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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Poetry.

December 25.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

O Winter dark and bare!  
Who giveth thee to wear  
Rich raiment that besemeth Summer bright?  
O pale abhorred Guest!  
What makes thy coming blest?  
O charmless one! how bringest thou delight?  
What maketh thy dull eye to shine.  
And o'er thy face forlorn spreads a sweet smile divine?

O Winter stern and grim!  
Why glows Earth's gladdest hymn  
Amidst the keenness of thine icy blast?  
Why ringeth Man's best cheer  
Full on thy silence drear?  
Why stream his smiles as thy snow falleth fast?  
In Earth's dead hour, o'er Nature's tomb.  
Why breaketh forth the heart into full Summer bloom?

O Lord of Glory bright!  
From thy descending light  
The gloom of Winter learneth this strange glow:  
O Heavenly Lover dear!  
O bringer of all cheer!  
Thou makest golden while of Nature's woe;  
Pale Winter suns his face forlorn  
In the full majesty of this thrice-blessed morn.

Not on sweet vernal flowers,  
Not on bright Summer hours  
More bloom, more beauty doth thy birthday shed.  
Thy full-orbed brightness streameth  
When the sun faintly beameth  
Thou bringest bloom when flowers are withered;  
Thou mak'st the songless ear to thrill,  
Thy gladsome bells ring forth when every bird is still.

Thou who our flesh didst take,  
Thou who our chains didst break,  
Thou who our tears didst weep, our death didst die!  
Thou who didst bear our sin,  
Thou who our Heaven didst win,  
Thou who dost keep those mansions far on high!  
Thou who the Vale of Tears didst bless,  
Thou who would'st robe our souls in thine own holiness;

Thou bringest Winter bare  
Bright Summer's golden hair,  
Thou teachest his grim face a smile divine;  
In thee our mirth is sweet;  
Beneath thy Mercy Seat  
We build a Bower of Bliss and call it thine.  
What joy may fill our hearts, nor swell  
Into a soaring song for our Emmanuel?  
—T. H. Gill.

## Selections.

### Correspondence between a Theological Student and his Father.

Theo. Seminary, Nov. 6, 1860.

MY DEAR FATHER:—I am beginning to consider whether it is not duty to cut short my course in this Institution. I am twenty-six years of age, and life is fast hurrying away. My services in the preaching line, are considerably in demand. I have been frequently asked by members of churches whether I have not studied enough. My sermons, three weeks ago last Sabbath, made a deep impression upon the congregation in—. A large number of the sisters and a few of the brethren crowded around me after the service, shook my hand warmly, and hinted that the Lord has work for me to do in that part of the vineyard. Yesterday I took from the Post Office an urgent and pressing call and invitation to become their pastor and shepherd. The more I preach, the less I feel inclined to follow up and pursue the course of study marked out by the Trustees of this Institution. My Hebrew and Greek are dry, as, in my College days, the more I preached the glorious gospel of the blessed God, the more like "chips and porridge" I found my studies.

Besides, I am impatient to be in the heat of the great battle. My soul longs to be at work. These are wonderful times. The Lord has need of those whom He has called to the ministry. If I remain to the end of my course, I shall be considerably in debt.

Your Affectionate Son,

P. S. In preparing your answer, please consider, especially, that if I remain, I may lose the uncommonly eligible situation which is now offered to me. The church to which I allude has a magnificent house, and a fifteen hundred dollar organ, and numbers two hundred and seventy-five.

Nov. 13, 1860.

MY DEAR SON:—I have received your letter. You know that I have never seen the inside of a Theological Seminary, but you know, also, that I have seen considerable of churches and ministers. You know that I

have seen a good deal of students. I feel prepared, therefore, to tell you my mind, and my mind is this, that you better stay in the Institution till you have completed your course; and even at that, if you don't wish, before you have been in the ministry five years, that the course had been four years instead of three, you will feel differently from some of the best preachers we have among us.

I don't think much of what you say about your age. A man who will be only twenty-eight years old when he takes the pastoral care of a church, and yet feels that he is entering on the work late, must have forgotten that his Lord and Master did not begin his public ministry till He was about thirty.

I think still less of the report you sent me about your preaching. I see that you have yet to learn how superficial is the judgment of five-eighths of the members of our churches respecting preaching. Some praise a sermon for qualities which are its greatest faults, and others berate a sermon for qualities which are its greatest excellencies. Don't draw the foolish inference, my son, that you ought to close your studies because people praise your preaching. Half of the churches make fools of themselves by filling young men's heads with false notions of their ability. You ought to be disgusted with such flattery. I think none the better of you for being asked so often whether you have not studied enough, and I think much the worse of those who have asked you. You know, my son, that you are blessed or cursed with a great deal of natural fluency. Now I have observed that natural fluency is in almost all cases the mother of superficiality. I do not want you to be a book-worm, but I am alarmed that you are so far gone in self-conceit as to call your studies "chips and porridge."

