds and the rabbits? What does it matter that later days took me among homes that are nearer together, and with people who have missed the blessing of comradeship that comes to fellow-sufferers with and for each other! Only the one great sorrow of my life could have taken me from the land of my childhood dreams and hopes. A great joy, God willing, shall bear me back to it ere long.

Dorothy, have you room in your heart for a new friend? May I come in as if I had known you face to face? I want to hear about the life you have lived and that which you hope to live, about next winter's school and how the chance came to you; about the dear ones who will be left behind in the home and how they will fare. I am not asking "officially," dear, but am begging for a heart-to-heart letter. And I come with confidence, for do I not know what I would have done and said had such a request come to me as the daughter in the home of a missionary who laid down his life in the home field, and whom the Indians loved as they love few men? Do I not know how gladly I would have told the story asked of me, in full assurance that I was telling it to a real friend?

So write me, Dorothy, and make the mountains seem real to me again, and the missionary life, as well. Because, you see, I'm coming back—but not alone. And we want to realize, before we come, all that we can of what it will mean to tell the story of Christ on the far frontier.

And write me soon, dear, for I am in a hurry to hear all about it. Here is a handclasp across the prairies, the rivers and the mountains that lie between us—so little can they separate those who really love one another. In this trust, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

MARGARET TEMPLE.

II

A motley collection of boxes and bundles was piled in one corner of the church parlor, and

the president of the Queen Esther Circle looked at them a little ruefully.

"We have enough in quantity at any rate," she said slowly. "I see that Williams has the barrel ready, but I suppose we'd better get through with our business meeting before we pack it. Miss Temple, I believe you have charge of the devotional exercises to-day."

As Margaret Temple rose, Bible in hand, what was it that brought back to the minds of the girls the closing words of that letter, "Pray about it"? True, they had come up in thought once and again in the interval between the two meetings. But there had been much to crowd them back, and they had made little impression.

Margaret had chosen the first twelve verses from the seventh chapter of Matthew as the lesson of the hour, and when she read, in clear, resonant tones, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," uneasy glances were cast by more than one pair of eyes toward certain packages in the corner pile. Nor was the impression lessened when, in simple, earnest words, exactly as if she were talking to a friend, Miss Temple asked the blessing of Him who knoweth the heart on the individual members of the Circle, and on their work and gifts for others in the name of the Master.

"I'm glad I didn't take off those roses, after

all," said Grace Foster to herself. "It seemed so kind of mean that I just couldn't."

The secretary's report and a few items of miscellaneous business were followed by the stereotyped question, "Is there any new business?"

The pause was broken by Miss Temple. "Madam President," she said, "I have a confession to make. I hope the members of the Circle will not be annoyed because after our last meeting I took the liberty of writing a letter which, in a way, concerned Circle business. I had a real desire to know personally the girl to whom our box was going, and so, without mentioning the Circle, I wrote to her. Here is her reply, and I think you will all be interested in it. Madam President, if the girls would like to hear it, may I be allowed to read it myself instead of passing it to the secretary? It is the answer to a personal letter, and contains some things that should, perhaps, be omitted in reading."

There was no doubt about the wish of the Circle members to hear the letter. They were ready to welcome anything that Miss Temple might present, as a pleasant variation from what had begun to be the monotony of their meetings. And then, a letter from the girl herself! Somehow she had not been "real folks" in their thoughts before. Of course, the letter was but

the crude effort of a schoolgirl, but then—and they settled back in comfortable attitudes, prepared to listen.

"Dear friend," began the reader. (The letter really opened with "Dear Margaret," but Miss Temple changed the wording and omitted the sentences immediately following—"May I call you that? It is so good to know that way off in the East there is a friend who cares for us, and for me; one who really wants to know about my very own plans and purposes.")

"You ask me to tell of my home, and I smiled when I read the words, wondering what you would have said if I had written the description six months ago—or two years ago—or four years ago. For at every one of those times we were living in a tent. Not for fun—oh, no, indeed!—but because there wasn't any house for the minister and his family. Indeed, my good father has quite a reputation for building parsonages, and this is the fourth time he has been sent to a homeless charge. 'Can you live in a tent again?' asked the presiding elder, and father turned to mother—and she replied, of course, like the blessed little mother she is, 'Oh, yes, if it's necessary.'

"But a house has grown in the past six months—in this one of four preaching-places, each ten miles from anywhere, that make up the 'circuit.' Shall I tell you how it was built? Lumber and bricks could be had only at the county-seat, and that is twenty miles away, over a road that is very hilly and, in some parts, dangerous. Father was teamster, mason, and carpenter, and mother and I helped by holding

the lamp o' nights while he tacked on the cheesecloth that covers the walls on the inside. 'No paper?' Indeed, no! We count ourselves very lucky to have the cloth inside of the bare boards. But you would not ask that question, for your letter shows you have not forgotten how things are in the real 'out West.'

