

The Fireside.

BUYING A MONUMENT.

The supper dishes were washed and put away, and the kitchen put in spotless order, and yet the good wife pattered back and forth from cellar to pantry intent on those infinitely numerous yet infinitesimal duties which go to prove that "woman's work is never done."

"Come, mother," said the farmer, already settled in his easy chair, "ain't you most ready to sit down and look over this catalogue with me?"

"Yes, David, I'm coming right away," said the wife, untying her gingham apron to hang up behind the kitchen door.

There seemed a little lack of heartiness in her voice, but then the selection of a tombstone could scarcely be considered an exhilarating occupation.

She came and sat down by the table. The farmer drew up the shaded lamp and opened a large illustrated catalogue. There were monuments of all sorts and sizes, to suit every purse. Soon they were deep in the comparative merits of gray or Scotch granite, marble or composite.

"I rather like this manufactured stone," said the farmer; "these rustic designs just strike my fancy. This broken tree trunk, now, with the ivy-vine running over it. Don't you like that?"

"How much money can we put into the monument, David?"

"Well, I calculated what we'd want would cost about five hundred. We've got that saved up in the bank now, and I wouldn't grudge it if it took the whole of it."

"No, I wouldn't begrudge it," the wife spoke a little absently. "We've got a nice lot in the cemetery, and there's Jamie's grave with only a head-board yet. We must have his name on the monument, and room for ours and the children's. But then, the children may be scattered everywhere and have families and monuments of their own after we're gone. I wonder"—and she broke off entirely.

"You wonder what? You don't seem no ways anxious about it tonight, mother. I thought all along that you was the chief one concerned."

"Yes, I have been. I wanted it for Jamie's sake and the rest of the children. But, do you know, father, ever since I heard about that new Deaconness Hospital they're trying so hard to build, I've wondered if a monument, standing away off there in the cemetery so lonesome-like, is the very best use we can make of the Lord's money."

"We earned the money," said the husband with a grim little smile.

"Yes, in a way we did. I reckon, though, the Lord had something to do with it, giving us sunshine and rain and making things grow. But anyway, we gave ourselves and all we had to Him when we joined the church, didn't we? but I suppose we'd ought to consider what He'd like to have us do with what's over, just as we would with any partner. Do you really think He'd care about our having a marble monument, just to tell folks a hundred years from now that somebody by the name of Brown lived once and died? A plain little head-board would tell it just as well. And would they care—those folks—whether it cost five hundred dollars or five? And what would we care—then? Seems to

me we can do something that will count for more to the world than that."

"There's a good deal in it," said the farmer, thoughtfully, "but you ain't thinking of our putting the whole of that five hundred into that hospital, are you? What about Jamie?"

"It's just about Jamie I was thinking. Don't you suppose he'd like it better so where he is now, knowing we did it for love of him, and of the Lord Jesus?"

The farmer only nodded. His face was turned away.

"There in the hospital," the wife went on, though she knew her case was won, "there in the hospital there'd be something doing all the time—sick folks being cured, sad hearts being comforted, and, I dare say, souls being saved. Never a patient comes and goes, the deaconess says, without hearing about Jesus, and many and many a one has learned to love Him through the kindness shown for His sake. And, just think, father, we'd be having a hand in it all, even after we're dead and gone. If we want folks to remember our names, we could have them put on the door of a room or on a tablet."

"Where there'd be more folks to read them than there would be in the cemetery—that's what you were going to say, wasn't it, wife? And I guess you're right—I guess you're right. We'll talk it over with the children, and if they're agreed, we'll send the money to the hospital fund," and the catalogue and the discussion were closed together with an emphatic gesture.

Three days later a letter containing a check for five hundred dollars came to the hospital with such words of sympathy and cheer that a great wave of courage and thanksgiving swept through the hearts of all the workers there—for this is a story of fact, and not of fancy. —Deaconness Advocate.

