

Family Reading.

A Missionary Trio.

A RECITATION FOR A MISSION BAND. [Three girls dressed in the costume of China, Greenland, and India]

(Enter China.) My burden'd heart o'erflows with thankfulness To greet my cherished benefactors here, Oh, you can never know how great the work Which you have done for me. My mind was blank; No knowledge had I of this world of ours; I could not trace one word on lettered pages; Of God or Christ or Heaven I had not heard, A gloomy state—and yet I helpless was For all my blunders and my sins My body suffered untold agonies; And yet I sinned again, I knew no way I could be saved from my sins, I could not long to die. The future world Was all a dread. For when I died, To earth I might come back a bat, A snake, a scorpion, a thing so vile My friends would shrink from me in horror. And in my wretchedness I was not alone, Four hundred million souls in China To-day cry out to you. To-day in darkness Lift burden'd, aching souls, praying Their unknown gods for light and peace. But Christian love has roused your sympathies, And thro' your efforts and your offerings The light of grace divine has pierced my soul. O wondrous light! If half could but be told You'd ne'er regret your toil and sacrifice. O happy sisters, you who lifted me, Remember them; my kindred—raise them, too.

(Enter Greenland.) From the ice-bound regions of the pole I come To greet the children of America. There is no zone upon this world of ours So cold but warm hearts throb, affection burns, And gratitude falls down before you, That while ye cared for more favored climes We by the frozen seas were not forgotten. We live in huts of ice, and on us Warm summer never smiles. But o'er our land the Saviour reigns, And we bow low and worship Him who in your hearts Put strong desires to save all those Who knew Him not. Speed on the work, To distant climes send the same glad news, Until all nations and all tongues confess The wonders of His love, His grace and mercy.

(Enter India.) From "Greenland's icy mountain" you have heard. I come from "India's coral strand," Where longest lingers on the western hills The sun in burning heat and splendor. To us the Gospel light and truth has come, But oh, my friends, two ministers to one million souls, Will not bring the world to Christ to-day. You sit here in peace, in comfort, joy; While children there are dying day by day, Because God made them girls. The river's rapid stream hushes the infant's wail, And mothers turn with aching, empty hearts Back to their idols. The father's sinful greed Dooms many a girl like you to worse than death. Hark! hear the Macedonian cry! God hears above. It has pierced the sky. Will ye be deaf? "He that loveth not his brother," Hear ye these words? Harken to them And send us help. Hear ye our cry.

Aunt Parson's Story.

BY DORA DENNIS.

I told Hezekiah—that's my man. People mostly call him Deacon Parson, but he never gets any deaconing from me. We were married—"Hezekiah and Amariah," that's goin' on forty years ago, and he's jest Hezekiah to me, and nothin' more. "Well, as I was sayin'," says I; "Hezekiah, we aren't right. I am sure of it." And he said: "Of course not. We are poor sinners, Amy: all poor sinners." And I said: "Hezekiah, this 'poor sinner' talk has gone on long enough. I suppose we are poor sinners; but I don't see any use of being mean sinners; and there's one thing I think is real mean." It was jest after breakfast; and, as he felt poorly, he hadn't gone to the shop yet; and so I had this little talk with him to sort o' chirk him up. He knew what I was coming to; for we had had the subject up before. It was our little church. He always said: "The poor people, and what should we ever do?" And I always said: "We never shall do nothin' unless we try." And so when I brought the matter up in this way, he just began his toothpick, and said: "What's up now. Who's mean? Amariah, we oughtn't to speak evil one of another." Hezekiah always says "poor sinners"; and

doesn't seem to mind it; but when I occasionally say mean sinners he somehow get uneasy. But I was started, and I meant to free my mind.

So I said, says I: "I was goin to confess our sins. Dan' confessed for all his people, and I was confessin' for all our little church."

"Truth is," says I, "ours is allus called one of the 'feeble churches,' and I am troubled about it. I've raised seven children, and at fourteen months old every boy and girl of 'em could run alone. And our church is fourteen years old," says I, "and it can't take a step yet without somebody to hold on by. The board helps us, and General Jones, good man, he helps us—helps too much, I think—and so we live along, but we do not seem to grow strong. Our people draw their rations every year as the Indians do up at the agency; and it doesn't seem sometimes as if they ever thought of doing anything else."