I am amazed that you have any want of interest in the Greek and Hebrew of the Bible. It looks to me almost like the sin against the Holy Ghost. I have noticed for many years that the young men who leave the Theological School before their time is up, are, with precious few exceptions, the fluent ones. But those are the ones that ought to stay. And I have also noticed that what the churches mean by the "smart" preacher is one that talks fast, and yet these fast talkers are amazingly apt to give out. The report gets round that their stomachs have given out, or their throats, when, if the honest truth were told, they have given out a little higher up.

I am no critic, but I should like to know what the Professor of Sacred Rhetoric in the Seminary would say to some things in your letter. They seem to me to show that you have fallen into what I have heard people call "the spread-eagle" or "the highfalutin" style, and if I am right, I advise you to stay in the Seminary till you are grey if you cannot get such a style broken up before. You abound in repetitions. You tell about urgent and pressing. You tell about a call and invitation. You tell about being a pastor and a shepherd. You tell about following up and pursuing. A man that will strike a blow after the nail has been driven in just as far as it can be has something more to learn, I reckon. You better not leave the Seminary just yet. I know the churches do not "loathe this light food," but, my son, be not a partaker of their sins.

If you come out of your studies two or three hundred dollars in debt, it can be wiped off very easily if you are economical and don't get married too soon. Speaking of getting married, I must discharge my whole duty, and ask you whether you want to break your connection with the Theological School for the sake of forming so much the sooner another kind of connection. A little honest searching of the heart at this point may do you no hurt.

The postscript of your letter troubles me exceedingly. It proves that your spirit is wrong. Take that postscript in your hands, and bowing before God, talk out its sentiments in prayer, and if you have one spark of grace in your heart, your face will be covered all over with shame. I advise you to become pastor, at the right time, of a church that will not make such a demand upon your abilities as shall prove disastrous to your health, your studies, and your success. Don't leave the Seminary yet. You are not ripe enough.

Your Affec. Father,

P. S. You say the Lord has need of those whom He has called to the ministry. Our young pastor sometimes quotes from Plato, I believe it is, and a few Sundays ago he quoted him as Socrates, I can't tell which, as saying to one of the friends, "Don't talk big." The exhortation seems to be well adapted to you.—Ch. Era.

### The Deacon's Dilemma; OR, THE USE OF THE BEAUTIFUL.

BY MRS. HARRIET B. STOWE.

Deacon Tilden had the squarest, neatest white house that ever showed its keen angles from the dusky clumps of old lilac bushes. In front of it stood, on each side of the doorway, two thrifty cherry-trees, which bore a bushel each every season. Excepting the aforementioned lilac trees, there was not a flower or shrub round the place. Rose bushes the Deacon thought rotted the house, and the honeysuckle which his wife tried to train over the porch, was torn down when the painters came, and, on the whole, the Deacon said, what was the use of putting it up, so long as it did not bear anything?

By the side of the house was a thrifty well-kept garden, with plenty of currant bushes, gooseberry bushes, and quince trees—and the beets, and carrots, and onions were the pride of the Deacon's heart; but, as he often proudly said, "everything was for use"—there was nothing fancy about it. His wife put in timorously one season for a flower-border—Mrs. Jenkyns had given her a petunia, and Mrs. Simpkins had brought her a package of flower-seeds from New-York—and so a bed was laid out. But the thrifty Deacon soon found that the wedding of it took time that Mrs Tilden might give to her dairy, or to making shirts and knitting stockings, and so it really troubled his conscience. The next spring he turned it into his corn-field; and when his wife mildly intimated her disappointment, said placidly, "After all, 'twas a thing of no use and took time"—and Mrs. Tilden being a meek woman, and one of the kind of saints who always suppose themselves miserable sinners, specially confessed her sin of being inwardly vexed about the incident in her prayers that night, and prayed that her eyes might be turned off from beholding vanity, and that she might be quickened in the way of minding her work.