"As for 'We, Us and Company,' 'we are seven'—father, mother, and five children. But oh, there comes a heart-break as I write this, for three months ago Dolores, my twin sister, was here, too. She was father's 'right-hand man,' helping him in Sunday-school and League, while I have always been the home-girl. But to-day Dolores has gone to the home where they are never cold nor sick, and I am left to try—and to fail so often—to fill her place as well as my own.

"Next to me comes Frank—she's our only boy except the baby, and she's a girl. But father has called her his boy from the time when, a wee bit of a thing, she insisted on going to meet him whenever he came home, no matter how late or cold it was, and staying with him till he had unharnessed and cared for his horse. Frances is her real name, but we always call her Frank. She is twelve years old, and large and strong for her age. Jennie is ten, a real little caretaker, who already saves lots of steps for the rest of us; then comes Florence—Flossie, in the family dialect, and the name fits her well, for her hair is like spun silk—and Ralph, the year-old baby, who already asserts his rights lustily when he thinks them invaded.

"As for my father and mother—Margaret"—the name slipped out unawares, but the girls noticed it—"how can I describe them? They are both graduates of Eastern colleges, capable, I know, of filling

important positions. But they are here 'for Christ and the church'—here where the needs are so great —here in this splendid new land that must be won for Christ; here where the winter storms are not more cruel than the wicked men, nor the mountains one-half so grand as the Christian lives that are developed right here. But I need not tell this to you. You remember——"

"Excuse me," said Margaret, turning the sheet and beginning again, while the girls looked at each other significantly.

"You ask about my going to school. It is a beautiful plan, and yet there is a hard side to it, for how can I leave the home folks through the cold winter that is coming? But father and mother feel that I must be fitted for my lifework—for of course I'm going to be a missionary. *You* know that I couldn't be anything else. And now the chance to go on with my studies has come, and perhaps the way will open some time for me to go to a missionary training-school. I am to work for my board this winter in the family of the minister in Lookout, a city two hundred miles away, where there is a good school. Father planned it all when he was there at Conference last year.

"My absurd little mother is worrying about my clothes—as if they mattered if one can only go to school! But I've one dress that came in a barrel—those blessed missionary barrels—three years ago, and flour sacks—now don't laugh—make good shirt-waists, if they aren't very warm. I'll work my brains so hard that there'll be no chance to get cold.

"I wish you could know the minister to whose home I am going, and his dear little wife. They are

quite comfortably situated now, but father spent a night with them a few years ago, when they were living in three little rooms, one back of the other, that used to be a shop. Father slept in the middle one, and he says it was almost dark, and the broken window-panes were stuffed with rags to keep out the cold, and the mattress was made of husks—so are ours. Have you ever seen such? The minister had received only $100 the past twelve months. When father came away, he said, 'Tell your wife we did the best we could for you,' and father answered, 'I'll tell her you did the best you could for me—and for God.'

"But to go back to barrels. I wish one could come for the people at home, for they need it. Poor father runs big risks in his long drives without heavy underclothing and overcoat, and there isn't a blanket in the house. We keep the baby warm by wrapping him in an old bearskin—a trophy of father's hunting, years and years ago. He lies in just such a cradle as you describe, too—a hollowed-out log—and there isn't a happier boy in the land.

"When you come——"

Here Margaret stopped with a confused, "I think that is all, Madam President."

Really it seemed "all," for no one spoke. At last the president turned toward the corner with the question, "Shall we begin packing now?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" cried Rose Sinclair, springing forward as if in defense of the most carelessly tied box of the whole lot. "No, indeed! It's horrid, and I'm as ashamed as I can be. I wouldn't let you see it for anything! Why," and

Rose's voice broke a bit, "did you think that she was a real girl? I didn't, not once. But——"

"Yes, 'but,'" echoed May Fremont, and there were tears in her eyes as in the eyes of most of the others. "We all have a 'but,' Rose. Madam President, if there's a single girl except Miss Temple who's willing to send what she has here to a girl who can write such a letter as that and live such a life, I move that she speak now or 'ever hereafter hold her peace.' Not one! I thought so. Miss Temple, here's two dollars with which I meant to buy some gloves that I don't need one bit. Will you take it and wire Dorothy this very afternoon—because I can't wait for a letter to reach her—to write you at once all about the sizes, and colors, and everything, of the whole family? If there isn't any telegraph office I suppose you'll have to write. But I miss my guess, girls, if we can't send a box that *is* a box—or a barrel, if that's best—to these people. What do you say?"

May's enthusiasm was always contagious, but the others had been no less interested than herself, this time. Miss Temple's face showed her delight in a look that changed to one of deep, intense joy when Grace Foster said:

"Excuse me, Miss Temple, but the letter said, 'You remember,' several times. Were you ever in the West—the real West, I mean?"

"I am the daughter of a frontier minister," was the reply, "and perhaps I ought to explain some things in the letter more fully by saying that next year I expect to go back as the wife of another."

Then how they talked—and laughed, and cried—as only girls can! And in the midst of the happy tumult Miss Temple said softly: "The secret is in the letter that started all this, girls,—'Pray about it.'"

. . . . .