"They take it so easy," I said. "That's what worries me. I do not suppose we could pay all expenses, but we might act as if we wanted to, and as if we meant to do all we can."

"I read," says I, "last week about the debt of the Board; and this week, as I understand," says I, "our application is goin in for another year, and no particular effort to do any better, and it frets me. I can't sleep nights; and I can't take comfort Sabbaths. I've got to feelin' as if we were a kind of perpetual paupers. And that is what I meant when I said, 'It is real mean I suppose I was a little sharp,' says I; 'but, I'd rather be sharp than flat any day; and, if we don't begin to stir ourselves, we shall be flat enough before long, and shall deserve to be. It grows on me. It has jest been 'Board, Board, Board,' for fourteen years, and I'm tired of it. I never did like boardin'," says I; "and, even if we are poor, I believe we might do something toward settin' up house-keepin' for ourselves."

"Well, there's not many of us; about a hundred, I believe; and some of these is women folks, and some is jest girls and boys. And we all have to work hard and live close; but," says I, "let us show a disposition, if nothin' more. Hezekiah, if there's any sperrit in us, let us show some sort of disposition."

And Hezekiah looked down at his boots and rubbed his chin, as he always does when he's goin' to say somethin', and says he: "If that's all, I think we can do somethin'." I think there's some of us that shows a disposition."

Of course I understood that bit; but I kep' still; I mean I kep' right on with my argument; and I said: "Yes, and a pretty bad disposition it is. It's a disposition to let ourselves be helped when we ought to be helping ourselves. It's a disposition to lie still and let somebody carry us. And we are growin' up cripples—only we don't grow."

"Kiah," says I, "do you hear me? Sometimes when I want to talk a little he jest shets his eyes, and begins to rock himself back and forth in the old arm chair; and he was doin' that now. So I said: 'Kiah, do you hear?' And he said: 'Some!' and then I went on: 'I've got a proposition,' says I. And he sort o' looked up, and said: 'Hev you? Well, between a disposition and a proposition, I guess the proposition might be better.'

He's awful sotterotic, sometimes. But I wasn't goin' to get riled, nor thrown off the track; so I jest said: "Yes; do you and I git two shillin' worth apiece a week out of that blessed little church of ours, do you think?" says I. "Cos, if we do, I want to give two shillin' a week to keep it goin', and I thought maybe you could do as much: So he said he guessed we could stand that; and I said: "That's my proposition; and I mean to see if we can't find somebody else that'll do the same. It'll show disposition, anyway."

"Well, I suppose you'll hev your own way," says he; "you most allers do. And I said: 'Isn't it most allers a good way?' Then I brought out my subscription paper. I had it ready. I didn't just know how to shape it, but I knew it was something about 'the sums set opposite our names;' so I drew it up, and took my chances. 'Ye must head it,' says I, 'because you're the oldest deacon, and I must go

on next, because I am the deacon's wife; and then I'll see some of the rest of the folks.'

So Kiah sot down, and put on his specs, and took his pen, but did not write. "What's the matter?" says I. And he said: "I'm sort o' ashamed to subscribe two shillin'." I never signed so little as that for anything. I used to give that to go to circus when I was nothing but a boy, and I ought to do more than that to support the gospel. Two shillin' a week? Why, it's only a shillin' a sermon, and all the prayer-meetin's thrown in. I can't go less fifty cents, I am sure." So down he went for fifty cents, and then I signed for a quarter; and then my sunbonnet went onto my head pretty lively; and says I: "Hezekiah, there's some cold potato in the pantry, and you know where to find the salt; so, if I am not back by dinner time, don't be bashful: help yourself." And I started.

I called on the Smith family first. I felt sure of them. And they were just happy. Mr. Smith sighed, and so did Mrs. Smith; and long John, he came in while we were talkin', and put his name down; and then old Grandma Smith she didn't want to be left out; and so there was four of 'em. I've allers found it a great thing in any good enterprise to enlist the Smith family. There's a good many of 'em. Next I called on the Joslyns, and next on the Chapins, and then on Widdie Chadwick; and so I kept on goin'.

