

## The Fireside.

### AN UNCONSCIOUS MISSIONARY.

J. L. HARBOUR.

The minister and his wife were calling on Miss Maria Thorpe. They had found her sitting out on her little front porch behind a screen of vines, reading. She greeted them with great and sincere cordiality.

"You don't know how glad I am to see you!" she exclaimed, as she met them at the porch step. "You haven't been to see me for such a long time; but of course I know that you have a great many calls to make and that I cannot expect to see you very often. It's real good of you to come and see me at all, busy as you must be. Shall we go in the house or sit out here?"

"Oh, let us sit out here," said the minister. "It is so pleasant here, and the air is fairly perfumed with your lovely flowers. How many and what a variety you have!"

"I ain't got half as many as I had yesterday. I gathered twelve big bouquets and carried them around to sick and poor folks yesterday afternoon. But here I stand talking, and you haven't a chair to sit down on. I'll go in and fetch out a couple of chairs."

When they were seated, Miss Maria said: "I have just been looking over my copy of the *Woman's Missionary Friend*, and I got so interested in it. If I could live my life over, I would be a missionary. I wish every time I get to reading my missionary papers and magazines that I could be a missionary. But I guess that the Lord will have to take the will for the deed in my case."

"He is often willing to do that in the cases of those who would be missionaries if they could," said the minister. "Then you know that there are a great many missionaries who never leave their own homes, and, if you will let me say so, Miss Maria, you are one of that kind."

"I a missionary!" exclaimed Miss Maria. "My land! What in the world do I do that is in any sense missionary work?"

"Why, haven't you just been telling us about the twelve big bouquets you gathered in your garden yesterday and carried to the sick and the poor? It was the missionary spirit that prompted you to do that, and it was a deed that must have brought gladness to those to whom you carried the flowers."

"Yes, it did," said Miss Maria. "Old Mrs. Todd almost cried over the great bouquet of roses I carried her. She said that they were the first roses she had had in her hands and smelled for years. You know she has been bedridden for ten years—poor old body! Then Susan Tilley's little sick girl fairly screamed when she saw the flowers I had for her."

"The people you carried the flowers to were made happier and better for them, and that is the object of all missionary effort. And didn't I find you at poor old Mrs. Dane's last week nursing and caring for her for three days and nights when she was so sick? She told me yesterday that she believed that she would have died but for your care of her, and perhaps she would, for she was certainly very ill. She said that no one in all this town had been so good to her as you have been for ten years."

"Yes, and when the Booths had that dreadful time with the scarlet fever among that brood of children of theirs last winter, who was it but you that went right in and helped them through with it? They were too poor to hire a nurse, and Mrs. Booth told me that she attributed her husband's conversion and her own to your influence over them during the eight weeks you stayed with them helping them in their time of trouble. I do not know of any better missionary work than that."

"Why, I never thought of it as being missionary work at all," said Miss Maria.

"Well, it certainly was missionary work. It was also missionary work when you took those three orphan Baxter children into your home and kept them a month after their parents died last year. It is missionary work when you go over to poor old Eli Dart's wretched little home and clean it up for him and cook him up a supply of good food. The fact is, Miss Maria, that there are missionaries away out on the foreign field who are not doing any more genuine or any better missionary work than you are doing right here in your own home. You are a missionary."

"Well, you are one. I thought of you and of many others like you when I read this in a magazine the other day: 'God will credit us with what we would have been if we might. He that has the missionary's heart, though he be tied to an office-stool, is reckoned as one of that noble band; the woman at Zarephath, who did nothing more than share her last meal with the prophet, shall have a prophet's reward; the soul that thrills with the loftiest impulses, which the cares of the widowed mother or dependent relatives stay in fulfillment, will be surprised one day to find itself credited with the harvest which would have been reaped had those seed-germs been cast on more propitious soil. In the glory David will find himself credited with the building of the temple on Mount Zion.'—*Z. Herald*."

### WHY THE SERMON WAS DULL.

Two men were walking home from church. One said: "Well, I am glad the service is over. I thought that the dullest sermon I ever listened to."

"I am surprised," replied the other; "I really enjoyed it very much."

"You did? Well, that beats me. But, then, you are such a stickler for the church and the preacher that anything in that line interests you."