That barrel? Well, it started as a "rummage" barrel, fast enough. But when finally packed, only the most aristocratic "rummaging" could claim kinship with its contents. And, even then, there must needs be measure full and running over of real heart-love added to the material supplies. And when, the following autumn, a company of Queen Esther girls, now thoroughly alive to the fact that home missions are for "real folks," had stood as bridesmaids when twain were made one and their "very own missionary" smiled good-by through happy tears, they wrote the whole story to Dorothy, adding: "Tell us everything you will need, for there'll be a graduation box coming. And by the time you are ready to go to the training-school we shall have the money ready."

A BUNDLE OF FAGOTS

It was the first auxiliary meeting since the summer vacation, and the attendance of members and friends was large, for the mystery of a "fagot party" had proved enticing. Soft candles gave the light needed to supplement the glow of the cannel coal in the open grate, that sent long streamers of color up into the dim spaces above and invited to all sorts of beautiful dreams.

On a low stool before the fire sat the president of the auxiliary, a tall, queenly woman whose face, as she spoke, told its story of love for the work for the very work's sake.

"These pine cones," she said, holding them a moment before tossing them on the glowing coals, "came from the summit of the mountains crossed by the Southern Railway. I was on my way to visit one of our missionary Homes, and I had been fascinated by the railroad descriptions of the 'sapphire country,' the 'land of the sky.' So I planned the trip in a way to make it possible to stop over a train at the very top. I meant to study scenery, and, indeed, it was magnificent all along the way. But I almost forgot the scenery

when I saw the homes. Log cabins, the chinks filled in with mud, without windows and with but one door—I think I saw hundreds of them on that journey. And always around their doors were clustered the children—so many of them—and so many without any better chance in life than their fathers and mothers had had. I haven't brought all of my cones. I left a cluster of them, with some moss-covered twigs, hanging over my desk. And whenever I see them, I say to myself, remembering that journey and then remembering the blessed work that I saw in the Home, 'Lord, if I may, I'll serve another day.'"

"When I was a child," said the secretary, taking her turn in front of the fire, "I used to play, 'What is my thought like!' The game was to guess what one member of the party was thinking about, and then to trace a resemblance between the two things, which were often as unlike as black and white. I'm afraid you'll have to do that tonight, for my fagot doesn't seem to bear much relation to Home Missions. Here is a bit of a stick—I can't imagine how it chanced to be left there—that I picked up on the grounds of the Lincoln monument. And this crooked old branch came from Mt. McGregor, in sight of the cottage where General Grant died. On our way down the mountain I strayed into the woods by the side of the road and picked up this moss and these cones.

If they could only bring 'the breath of the woods' with them!"

"Why, that's easy," cried little Mrs. Duncan, the wide-awake treasurer of the auxiliary, as the sparks flew from the cones and dry twigs. "We always think of the colored people when we think of Lincoln. Our society wouldn't even have started, perhaps, if it hadn't been for Lincoln and Grant. As for my fagot—well, of course there had to be some money mixed up with it. It's a pretty big one, you see, and it came from the girls of our Mission Band. I told them one day what we were going to do, and promised some money for their treasury if they'd bring me a handsome fagot. And isn't this a fine one? Just look at the moss—and this beautiful bird's nest, and these queer knots and lichens. It's too pretty to burn, Madame President,"—and here they began to laugh, for they knew their treasurer—"so if no one objects I'll put a dollar into the treasury and keep my lovely fagot."

Amid general laughter, May Freeman came forward. "I think mine is rather the most delightful fagot of all," she said with a smile. "It's small, to be sure, and, indeed, I left the larger part of it at home." Cries of "Oh," "Oh," and "That's not fair," interrupted the speaker, but she went on: "You'd have done the same thing yourselves. You know I've corresponded with Miss

Blank, who went from our Home in Georgia as a missionary to Africa, ever since she left this country. When we planned for this party, I wrote her to send me a box of sticks—just little things that could come through by mail, but that would be different from the woods we have here. I thought I was going to be disappointed, for the box did not reach me till last night, but here they are—bits of real wood, leaves and nuts from Africa over the sea, sent by one from our own Africa, and showing over again that Home and Foreign Mission work are but two halves of one great whole, and that each needs the other."

Widely varied had been the experiences of the auxiliary members during that summer vacation. There were fagots from the Rockies and even from Alaska. Others, that made as bright a flame, came from the dear home woods, and told of long, happy days of rest and the gathering of strength for increased service. But best of all was the last, a crooked stick held by the "little deaconess," as she told its story:

"Those of us who were at home through the summer found abundant work in caring for the 'Fresh Air' children. Some we sent away, and for others we made picnics near home. Among these last, was one little fellow who became my most devoted knight. I am sure he was something of a 'tough' before I knew him, but there

was that in his eyes that made me like him. There's good stuff in the boy and I mean he shall have the chance to prove it.

"Whenever we went picnicking Roy was by my side, ready to do anything or say anything for me—even, as he assured me one day, to 'lick anybody I wanted him to.' One day, when we were in the woods, I remembered our fagot party, and picked up some sticks, telling him what they were for.