I met a little trouble once or twice, but not much. There was Fussy Furber; and bein' trustee, he thought I was out of my sphere, he said; and he wanted it understood that such work belonged to the trustees. "To be sure," says I, "I'm glad you've found it out. I wish the trustees had discovered that a little sooner." There was sister Puffy, that's got the asthma. She thought we ought to be lookin' after 'the sperritoalities.' She said we must get down before the Lord. She didn't think churches could be run on money. But I told her I guessed we'd been down enough, if that would do any good; and that I guessed we should be jest as spiritual to look into our pocket-books a little; and I said it was a shame to be tarnally beggin' so of the Board.

She looked dreadful solemn when I said that, and I almost felt as if I'd been committin' profane language. But I hope the Lord will forgive me if I took anything in vain. I did not take my call in vain, I tell you. Mrs. Puffy is good, only she allers wanted to talk so pious; and she put down her two shillin', an' then heve a sigh. Then I found the boys at the cooper shop, and got seven names there at once; and when the list began to grow, people seemed ashamed to say no; and I kept gainin' till I had just an even hundred, and then I went home.

Well, it was pretty well toward candle light when I got back, and I was that tired I didn't know much of anything. I've washed, and I've scrubbed, and I've biled soap, and I've moved; and I low that almost any one of that sort of things is a little exhaustin'. But put your bakin' and movin' and bilin' soap together, and it won't work out as much as genuine tired soul and body as one day with a subscription paper to support the gospel. So when I sort o' dropped into a chair, and Hezekiah said, "Well?" I was past speakin'; and I put my check apron up to my face as I hadn't done since I was a young, foolish girl, and cried. I don't know what I felt so bad about. I don't know as I did feel bad. But I felt cry, and I cried. And Kiah, seein' how it was kind o' sorry for me, set some tea a steepin'; and when I had my tea and my cry, and so mingled my drink with weepin', I felt better.

I handed him the Subscription Paper, and he looked it over as if he didn't expect anything; but soon he began sayin': "I never!" And I said: "Of course you didn't; you never tried. How much is it?" "Why, don't you know?" says he. "No," I said; "I ain't quick in figures, and I hadn't time to foot it up. I hope it will make us out this year three hundred dollars or so."

"Amy," says he, "you're a prodigy, a prodigy, I may say—and you don't know it. A hundred names at two shillin' each gives us \$22 a Sabbath. Some of them may fail, but most of

'em is good; and there is ten, eleven, thirteen, that sign fifty cents. That'll make up what fails. That paper of yours'll give us thirteen hundred dollars a year!" I jumped up like I was shot. "Yes," he says, "shant need anything this year from the Board. This church for this year, at any rate, is self-supporting."

We both sot down, and kep' still a minute, when I said, kind o' softly: "Hezekiah," says I, "isn't it about time for prayers?" I was just chokin'; but, as he took down the Bible, he said: "I guess we'd better sing somethin'." I nodded, like, as he struck in. We often sing at prayers in the morning; but now it seemed like the Scripeter that say: "He giveth songs in the night." Kiah generally likes the solemn tunes, too; and we sing "Show pity, Lord," a great deal; and this mornin' we had sung "Hark from the tombs a doleful sound," 'cause Kiah was not feeling very well, and we wanted to obirk up a little.

So I jes waited to see what metre he'd strike to-night; and, would you believe it? I didn't know that he knew such a tune. But off he started on "Joy to the world, the Lord is come." I tried to catch, but he went off, lickety-switch, like a steam engine, and I couldn't keep up. I was partly laughin' to see Kiah go it, and partly cryin' again, my heart was so full; so I doubled up some of the notes and jumped over the others, and so we safely reached the end.

But, I tell you Hezekiah prayed. He allers prays well; but this was a bran new prayer, exactly suited to the occasion. And when Sabbath came, and the minister got up and told what had been done, and said: "It is all the work of one good woman, and done in one day," I just got scared and wanted to run. And when some of the folks shook hands with me after meetin' and said with tears in their eyes, how I'd saved the church, and all that, I come awful nigh gettin' proud. But, as Hezekiah says, "we're all poor sinners," so I choked it back. But I am glad I did it; and I don't believe our church will ever go boardin' any more.