The front parlor of the Deacon's house was the most frigid asylum of neatness that ever discouraged the eyes and heart of a visitor. The four blank walls were guiltless of any engraving or painting, or of any adornment but an ordinary wall-paper, and a framed copy of the Declaration of Independence—on each of the three sides stood four chairs—under the looking-glass was a shining mahogany table, with a large Bible and an almanack on it—and a pair of cold, glistening brass andirons illustrated the fireplace. The mantel-shelf above had a pair of bright brass candlesticks, with a pair of snuffers between—and that was all. The Deacon liked it—it was plain and simple—no nonsense about it—everything for use and nothing for show—it suited him. His wife sometimes sighed and looked round it, when she was sewing, as if she wanted something, and then sung in the good old psalm—

"From vanity turn off my eyes;  
Let no corrupt design  
Or covetous desires arise  
Within this heart of mine."

The corrupt design to which this estimable matron had been tempted, had been the purchase of a pair of Parian flower-vases, whose beauty had struck to her heart when she went with her butter and eggs to the neighbouring city—but recollecting herself in time, she had resolutely shut her eyes to the allurements, and spent the money usefully in buying loaf sugar.

For it is to be remarked that the Deacon was fond of good eating, and prided himself on the bounties of his wife's table. Few women knew better how to set one—and the snowy bread, golden butter, clear preserves and jellies, were themes of admiration at all the tea-tables in the land. The Deacon didn't mind a few cents in a pound more for a nicer ham, and would now and then bring in a treat of oysters from the city when they were dearest. These were comforts, he said—one must stretch a point for the comforts of life.

The Deacon must not be mistaken for a tyrannical man or a bad husband. When he quietly put his wife's flower-patch into his

corn-field, he thought he had done her a service by curing her of an absurd notion for things that took time and made trouble, and were of no use; and she, dear soul, never had breathed a dissent to any course of his, loud enough to let him know she had one. He laughed in his sleeve often, when he saw her so tranquilly knitting or shirt-making at those times she had been wont to give to her poor little contraband pleasures. As for the flower-vases, they were repented of—and Mrs. Tilden put a handful of spring anemones into a cracked pitcher, and set it on her kitchen table, till the Deacon tossed them out of the window—"he couldn't bear to see weeds growing round."

The poor little woman had a kind of chronic heart-sickness, like the pining of a teething child, but she never knew exactly what it was she wanted. If she ever was sick, no man could be kinder than the Deacon. He has been known to harness in all haste, and rush to the neighboring town at four o'clock in the morning, that he might bring her some delicacy she had a fancy for—for that he could see the use of, but he could not sympathize in her craving desire to see Powers' Greek Slave, which was exhibiting in a neighboring town. "What did Christian people want of *stun* images?" he wanted to know. He thought the Scriptures put that down—"Eyes have they, but they hear not—ears have they, but they hear not—neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." There was the Deacon's opinion of the arts; and Mrs. Tilden only sighed, and wished she could see it, that was all.

But it came to pass that the Deacon's eldest son went to live in New-York, and from that time strange changes began to appear in the family, that the Deacon didn't like; but as Jethro was a smart, driving lad, and making money at a great pace, he at first said nothing. But on his mother's birth-day, down he came and brought a box for his mother, which, being unpacked, contained a Parian statuette of Paul and Virginia—a lovely, simple little group as ever told its story in clay.

Everybody was soon standing round it in open-mouthed admiration, and poor Mrs. Tilden wiped her eyes more than once as she looked on it. It seemed a vision of beauty in the desolate neatness of the best room.

"Very pretty, I s'pose," said the Deacon, doubtfully—for like most fathers of spirited twenty-three olders, he began to feel a little in awe of his son—but dear me, what a sight of money to give for a thing that after all is of no use!"

"I think," said Jethro, looking at his mother's suffused eyes, "it is one of the most useful things that has been brought into the house this many a day."

"I don't see how you're going to make that out," said the Deacon, looking apprehensive at the young Wisdom that had risen in his household.

"What will you wager me, father, that I will prove out of your own mouth that this statuette is as useful as your cart and oxen?"

"I know you've got a great way of coming round folks, and twitching them up before they fairly know where they are; but I'll stan' you on this question, any way." And the Deacon put his yellow silk bandanna over his bald head, and took up his position in the window seat.

"Well now, father, what is the use of your cart and oxen?"

"Why, I could not work the farm without them; and you'd all have nothing to eat, drink, or wear."

"Well, and what is the use of our eating, drinking, and wearing?"

"Use? why, we could not keep alive without it."

"And what is the use of our keeping alive?"

"The use of our keeping alive?"

"Yes, to be sure, why do we try and strive and twist and turn to keep alive, and what's the use of living?"

"Living!—why we want to live; we enjoy living—all creatures do—dogs and cats, and every kind of beast. Life is sweet."

"The use of living, then, is that we enjoy it?"

"Yes."

"Well, we all enjoy this statuette, so that