

## KEEP HOLD OF THE PROMISES.

(A Story of answered prayer by a Minister's wife.)

I remember a day during one winter which stands out like a boulder in my life.

The weather was unusually cold. Our salary had not been regularly paid, and it did not meet our needs when it was. My husband was away travelling from one district to another most of the time.

Our boys were well, but my little Ruth was ailing; and at best none of us was decently clothed. I patched and repatched, with spirits sinking to their lowest ebb. The water gave out in the well and the wind blew through the cracks of the floor.

The people in the parish were kind and generous, but the settlement was new, and each family was struggling for itself. Little by little, at the time when I needed most, my faith began to waver. Early in life I was taught to take God at His Word, and I thought my lesson was well learned. I had lived upon the promises in dark times, until I knew as David did, Who was "my fortress and my deliverer." Now a daily prayer for forgiveness was all that I could offer.

My husband's overcoat was hardly thick enough for October, and he was obliged to ride miles to attend some meetings or funerals. Many a time our breakfast was Indian cake and a cup of tea without any sugar. I remember the ice was thick and Christmas was coming; the children always expected something, and the boys were each craving a pair of skates. Ruth, in some unaccountable way had taken a fancy that the dolls that I made were no longer suitable; she wanted a large nice one, and insisted on praying for it. I knew it was impossible; but oh, how I wanted to give each child its present! It seemed as if God had deserted us. But I did not tell my husband all this. He worked so earnestly and heartily, I supposed him to be as hopeful as ever. I kept the sitting room cheery with an open fire, and tried to serve our scanty meals as invitingly as I could.

The morning before Christmas James was called to see a sick man. I put up a piece of bread for his lunch—it was the best I could do—wrapped a plaid shawl around his neck, and then tried to whisper a promise, as I often had; but the words died away on my lips. I let him go without it. This was a dark, hopeless day.

I coaxed the children to bed early, for I could not bear their talk. When Ruth went I listened to her prayer; she asked for the last time most explicitly for her doll, and for skates for her brothers. Her bright face looked so lovely when she whispered to me: "You know I think they'll be here early tomorrow morning—early, mama," that I thought I could move heaven and earth to save her from disappointment.

I sat down alone, and gave way to the bitterest tears.

Before long James returned, chilled and exhausted. He drew off his boots; the thin stockings slipped off with them, and his feet were red with cold. Then as I glanced up I noticed the hard lines in his face, and the look of despair, it flashed

across me, James had to let go too! I brought him a cup of tea, feeling sick and dizzy at that thought. He took my hand, and we sat for an hour without a word. I wanted to die and meet God and tell Him His promise wasn't true—my soul was so full of rebellious despair.

There came a sound of bells, a quick step, and a loud knock at the door. James sprang up to open it. There stood Deacon Pike.

"A box came for you by express just before dark. I brought it round just as soon as I could get away, reckoned it might be for Christmas; at any rate I thought they shall have it tonight. Here is a turkey my wife asked me to fetch along, and these other things I believe belong to you."

There was a basket of potatoes and a bag of flour. Talking all the time, he hurried in the box, and then with a hearty "good night" rode away. Still without speaking James found a chisel and opened the box. I drew out at first a thick red blanket, and we saw that beneath was full of clothing. It seemed at that moment as if Christ fastened upon me a look of reproach. James sat down and covered his face with his hands.

"I can't touch them," he exclaimed. "I haven't been just when God was trying me to see if I could hold out. Do you think I could not see how you were suffering, and I had no word of comfort to offer? I know not how to preach the awfulness of turning away from God."

"James," I said, clinging to him, don't take it to heart like this, I've been to blame; I ought to have helped you. We will ask Him together to forgive us."

"Wait a moment, dear, I cannot talk now;" then he went into another room.

I knelt down and my heart broke; in an instant all the darkness, all the stubbornness rolled away. Jesus came and stood before me, but now with the loving word, "Daughter!" Sweet promises of tenderness and joy flooded my soul; I was so lost in praise and gratitude that I forgot everything else. I don't know how long it was before James came back; but I knew that he, too, had found peace.

"Now, dear wife," said he, "let us thank God together." And then he poured out words of praise, Bible words, for nothing else could express our thanksgiving. It was eleven o'clock, the fire was low, and there was the great box, and nothing touched but the warm blanket we needed so much. We piled on fresh logs, lighted two candles, and began to examine our treasures. We drew out an overcoat; I made James try it on; just the right size, and I danced awhile round him, for all my light-heartedness had returned. Then there was a cloak, and he insisted on seeing me in it. My spirits always infected him, and we both laughed like foolish children. There was a warm suit of clothes, also, and three pairs of warm woolen hose. There was a dress for me, and yards of flannel; a pair of Arctic overshoes for each of us, and in mine was a slip of paper—I have it now, and I mean to hand it down to my children. It was Jacob's blessing to Asher: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." In the gloves, evidently for James, the same dear hand

had written: "I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee."

It was a wonderful box, and packed with thoughtful care. There was a suit of clothes for each of the boys, and a little red gown for Ruth. There were mittens, scarfs and hoods; down in the centre, a box—we opened it, and there was a great wax doll! I burst into tears again, and James wept with me for joy. It was too much. Then we both exclaimed again, for close behind it came two pairs of skates. There were books for us to read—some of them I had wished to see, stories for the children to read, aprons and underclothing, knots of ribbon, a gay little tidy, a lovely photograph, needles, buttons and thread, actually a muff, and an envelope containing a ten-dollar gold piece. We cried over everything we took up. It was past midnight, and we were faint and exhausted even with happiness.

I made a cup of tea, cut a fresh loaf of bread, and James boiled some eggs. We drew up the table before the fire—how we enjoyed our supper!—and then we sat talking over all our life, and how sure a help God had always proved.

You should have seen the children the next morning. The boys raised a shout at the sight of their skates. Ruth caught up her doll and hugged it tightly without a word; then she went into her room and knelt by her bed. When she came back she whispered to me: "I knew it would be here, mamma, but I wanted to thank God just the same, you know."

"Look here, wife; see the difference!"

We went to the window, and there were the boys out of the house already, and skating with all their might.

My husband and I both tried to return thanks to the church in the East which sent the box, and have tried to return thanks to God every day since.

Hard times have come again and again, but we have trusted in Him, dreading nothing so much as a doubt of His protecting care. Over and over again we have proved that they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.—Sel.

## KNEE WORK.

It is reported that Charles H. Spurgeon, when asked for the explanation of his success, said, "Knee work, knee work!"

C. G. Finney, after spending a whole day in fasting and praying, preached at night to a phenomenally irreligious congregation. The sermon was accompanied by such power that very many of those present fell prostrate on the floor and voiced their agony under conviction in such loud cries that the preacher was forced to stop.

The Rev. Daniel Steele said: "Down upon your knees. I wish I had the power to reach every Methodist on the round earth. I would say, 'cease living on the heroism of your fathers; quit glorifying in numbers, sacrificing to statistics, and burning incense to the general minutes; down upon your knees, and seek and find yourself the secret of the power of the fathers—a clean heart and the endowment of power from on high.'"—Sel.

"In doing God's work we must follow God's order, not our own."