"Yesterday I had a nice visit with Roy, and as I turned away he handed me this stick. 'Won't you take it, Miss Weeden, fer that thar party?' he asked. Then he hesitated, and really blushed as he added, 'I used ter keep it ter go fer the boys with, but I ain't goin' ter do that no more, 'cause yer says 'taint right.'

"My fagot is Roy's. And it stands for the first strivings of the spirit that shall, please God, make of the little lad a good and useful man."

The firelight died softly away, and a silence fell with the shadows. It was broken by the low voice of the pastor: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these—ye have done it unto me."

THE BURDEN OF MENDON

"I must needs go to Rome also."

"You will have a warm welcome at Eden. Brother and Sister Brown believe in the Woman's Home Missionary Society with all their hearts, and have been working up sentiment for an auxiliary ever since they went there last spring. Freeville —I'm a little in doubt about that church; the pastor is a good man, but his wife never does any church work, and I don't believe he knows much about our society. Still, I think you'll get him interested if he'll open the way for you to go there.

"Here is Mendon," and the secretary pointed to a place in the extreme northwest corner of the map. "We ought to have a good strong auxiliary at Mendon. It's one of our largest churches, pays a liberal salary, has a fine parsonage, and all that, but the people don't seem interested in anything beyond themselves."

"Just the people who need the waking up that comes from missionary knowledge."

"Exactly! But you can't always make people take the treatment they need. But I'm anxious you should go to Mendon. Try to get in there,

even if you don't succeed." The tracing finger moved downward along the map. "You'll have no trouble at all in the southern district. The presiding elder is a good friend of our work, and his approval will open the way in most of the churches, to say the least."

"Evidently I need not feel that in every place 'bonds and afflictions abide me,'" said the organizer, smiling.

"Yes, Paul was a real organizer, wasn't he?" replied her friend to the unspoken thought. "No, it's not so bad as that. You'll have trials and difficulties enough, but Paul has a better motto for you—'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' You'll need to remember that when you try for Mendon—and I want you to get in there if you don't do another thing on that district. Mendon has been on my heart for a long time, and I believe you'll succeed there."

Full of faith and hope and courage—the typical equipment for a Home Missionary organizer—Miss Benton began to plan her first route. Years of experience as a pastor's assistant had taught her the secret of leading individuals without antagonizing them. It remained to be seen if the same "tactics" could be applied in the broader work with masses. Were not these made up of individuals? Letters were written and received, an itinerary made out, and new members, new inter-

est, and new auxiliaries attested to the success of the earnest young worker. Beginning near home, she gradually worked toward the northwest, with Mendon constantly in her thoughts. In an unaccountable way the burden of that place rested upon her. "It seems to me my whole work will be a failure if I do not succeed in Mendon," she said to herself. "It must be that the Lord means me to go there, or He wouldn't have laid it so upon my heart. I know what Paul meant—'I must needs go to' Mendon."

It was pioneer work in the northwestern district. But God opened the way among perfect strangers, and one engagement led to another.

"Excuse me, but isn't this Miss Benton?" The landscape outside the window lost its interest at once as the speaker continued: "I heard you at the annual meeting. My name is Lamb. I'm the pastor at Linville. Can't you come to us next week and organize a Home Missionary society?"

There was time for but hurried planning before the train stopped at the place of Miss Benton's next appointment, but the pastor went home to arrange for meetings at Linville.

"One more step toward Mendon," said the organizer.

"REV. DR. STRONG, Mendon.

"DEAR BROTHER: As an organizer of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal

Church, and with the cordial approval of the presiding elder of this district, I write to ask if it will be possible for you to open the way for our work in your church. I shall be in this part of the district for some weeks to come; at the close of that time I should be glad to go to Mendon. Kindly reply at your earliest convenience, that I may be able to plan accordingly.

"Yours sincerely,

"FLORENCE M. BENTON."

This was the letter mailed from Linville—the final step, as Miss Benton fondly hoped, toward Mendon. But day after day brought no answer, till at last she told her good friends in Linville of the burden on her heart.

"I'll telephone Brother Strong," said her host. Suiting action to word, he at once called up his fellow-worker at Mendon. "Say, why didn't you answer Miss Benton's letter? . . . Did you get it? . . . What? What has that to do with it? . . . Oh, I see! . . . Well, look here—when can you do it? . . . Not before then? . . . That's too bad. Well, I'll tell her."

The good brother turned from the instrument with a laugh that was half an apology. "What do you think Brother Strong says? 'Once in a while I like a chance to preach in my own pulpit.' It's too bad—but Bible Society and Parent Missionary and Education Society, and some other church agents have been there, till he says he must call a

halt. But he'll write you—he can't open the way before December, to say the least."

"Before December"—and it was the first of November! With the exception of Mendon, all the organizing work practicable in that district had been done. But to leave that part of the State at that time was to leave Mendon unvisited for the year. The way was hedged up, as it so often is, and the outlook was upward only. But Miss Benton was no stranger at the throne, and although "Wait" was the only answer to her call for guidance, it was enough.