Mrs. Melton's Christmas Blessing.

GRACE JEWETT AUSTIN.

Mrs. Melton was slowly running the carpet-sweeper over the rug in her husband's study, with her eyes on the large calendar over his desk.

"December first! It's a wonder how fast the days go by. I really believe I'll open the Christmas box this afternoon. It rains, and no one will call. After the children are away at school, I'll just have a quiet time for it."

Downstairs, Swedish Mary was lustily singing:

"I gave, I gave My life for thee,
What hast thou given for Me?"

And humming it also, Mrs. Melton and her sweeper journeyed upstairs to the bedrooms. She stopped to turn the wall-rol in "mother's room," so-called, though mother was out West for the winter, and High School Fred was sleeping there.

"Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters," she read, and as the sweeper went back and forth over the carpets, her mind dwelt on the words, "All waters"—she had never thought definitely of that verse before. She began to name them to herself: Atlantic, Pacific, Indian Oceans; the China Sea; the Mediterranean; the great rivers of India and South America. How many waters there were, and how many people beside them! She thought of her yearly mis-

sionary dollar, and some way it did not seem so large as usual.

"And there is a special blessing just for givers to missions, too!" she exclaimed aloud. "I never realized that before."

It was growing late in the morning. The carpet-sweeper was laid aside, and dinner cares were pressing. But at last the quiet time came, and Mrs. Melton brought out the "Christmas box" from its closet corner. This box had for some years been a favorite institution with Mrs. Melton, and she had recommended it to many friends. It had two parts—one small, with a tiny slit in its cover; one large, with a generous opening. Down through the small slit Mrs. Melton dropped odd change all the year, and never felt penniless at Christmas time. Into the larger box went bits of fancy work made, or bargains found in the shops. Early in December the box was opened for assorting, and very interesting work Mrs. Melton found it.

This had been an unusually good year for the box. Pennies and dimes were plentiful in the smaller part, while books, handkerchiefs, doilies and cushions well filled the larger. Note-book in hand, with a little puzzled scowl on her face, Mrs. Melton studied the collection.

"Now I should like to buy something really elegant for Aunt Julia. I wonder if I could possibly afford a little piece of cloisonne. And Fred needs a watch-chain, and John would enjoy that new set of histories. I believe the more money I save the more I want to spend. There isn't half enough here for all I want to do."

Swedish Mary, her afternoon work done, was climbing the back stairs, still singing, though with tired voice:

"I gave, I gave My life for thee;
What hast thou given for Me?"

In a moment the thought of the wall-rol message came back to Mrs. Melton. "Beside all waters"—could that special blessing come to her? Slowly she began to separate those dimes and nickels into two piles. She knew that it meant Aunt Julia would get an American vase instead of the costly Japanese inlaid ware. Fred might have to accept a plain silk fob, and father get one volume rather than a set; but as the mission pile grew, her face became brighter.

"I'll divide Aunt Julia's gift between her and Japan," she said to herself; "half of John's shall go to India, and I'll divide the rest all about." To plan was to do, with Mrs. Melton; so that evening her pastor had a visitor. Very simply she told the story of her morning and her afternoon, then laid her little pile of marked envelopes in his hand. The good man cleared his throat more than once before he answered.

"Sister, you have given me 'meat in due season.' May I pass on the message?" And he did; so wisely and well that a rich blessing fell on many a trusting heart that Christmas-tide, who, rejoicing in Christ's birth, tried also to send the good news to distant shores and peoples.—Zion's Herald.

Youth has its own criteria by which to judge things which its elders assess by other standards. Henry had just come into his mother's kitchen, where she was rolling pie-crust.

"Making pies, mother?"

"Yes, dear."

"Say, mother, your pies taste all right, but why don't you make some like Mrs. Thompson gives me and Billy? You can take a piece in your hand and walk all round the yard eating it and it won't break."—Youth's Companion.

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