Saved by a Lark.

Patty lived in the country, in a white house with green blinds. There was a nice yard, with smooth cut grass and green trees where the birds would sit singing and swinging on the boughs. Patty had a swing, too,—one that papa put up,—of good stout rope, that would go up ever so high into the branches. Patty was six years old.

A short distance back from the house and gardens stood three great barns, filled with stores of hidden wonders. But she liked best to go with mamma in early spring, into the woods to gather flowers, and search for ferns and soft, green mosses, or, in the autumn, to go into the fields where papa was at work, and make him a little visit.

One morning, in the harvest-time, Patty was alone at the door. Outside, all was bright and sunny. Through the air came the softened hum of the distant reapers. Patty thought she would like to go out and see papa; and so in another moment the little feet were trotting across the fields. When she came into the wheat field, she could see the men going down one side following the reaper, and leaving a shining row of bundles behind.

Patty tried to catch up, but they worked very fast; and by and by, growing tired, she sat down to rest on a sheaf of wheat. By her side the uncut grain waved in the sunlight. An old beech tree cast a cool, pleasant shade,—it was very beautiful there.

Suddenly, a bird flew out of the wheat near by, singing a rich, clear song. Patty clapped her hands in delight.

"Perhaps there is a nest in there," thought Patty; and 'in there' she went, looking with a pair of bright eyes eagerly about. And, yes, there it was surely, a nest and three of the dearest, sweetest little birdies. Was there ever anything so funny as those downy little heads with the tiny bills wide open? Such a nice place for a nest, too, Patty thought. It was like being in a golden forest in there, for the grain was high above her head. The yellow straw laughed too, a waving, murmuring laugh, and tossed its head back and forth, but

never whispered to the child of danger, nor even told to the men coming rapidly along, the story of the little girl hidden in its midst. The men came on, the machine leading them, the horses drawing steadily, and the knives cutting sharp and sure.

What was it that made the farmer stop his team all at once? Did he know his little daughter was in danger? No, indeed; he thought she was safely cared for at home. But he was a noble man, with a large kind heart; and he had seen a lark fluttering wildly over the grain. So, as he would not willingly hurt the least of God's creatures, he said to the man: "Here, Tom, come and hold the team. There is a nest somewhere near the old tree yonder. I'll hunt it up, and you can drive around so as not to hurt the birds."

Ah, what a cry of surprise papa uttered when he found his darling Patty sitting there! How fast his heart beat, when he thought of the danger she had been in! And how it thrilled and softened as he caught her up in his arms, and covering her face with kisses, said, "It was the bird that saved her!"

When the first excitement was over, and Patty had been carried safely home in her father's arms, and the men were going down the field again, leaving a wide uncut space around the lark's nest, somebody—it was a great, rough-looking man—said, while the tears glistened in his eyes and his voice grew husky, "God bless the birds!"—Sunlight.

"Pagoda Shadows."

BY ADELE M. FIELDE.

BUDDHIST NUNS.

Among the villages, one not unfrequently sees a woman in a gray cotton tunic and conical splint hat, with a shaven head and natural feet, and carrying a bag and basket on her arm. Her attire distinguishes her from other, Chinese women. The long gray gown and shaven head are the badges of her religious order, that of a Buddhist nun. The bag holds the rice, and the basket the fruit and vegetables, given her at the doors of the houses before which she halts. She is supposed to have more intimate friendship with Buddha than have those who dwell outside his temple, and those who give to the servant will get favors from the lord of the house. Devotion to the believer is not a criterion of the truth of a creed. The Buddhist nun's bag is always well filled, although little good comes to the donor of its contents.