Back in the home of the Conference secretary there was uneasiness. "I wonder if it is really best for you to stay there a whole month waiting for a chance at Mendon. I want you to go there —but I don't want you to 'wear out your welcome,' as my New England grandmother used to say."

And Miss Benton promptly replied: "Not for nothing do I come of genuine New England stock. A Yankee woman can turn her hand to anything, and these overworked ministers' wives in the country places are only too glad to have some help on the winter's sewing. I am not wasting my time—for I believe it is God's order for me to wait. Nor need you worry about my 'welcome.' Just trust me. It will all come out right. I shall have a good auxiliary to report from Mendon."

The days went by, but still no word from the pastor at Mendon. On the Monday following the first Sabbath of December Miss Benton herself went to the telephone.

"Is this Dr. Strong? This is Miss Benton. Will it be convenient for you to have me come to your church next Sunday?"

"I have had so much in my church—" Right in the middle of the sentence "Central" cut him off, as "Central" has a way of doing. Another trial:

"What did you say, doctor? 'Central' cut us off."

"I've had so many—" Again the cut-off. "I must needs go to Mendon," said Miss Benton to herself, as she tried the third time to get the message, with the same result. The fourth time the response came promptly, "Come next Sunday!"

"I feel like singing the doxology right in the telephone," cried Miss Benton, as she turned away. "Dr. Strong tells me to come Saturday noon, so we can plan. I'm really going to Mendon!"

Even an organizer, who goes in all sorts of weather, to all sorts of homes, where she must be agreeable to all sorts of people, sometimes wonders what her welcome will be from the strangers at her next abiding place. But all anxiety about this part of the visit to Mendon was dispelled by the cheery greeting at the parsonage.

"Glad to see you, Sister Benton, if the telephone did treat us so badly. Here is my wife, who knows you better than you know her, I fancy."

"Oh, we are not strangers," said the cheery little Mrs. Strong, taking the wraps of her guest as she spoke. "Don't you remember Minnie Foster, who used to be in your infant class in Sunday-school? I'm ever so glad to see you."

With such greeting, Miss Benton may be pardoned for puzzled thoughts. Why had they been, seemingly, so unwilling for her to come to Mendon? What could be the trouble? Something outside of the parsonage, surely.

The mystery was explained as they sat around the dinner table: "We hated to have you come, Miss Benton, for we dreaded a failure, both for your sake and ours. The truth is, it seems imposssible to stir the people here to any interest in missions. One of the best speakers of the Woman's Foreign Society was here a while ago. She had a lot of curios, and everybody enjoyed her talk, but when it came to organization only two women would give their names besides my wife. I'm very much afraid your attempt will be another fizzle, but I couldn't hold out any longer."

"Your story seems like a Jericho wall," answered Miss Benton, "but I believe the Lord has given me Mendon. One thing is certain, if He helps us organize a society here, there'll be one.

If He doesn't, neither you nor I can accomplish it." And she told them of the "burden of Mendon."

There was earnest prayer in that parsonage home that night, and when they rose from their knees the good pastor echoed the faith of their hearts as he said, "Shout! for the Lord hath given you the city."

"Surely the Lord was with me," said Miss Benton, as she told her story, the next week, to the Conference secretary. "I could pick out in that congregation the very women whom I knew would join the society. At the close of my talk, I said, 'I would be glad to shake hands with every woman in this congregation, and, at the same time, to take the name of every woman to whom God has spoken.' Forty names were given, and a meeting for organization was appointed for the next afternoon at the parsonage.

"Monday opened with a pouring rainstorm, such a storm as lasts all day. But it didn't drown our faith. The pastor and his wife had especially interested me in two ladies in the congregation—fine people, but not professing Christians. Neither had given her name on Sunday, and yet I felt sure they wanted to join, so I was not surprised when they came to the afternoon meeting. One of them brought her little daughter, a beautiful child of six years. They lingered a moment after

the others left, and one of them said, 'We have been so interested in all you have told.'

"'But you didn't join us,' I answered.

"'No,' said the mother of the little girl, who was looking into my face with wide-open eyes. 'No—two cents a week is nothing—but I couldn't do the rest.'

"'My dear,' I said, laying my hand on her shoulder, 'you the mother of this beautiful little girl, and not a Christian? Will you think this over to-night—and you, too, sister?' for I had each by the hand as I spoke, 'and will you let me know to-morrow if you will take the society and all there is in it?'

"Neither could speak, but the dear little blue-eyed darling came to their help. 'Can't Minnie and I be Home Guards?' she asked, eagerly. 'We'll send our pennies—Minnie's my cousin, you know—and mamma'll help us to have our meetings—only who'll pray?' she added, with a little troubled look. Once more was the promise fulfilled, 'A little child shall lead them.' 'Mamma will pray, darling,' said the mother, and she broke down completely as she threw her arms around the little one. 'And auntie, too,' said the other one. And then and there we had a prayer-meeting, and all of us prayed. When it came wee Dorothy's turn she said, 'Dear Jesus, I'm so glad my mamma knows how to pray now. Amen.'"

