THE FIFTY-DOLLAR BILL.

Mrs. Dean sat alone in her kitchen. She never used her parlor. There was the extravagance of an extra fire to rag carpet, woven by her own skilful hands, must not be worn out too recklessly, the dread possibility of sunshine fading out those economies. She believed in making everything last as long as it possibly could. And so she made the kitchen her head quarters, and sat there knitting, with her feet comfortably balanced on the stone hearth, the saucepan of apples bubbling softly away at the back, and the kettle of her husband's axe ringing from the back shed as he cut and split the kindling wood piled up there in well seasoned logs.

She was a little wrinkled-faced woman of fifty with stiff brown bows to her cap, hair that seemed dried up instead of silvered, and keen blue eyes that twinkled as if they had discovered the secret of perpetual motion. To save money was her chief end and aim in life. The very mittens she was knitting were to be sold at the village store in exchange for tea, sugar, spices and all necessary groceries. A penny saved is as good as a penny earned, was the way she shaped her life.

"I'm glad I took that money out of the savings bank yesterday," said Mrs. Dean to herself, as the bright needles clicked merrily away. "People say it isn't safe. And one can't be too careful. But then again, there's danger of burglars—though to be sure, no burglar," she added, with a complacent inward chuckle, "would ever think of looking in the folds of the old 'Clinkerville Clarion' newspaper in the work-basket on the table drawer. I'm pretty sure I've kept the saving's bank!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Dean, her face voluntarily hardening, "I did."

"We are taking up a subscription to get little lame Dick Bodley a cart and donkey so that he can go around peddling things," said the doctor. "It's pretty hard for any one afflicted as he is to get along, and if you can help us a little——"

"But I can't," interposed Mrs. Dean breathlessly. The money was an investment. I don't propose to cut it up into little bits."

"It's a deed of charity, Mrs. Dean," said the good old man; "to help lame Dick Bodley."

"I dare say," said Mrs. Dean, a little irritably. "But I never pretended to be a charitable character."

The old doctor went away, and the next visitor was Helen Hurst, a rosy girl of eighteen.

"Excuse me for interrupting you, Mrs. Dean," said she, "but Larry Johnson was at the bank yesterday, and he tells me you drew out your money!"

"Was all creation there?" thought Mrs. Dean.

But she said nothing, only knit away until her needles seemed to glance and glitter like points of fire.

"I am trying to get a boarding place at Mrs. Swipes'," added Helen, coloring, "so as to be near the district school, where I am to teach this spring. Mrs. Swipes requires payment in advance by the month, and unfortunately we have used up all our slender means in providing my outfit. A teacher, you know, must be dressed decently to command the respect of her pupils. But if you would kindly lend me ten dollars——"

"I never lend," said Mrs. Dean, curtly. "I will be sure to pay it up when I receive my first quarter's salary," pleaded Helen. "And I don't know of any one else to go to."

"It's altogether against my principles," said Mrs. Dean, with her face as hard as if had been carved out of hickory.

Helen Hurst crept out, feeling humiliated and disappointed beyond all expression.

Mrs. Dean chuckled at her own shrewdness, but she hardly had time to stir up the apples in the sauce-pan, before Mrs. Graham entered with a leather-covered memorandum book and pencil.

"I am looking for charitable people, Mrs. Dean," said the squire's wife, with a laugh.

"Then you've come to the wrong place," said Mrs. Dean, frigidly.

"Poor Patrick O'Hara was killed yesterday, in the machinery of the rolling mill," said Mrs. Graham, ignoring her neighbor's response. "He's left a widow and eight children, totally destitute."

"And whose fault is that?" said Mrs. Dean.

"Will you not contribute something toward relieving their destitute condition," urged Mrs. Graham, opening the book and holding the pencil ready for use.

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Dean; "no money to spare."

"But I was told——"

"O, yes," drawn——

... out the money that I took out of the savings bank," said Mrs. Dean. "But I intend to keep that money for myself, Mrs. Graham."

"He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," softly spoke Mrs. Graham. "Yes, yes—I know," said Mrs. Dean but nobody interprets the Bible literally, nowadays.

Mrs Graham took her departure, acknowledging within herself that her errand was a failure, and Mrs. Dean, left to herself at last, indulged in a nap with the knitting work in her lap—a nap wherein she dreamed that the fifty-dollar bill had taken to itself legs and was running away from a swarm of pursuers herself among the number.

When she waked up, roused by the noise of coal being poured upon the stove a candle was burning and Mr. Dean was laughing at her.

"Why, Betsy, said he, 'I thought you were never going to wake again. Here you sat with the few dead out, and I've had to kindle it up again.

"Bless me! said Mrs. Dean. "I must have been asleep quite a while. But—as she started up she saw that the old wall pocket opposite was empty—where is that old number of the Clinkerville Clarion?"

"It was last week's paper, said Mr. Dean, calmly. "We have both of us read it, so I just lit it up to kindle the fire."

"Yes," said Mr. Dean; "I burnt it up. Why shouldn't I?"

"Why didn't you ask me? Mrs. Dean sat silent and never spoke a word. Her features woke lay:

"It's the Lord's judgment upon me!"

"It was that miserable woman, 'full of character. She never let her table drawer, took out a sheet of paper and wrote to Dr. Bridgman, inclosing a dollar toward lame Dick Bodley's cart and horse. She sent another dollar to Mrs. Graham for the poor little O'Hara's, and thereout to donate a barrel of russet, a bushel of potatoes and some of her husband's cast off clothes to cut over for the children. And she sent for Helen Hurst to come and see her.

"I can't lend you ten dollars, my dear,' said she, 'because I haven't got it. But I'll tell you how I will do. I'll let you make your house here as long as you want, and never ask a cent. Here's a spare room and its an eighth of a mile nearer than Mrs. Swipe's to the district school.

"Oh, how very, very good you are!" said Helen, her eyes swimming with grateful tears.

"Good! cried Mrs. Dean. "I'm just beginning to see what a selfish, greedy creature I have been all my life. But your welcome, my dear, and your board shall not cost you a cent."

She opened her parlor, shook out the curtains and built a fire in the air-tight wood-stove.

"Dean likes the parlor,' said she, 'because it has such nice south windows, and I don't see why we shouldn't enjoy it."

She baked a fresh batch of gingerbread, and sent a loaf to old Ann Mudge, she took out a basket of knit-ury nuts for poor little Harry Jones, who was trying to crack dried up peanuts on a stone by the roadside; she renewed her subscriptions to the church charities.

"I can't be very liberal,' she said, but I am determined to do what I can.' That's right my dear—that's right! said her husband. 'We shall be prosperous never fear. I'm awfully sorry about burning up your fifty dollar bill; if it's going to open your heart wide it's the best thing that could have happened to us,"

Mrs. Dean was sweeping out the kitchen. She looked around with a smile as she moved the wide leaved table which always stood under the wall-pocket, and took down the pocket itself, a rude structure of splinters, lined with red cambric and tied with cords and tassels of red worsted to dust it out.

"Yes," she said, "I am afraid I was getting to be a little miserly, and—Why, what's this?"

Mr. Dean stopped and picked up a slip of paper, which had fallen out from the wall-pocket as his wife tipped it upside down and tapped her fingers against it to remove it as all possible dust.

"It's the fifty dollar bill!" said he, with mouth an't eyes opening in unison. "It must have slipped down from the fold of the newspaper and lodged here!"

"Well," said Mrs. Dean, reverently, "and He has sent a lesson, wise and merciful with it."

"And all the theologians in the world could not have improved upon the faith of this simple, unfettered old farmer.