In the gleanings of her morning walk, the nun has enough for herself, and for some other nuns too young or too old to go out and gather for themselves. Her home is a temple, sometimes extensive in its grounds, fine in its architecture, and elegant in its appointments. It is built by one rich family, or by the contributions of many persons, in the hope of making merit which shall be put to their credit in their next world. It has a main building, in which are immense figures of Buddha, and lesser halls with images of the saints. Before these the nuns chant liturgies three times a day. Their sacred writings are in Chinese letters, translated from the Buddhist books brought into China from India in the year 63 A. D. Around the chief temple are courts with small apartments where the nuns sleep and work. These women are the only inmates of the place. They sew and spin, and bring up children to be nuns like themselves. These child-nuns are not such by the will of God, nor by their own will; but they are orphans by the will of some man, and nuns by the will of some woman. They are sold to the nunnery when two or three years old, for three or four dollars apiece; and the nuns, each buying as many as she can support, bring them up. Sometimes a nun thus has as many as twenty little girls under her immediate care, and subject to no authority but hers. The nuns, being well to do in the world, do not take such children as would be thrown or given away, but buy those that are past the first diseases of infancy, and healthy and attractive. As soon as the girls are old enough, they are taught to weave and embroider and read. A good teacher is employed to

instruct them, and they often become fine scholars.

At fifteen, the little girl ceases to eat animal food, has her head clean-shaven, and puts on the dress of a nun. It is said that no coercion is used in keeping girls in the nunnery, but that none of them ever choose to leave it and return to their parents. They are much more comfortable in the nunnery than they could be with the poverty-stricken parents who sold them.

The nuns frequently make long excursions in their own boats, bringing home boat-loads of fruits or vegetables. They weave with skill, and embroider exquisite, and are almost the only women who know how to read. They are called to chant at death-beds, to dispel the evil influences in streets and houses, and receive pay for special petitions to their gods. Their incomes are large and their lives easy. Taken together, they appear strong, portly, and comfortable beyond other Chinese women.

The nunneries are regarded with reverence by the ignorant and superstitious, but it is whispered among the wise that they are not the religious and respectable haunts they nominally represent. We hear not unfrequently of a nun's having been broken up by the civil authorities, on account of its vice.

In a country where no census is taken, and no statistics compiled, it is difficult to ascertain the number of nuns in the population. But one sees a dozen nunneries with in a days' journey; and in one forenoon I visited three nunneries having a hundred nuns in them all. The abbess in one of them was seventy-five years old, and had been in the nunnery seventy-two years. All the women with whom I privately spoke had been in the nunnery from infancy. The friendly old abbess gave me every opportunity to speak of what she called "God's doctrines," but when I suggested that a native female teacher might come and stay there a few days, she responded that it would be wholly contrary to the customs of the place should she allow any meat-eater to lodge there. She said she herself was old and had laid by enough to live on and so she could believe my words; but the other nuns could not believe, because, if they did, they would have nothing to eat. She would herself come to my home and be taught, and I could come and tell my doctrine to the nuns, and they could judge for themselves whether it were something for which it were worth while to starve.

Whiskey and Shipwreck.

One of the latest culpable shipwrecks was the recent loss of the steamer Amsterdam off Sable Island. The New York Tribune says: The verdict of all unbiased seamen in this case must be that the Amsterdam ought not to have been lost. Besides the ship and valuable cargo three lives were lost and two hundred and forty others were put in deadly peril. The passengers were landed on Sable Island in boats in the midst of "a great deal of confusion, misconduct and suffering." Some of the crew and some of the passengers are said to have got at the liquors on board and to have "made themselves drunk." It is also said that "some of the people on shore obtained spirits from the ship," and "appear to have behaved with great inhumanity." Whiskey adds greatly to the perils of the sea and of shipwreck. Ex-Gov. Long, of Massachusetts, was right when he denounced it in Congress as "the dynamite of civilization."

A holy life is made up of a number of small things; little words, not eloquent speeches or sermons; little deeds, not miracles or batties, nor one great heroic act of mighty martyrdom, make up the true Christian life. The little, constant submean, not the lightning; the waters of Siloam "that go softly" in the meek mission of refreshment, not the "waters of the river, great and many," rushing down in noisy torrents. Are the true symbols of a holy life, The avoidance of little evils, little sins, little inconsistencies, little weaknesses, little foibles, little indulgences of the flesh; the avoidance of such little things; as these go far to make up, at least, the negative of a holy life.—Bonar.