To-day the Woman's Home Missionary Society counts among its best auxiliaries that in Mendon, and the Woman's Foreign is equally welcomed. Under the leadership of the two who learned to pray when they learned to give, both societies are proving themselves even more of a blessing, if possible, to the Mendon church than to those for whom they labor. And Miss Benton, as she moves among the churches, thanks God and takes courage whenever she thinks of the burden of Mendon.

FROM CHRISTMAS TO EASTER

"I SUPPOSE there's an old freight car sidetracked somewhere—or else that precious barrel is hid away in some musty, dark station, all covered with dirt and spider webs, and everything in it spoiled! And we need it so much! I declare, I most wish they hadn't written one word about it. It's too hard, Mamsie, I can't bear it," and the curly brown head sank into her mother's lap, and the tears choked the voice.

It *was* hard for Carol, a minister's daughter on the far western frontier, where crops were poor and money scarce. She had few things to enjoy—few, I mean, compared with those that

you have, you happy girls whose lives are filled with sunshine and treasures. She loved pretty things just as well as you do, and was a thousand times happier over a new ribbon or a bit of embroidery than you know how to be; and as for books, in all her twelve years Carol had had but two that she could really call her own, her Bible and her hymn book.

But the two weeks before Christmas had been gladdened by a wonderful letter that came from an Eastern Sunday school, and this was its message:

"The North Street Sunday school sends you Christmas greetings, which you will find in a barrel that we ship by freight to-day to your address. Please notify us of its safe arrival."

The letter reached the little parsonage late at night, when Carol and dear little Ruth, the pet of the home, were fast asleep. But the light in the mother's face the next morning was so bright that the secret could not be kept; and when she knew it, small wonder that Carol could think of little else till Christmas Day.

"Oh, what do you suppose will be in it?" she questioned over and over. "Let's guess, Ruthie. I think there'll be a dress for you and some mittens for papa—he needs them dreadfully, you know—and oh, I do hope there'll be a book for me—just one—because I've read all those in the

house except papa's sermon books. I tried to read those, but they aren't interesting. What *do* you think will be in it, Ruth?"

And the golden-haired, blue-eyed baby—just as fair and sweet as the treasure in your home—said shyly, "I don't know, but something good. Perhaps," and imagination reached its utmost height, "perhaps there'll be a big, round dollar."

"Oh, no, Ruthie, folks don't send dollars in barrels. It'll be clothes and such things, of course."

But the ways of freight trains are past finding out. It did seem as if that particular one, that was laden with so much of hope and cheer, might have gone straight to its destination. But Christmas Day came and went, and no barrel appeared at the parsonage door. "It will surely be here by New Year's," said the minister, but there were no signs of it on New Year's morning, or the next day, or the next week, or the next month. Do you wonder that Carol was discouraged, or that she said, one day,

"I don't believe there ever was a barrel! I believe they made the whole story up, on purpose to cheat us!"

. . . . .

But back in the North Street Sunday school there was real trouble, too, though it could not be so keen as Carol's. They had taken so much

pains with that barrel! Classes had vied with each other in filling it, and Class No. 19, composed of girls about Carol's age, had assumed special charge of the Christmas for the Western girl.

"She'll want something that looks warm, way out there in the cold," said Edyth, and a bright, red flannel waist, and neat leather belt went into the barrel.

"I don't suppose she can get ribbons so easily as we can! I wish I knew the color of her hair;" —this from Dorothy—"I'll send pink and blue both—she can wear one of them, I'm sure."

"I shall send her books," cried Laura. "I, too," said Lucy, "and a box of candy. I don't believe she'll be any happier when she opens the packages than we are in sending them."

"She can have no happier face," said the teacher to herself, as she prayed that the dear young hearts might so learn the blessed lesson of giving that it would never be forgotten.

And now it was all for nothing—so it seemed. No "tracers" discovered the barrel, no railroad officials could find it. To all appearance, it was hopelessly lost.

. . . . .

There began to be a touch of spring in the air in the far Western country. The snow had disappeared from the lowlands, and though the

bare, brown fields were yet wet and dreary, the farmers knew that they would soon be ready for the plow.

The Christmas barrel was quite forgotten, for there was more serious trouble in the parsonage. Dear little Ruth, the sunshine of the home, saw the first spring flowers blossom in a sheltered nook, and then closed her sweet, blue eyes to open them again in the eternal spring, in the garden of God. This was the end of the hard, cold winter—the darkness and gloom of a great sorrow.

Softly they drew a white cloth over the face of their darling, and left the precious body as it had never been left before—alone. Then the minister drew his wife aside to whisper,

"Don't tell Carol, dear, she has all that she can bear, but I haven't one cent for the burial of our baby. I shall start very early in the morning to see if I can borrow ten dollars from Brother Brewster over at Reading."