"Oh, I do not know as to that. The fact is, I was interested in thoughts pertaining to worship this morning before I went to the church."

"Why, how was that?"

"Well, easy enough. You see, this morning, at family worship, I read the fourteenth chapter of John, and, after prayer, my little eight-year-old daughter came to me and said: 'Papa, in the words of the Saviour which you just read, among other things, he said, 'I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter.' Now, who is that, father? Is he as kind and loving a father as you are, and can we go to him with our joys and sorrows as I can come to you?'"

"Then you have family worship, do you?"

"Oh, certainly. But I was going to say, my little daughter's words set me to thinking about our Heavenly Father, and then, you know, the pastor's text was 'Our Father which art in Heaven,' and the precious truths he brought out about the tender, sacred relation we sustain to Him as his children were a perfect soul-feast to me all the way through."

"Oh, I see, I see; but it was altogether different with me. The fact is, we do not have family worship. Each member of the family does his and her own Bible reading and praying in secret. I believe in *secret* prayer. Then, too, you know, that only on Saturday our State convention closed, and I could hardly wait till the paper boy came round this morning, I was so anxious to know who were nominated. So, as soon as the paper came, I commenced to read, and I became so interested in the report of the convention that I was surprised when my wife told me to hurry up, or we would be too late for church."

"Ah, I too, see. It is clear to me now why the sermon failed to interest you. Your mind was so full of the State convention that you had no appetite for spiritual things. No wonder the sermon was dull to you."

**MORAL.**—One of the best possible preparations for enjoying a sermon is an hour of the morning spent in reading and meditating upon some portion of God's Word. That makes it a pleasure to go to the church for worship.

**MORAL 2.**—The Sabbath morning spent in reading the Sunday newspaper is sufficient to make the best of sermons appear dull, and to render the services of God's house uninteresting and burdensome.—*Rel. Telescope*.

### DANIEL AND THE PULSE.

Daniel might have kept himself to pulse and water all his days and not been any wiser or greater than other men. It was not a question of what sort of diet was most conducive to learning, but what were God's commands in regard to things offered to idols and contrary to the law. It was a question of high religious principle and duty. He had learned the statutes of Jehovah and kept himself devoutly to them; hence the blessing of his humble fare and of himself in the use of it, which turned weaknesses into power and adversities into glorious triumphs.

But it was not in offensive self-assertion that Daniel and his companions decline the king's viands. An obtrusive piety is never of God. True religion is always courteous, modest and anxious to avoid unnecessary collisions. With all its inflexibility it is always amiable and kind. There are some who think they cannot be faithful without being rude, or true to God without harshness toward men. But here we have all the modesty and politeness of genuine refinement and all the courtesy of an accomplished courier, with all the steadfastness of the most devoted piety, evincing the genial sincerity and heralding in its simplicity the future greatness of the man.

Daniel did not fly into an indignant passion about his religion and his God. He did not break out in declamation against Babylonian ways and idolatries. He did not feign himself insulted by the offers of his king because they did not harmonize with his views and feeling. There was no bravado, no insolence, no defiance. That would have

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been as wrong as to eat of the king's meat. It would not have recommended him or his cause and could only have made matters worse.

Therefore, with the modesty of a true man, with due regard to the situation, and with that humility of spirit which considers the rights and feelings of others while yet faithful to principle, he put the whole in the shape of a mild and gentle request that he and his three friends might be permitted to live on pulse and water, if only by way of experiment, for ten days. And such entire confidence had he in God's favor to those who honor His statutes that he cheerfully stipulated to accept whatever should be judged right if, at the end of that time, he and his friends did not prove as fat in flesh as any who had no scruples about the portion of the king's meat.

In all these particulars we behold the sound and refined religious character of the man, and the putting forth of those shoots of moral stamina which made Daniel one of the noblest and most successful of men.—*Selected*.

### NINE NEVERS.

If possessed of the spirit of true politeness you will never—

1. Accept a favor of any kind without expressing gratitude to the giver.
2. Talk while others are reading.
3. Whisper or laugh during public worship.
4. Laugh at mistakes of others.
5. Answer questions addressed to others.
6. Leave a stranger without a seat.
7. Try to overhear others engaged in private conversation.
8. Make yourself the hero of your own story.
9. Correct your elders, or in any wise treat them with disrespect.