Can you picture that walk in the chill of the early morning—the walk of an empty-handed, broken-hearted father, ten miles and back, that he might have the wherewithal to bury his child? Worse still, he was haunted all the way by the specter of doubt:

"I must have the money, but how can I ever pay it back? How can I expect to save ten dol-

lars in the future any more than in the past? Oh, has it been a mistake, all a mistake coming here? Might I have served my Master just as well if I had stayed back East, in the comforts of civilization, where my family could have been properly cared for? O God, was it a mistake?"

All those long miles the bitter heart cry went up. Think you it was unheard? Nay, we have a God who hears and answers prayer.

It was Easter Eve when the minister's weary feet crossed the threshold of his home once more. Carol met him at the door with a burst of sobs.

"Oh, papa, the barrel, the Christmas barrel, has come—and Ruthie can't see it. Oh, let's not open it! I don't want to see anything that's in it!"

Very tenderly the father's arms encircled the child, as he answered, "Father knows, dear, how hard it is. We must be brave and help each other. As for the barrel, perhaps—what do you think, mother?" he asked, turning to his wife.

"I think you had better open it," she replied slowly. "There may be shoes in it that Carol can wear, and she needs them very much!"

. . . . .

In the very top of the barrel lay an envelope addressed to Rev. Mr. Graves. "This is probably some explanation," said the minister, "and

perhaps I'd better read it before we explore any farther." And this is what he read:

"STUDY OF NORTH STREET PARSONAGE,
"*December* 6, 19—.

"Dear Brother:

"The remaining contents of this barrel are love tokens from the Sunday-school of this church to yourself and family. The pastor was not asked to share the blessedness of this giving, but he cannot be denied the pleasure of so doing. He has not forgotten the purpose of his youth to be a frontier preacher, and, though failing health kept him from its fulfillment, every such shepherd of the wandering sheep is to him his substitute. As such, he begs you to accept the inclosed with a sincere prayer that the Christ-Child may dwell with you—nay, that you may know Him not only as the Babe in the Manger, but as the Christ of God, that your ministry may be in the power of His resurrection.

"Yours cordially
"CHARLES M. GRAHAM."

From the folds of the letter dropped a crisp ten dollar bill. As the minister picked it up, he said reverently: "That—I may know Him—and the power of His resurrection—and the fellowship—of His sufferings."

. . . . .

On Easter morning they laid the little form to rest. But as the minister looked into the faces of his flock—men and women and children

who knew and loved him, who sympathized with him in his sorrow even as he had wept with them beside their dead—as he remembered the struggles which he had shared, the conflicts in which he had helped them, by his own unfaltering trust, to be "more than conquerors," he knew there had been no mistake in God's plan for the lives of himself and his dear ones. The father's voice was calm and steady as he said: "We lay our little one to rest in the sure hope of the resurrection morning."

"CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR THE CHRIST-CHILD"

THE words were in bold, clear type, on a strip of white cloth extending the whole length of the wall back of the platform in the Sunday-school room. To the members of the various classes they were a puzzling surprise. But the teachers needed no explanation. There had been an invitation to the superintendent's home, an hour spent in pleasant social converse, followed by such words from the superintendent and pastor as are not easily forgotten. And there had been prayers—such prayers as bring heaven very near, simple, earnest prayers—asking God to bless the new

plans that had been made, and asking as if it were the most certain thing in the world that He would hear and answer.

"What does it mean?" said one and another, but "Wait and see," was the only reply.

Rows of expectant faces greeted the superintendent as he stepped forward for the closing exercises. But Mr. Wendell had no purpose to gratify the curiosity there expressed. He only said, quietly: "You have noticed the new motto on our wall to-day. It will remain there until the Sunday before Christmas. Then each of us, I hope, will have something to say about it."

That was all; no, not quite all, for, either verbally or by written invitation, each scholar in the school was asked to be the guest of his teacher at some time during the following week.

To take even a glimpse at each of the little groups thus brought together would be beyond our power. The plans for the class meetings were as varied as conditions required and circumstances permitted. For Miss Mellin's girls, on the threshold of womanhood, there was, of course, an evening at her beautiful home, with cake and cream and such breezy chatter as only girls of that age can furnish. For Dr. Forbes' class of fun-loving boys, most of them wage-earners in the intervals of school duties, there was a long Saturday in the woods, a tramp with rods and

lines, a noonday lunch with fish broiled to order and potatoes roasted in the coals. And the good doctor, getting the rare vacation day his busy life afforded, followed the example of his Master and fished for souls.

It is safe to assume that the talk in each of the little gatherings was on similar lines though with varying expressions. It was not the first time that Miss Henley's class of young ladies had met in the tiny parlor back of the millinery store, nor was this the first earnest discussion carried on there. But there was a difference somehow; the thought in their minds seemed so great, so wonderful, that they could not talk about it so easily as usual. It was Kate Masters, of course, who broke the silence.

"Don't you think that our love gifts, those we make to our friends, are that sort, Miss Henley?" she asked, abruptly.

"What sort, Kate?" asked Miss Henley in return.

"Why, you know—'for the Christ-child.' It sounds horrid to say it out loud, though, because —well, I know it isn't exactly true."

They were used to Kate's "backing down," as she herself called it, but Nell Phillips took up the word.

"That's so, Kate, it does sound mean. But I don't see what else there is to say. I suppose

every one of us is just as busy as she can be getting ready for Christmas. I know I am. And I haven't a cent of money to give, for I've had to stretch the little I had to make it go 'round."

"Nor I, nor a minute of time," added Caro Wendell. "Of course there's my tenth—we all have that. But we couldn't use that for these Christmas gifts, for that's not ours. They must be out and out gifts, and—well, I'm ashamed to say it, but I guess we're all alike—I didn't plan any Christmas gifts for the Christ-child." There was a suspicious little break in Caro's voice, as if tears were very near the surface.

"I'm afraid," said May Thomas, "that we're all in debt to the Lord more than we've dreamed. Don't you suppose one-tenth of our time belongs to Him just as much as one-tenth of our money?"

"Why, how could we?" began Lou Churchill, and then stopped as May continued:

"I'm thinking of a talk I heard not long ago at a missionary meeting. It didn't mean very much to me then, but it all comes back to me this afternoon. We go to church Sunday and to Sunday-school, and we count that one-seventh of our time, and think we have given the Lord more than the tithe. But ought we to count the sermons and the music as Christian work? I'm sure part of what we get on Sunday ought to be

credited to education and culture and that kind of thing. Then Sunday is the Lord's Day, and I'm not sure but we owe Him one-tenth of our time besides. I'm going to think it through for myself, at any rate, and see if I can't work out this Christmas puzzle at the same time."

When the girls separated that night there were certain distinct purposes in the mind of each, purposes whose working out was destined to affect many other lives than their own.

. . . . .

It was the Sunday before Christmas and near the close of the Sunday-school hour. On the table before the superintendent lay a pile of sealed white envelopes, and the expectant faces of scholars and teachers showed both interest and curiosity. Class had vied with class, in accordance with the wishes of their teachers, not only in giving but in secrecy concerning the gifts. The room was very still as Mr. Wendell pointed to the motto on the wall, now a familiar phrase, saying:

"A month ago this motto began to speak its silent message to us. No one knows the result, and no one knows what is in these envelopes. I am sure, however, that the results of this effort will not all be known here, whatever the opening of the envelopes may reveal. Only in heaven can they be counted up.

"These envelopes are from classes, or from individuals, following out your own wishes as expressed to your teachers. There are no names, at least on the outside, by which we may know 'who is who,' or which is who, for this giving has been to the Lord and not to men. But I believe we shall find messages here that will not only help to fill missionary treasuries, but will fill our own hearts with a joy and gladness we have never known before."

As he said this the superintendent opened the envelope lying on top of the pile, and taking from it a ten-dollar gold piece, read the accompanying note:

"A class gift for Missions—the gold of self-denial, for the sake of Him who 'first loved us.'"

"A hundred dimes from a hundred little people, to help give other boys and girls a chance" would have suggested the primary class without wee Harold's cry, "That's my class, and I picked up chips to get my ten cents."

"An unnecessary ribbon, a pair of gloves mended instead of getting new ones, chocolate creams unbought, some walks instead of trolley rides—all these are tucked into this tiny envelope." Folded within this note was a crisp five-dollar bill.

"Didn't you wonder why we hollered so? We

just had to, to make you hear, and here's the three dollars we made." They laughed, of course, as they remembered that Dr. Forbes' class had been most persistent in crying the daily papers, and clamorous for errands to be done—and paid for.

"A thank offering for last Sunday's sermon"; "a pocket-piece that had better be doing some good in the world"; "ten dollars for a scholarship, with more to follow"; the promise of fifty dollars during the year to come, "to be used 'at Jerusalem' or for 'all nations'"; so the notes went on, the pile of bills and coin beginning to show over the edge of the basket into which they were thrown.

At last but two envelopes remained on the table. From the first of these, when opened, there fell several slips of paper, but no money. Taking up a sheet that inclosed the others, Mr. Wendell read:

"We are volunteers, and so have to give our names. Use us if you can." The names of Miss Henley's girls were on the slips, following promises like these:

"I will help in the missionary work of the Junior Society next year"; "I will do my best for a mission study class, if there are those who would like to join one"; "We've done what we said we would not do—we've joined the Woman's

Foreign Missionary Society, and have promised to take charge of its children's work next year"; "If I may, I will gather up the Mothers' Jewels, and train them for home missionary work." When you know that each of these places and several others for which the girls volunteered had been begging for workers for many a day, you will not wonder at the glad hearts and shining faces of the leaders in these various lines of work as the pledges were read.

A change came over the face of the superintendent as he glanced at the contents of the next envelope. There was no money—only a tiny note. After a moment's pause Mr. Wendell read:

"I give myself to-day. 'I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord, I'll say what you want me to say.'"

"I know this writing," said Mr. Wendell, his voice trembling with emotion. "The writer has given her most precious possession—and mine," he added, softly, and then they knew that sweet Caro Wendell was her father's Christmas gift to the Christ-child.