

THE MAD GROCER

"It's about Sunday trading. You know I never did like it."

By J. H. Garland

A grocer in the East of London had for many years opened his shop regularly on the Lord's Day, and not only ridiculed all who attended a place of worship, but took great interest in trying to get places of amusement opened on the Sabbath. He was a great blasphemer, and used to boast that he knew the "vulgar tongue" better than any other man in the parish.

The case of this poor wayward fellow was laid heavily on the heart of a little boy who had recently been converted, and who felt so much for him that when he passed his shop on a Sunday he used to pray earnestly for his conversion.

One day this little boy called on his minister and asked if he (the minister) would visit the grocer, or give him a tract.

The minister replied—

"It will be useless for me to see the man: but as God has laid him on your heart, you must call upon him with a tract."

At this answer the little boy turned pale and was much distressed. At length, after some consideration, he said—

"Well, I will send it in a letter to him."

The tract was given and a stamp, which the little boy took home. Before sending the tract by post he wrote inside the first page these lines:

A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content,

And health for the toils of the morrow.

But a Sabbath profaned, whatso'er may be gained,

Is a certain forerunner of sorrow.

On the Saturday morning the postman delivered the letter containing the tract. The shopkeeper opened it, glanced at the poetry, and threw it into his wife's lap with the words—

"Here's a love-letter for you."

Glancing at the title of the tract she replied—

"No, it's for you; it's about Sunday trading. You know I never did like it. All the money we gain on the Sunday we appear to lose during the week. This is another silent call from God to repentance."

And then she began to read the tract aloud. But after a while her husband became very restless, and told her to stop reading, otherwise he would feel unable to do any business that day. She might finish the tract on Sunday morning.

All went on as usual till the Saturday evening, when the man wished his wife to finish reading the tract.

She did so, and asked what he thought about it, and how he "felt inside."

His only answer was, "I feel ill."

The shop was closed before midnight, rather earlier than usual, and the family retired to bed, but not to rest.

The wife wished that the shop should not be opened the next morning, but the husband urged—

"We shall lose many of our best customers. If I do not serve them, another grocer down the street will have their custom."

"The Lord will make it up," she answered; don't open the shop again."

When Sunday morning came, the little boy went past the shop, and returned home

quickly to tell the good news. He was told that he had been round an hour before opening time on Sundays. Prayer was specially offered in the home to God that the shop might remain closed.

The boy could eat no breakfast, and went to see the results of his tract and his prayers. The shop was still closed, but a woman with a basket in her hand was knocking loudly at the door, and continued to knock until the grocer opened it, when she exclaimed—

"Take down the shutters and serve me quickly. I thought you were dead."

The man answered—

"There's death in the house."

"Death?" she quickly inquired. "Who— which is dead of the family?"

"Oh, I'm dead. We are all dead in trespasses and sins. I do not intend opening my shop again on Sundays. May God have mercy upon my past!"

He shut the shop door. The woman went to the next shop, and, while being served, said—

"Mr. Jones is gone mad; I have just seen him, he is indeed mad. He says there is death in the house; said he was dead himself."

The news spread far and wide that poor Mr. Jones had gone off his head, and the people, seeing the shop closed for the first time in fifteen years, gave easy credence to the report. Soon a crowd assembled, expecting dramatic developments, but they were astonished when they saw the grocer and his wife, with two of their children, make their way to the Parish Church, where they heard the clergyman read the words, "Rend your hearts, and not your garments." The man on his return said, "Let us rend our hearts," and, falling upon their knees, husband and wife and children sought the Saviour Who had died on the Cross to save them from their sins. They became faithful worshippers at church on Sundays and loyal and useful workers for the Lord. God blessed them in material things. They found "Holiness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that lasts."

This narrative is true in every particular. The little boy who sent the tract became a town missionary and is my pastor at St. Austell, Cornwall.

Let every Sabbath breaker bear in mind that God is angry with those who profane the day which He has blessed and called His own. If we value health of body, mind and soul, we shall spend the Sabbath resting our bodies, and feeding our souls in the sanctuary with the Bread of Life.—The Evangelical Christian.

THE PERIL OF COMPROMISE

Some years ago there appeared in the editorial column of Henry Ford's magazine, the Dear-born Independent, the following pointed analysis of the spirit of the times under the title "The Great Hush-Hush."

"This is the broad age of suave tolerance. The soft pedal threatens at times to become our national symbol. Tolerance is our shibboleth; intolerance our greatest dread—and yet these are names that have not the remotest relation to the qualities we include by them. We must ever compromise. We must not speak our minds lest we offend. Our words must be so innocuous as not to displease any one. 'Be Bland' is the new commandment.

"Pollyanna-like, we can see no evil. Crime is

a disease; we must pity and pet the criminal, not denounce him. Personal culpability no longer exists. We flutter with trepidation that our harsh words pain some gentle soul. Objectionable social tendencies are not to be mentioned. Practices that have been condemned for centuries are nowadays condoned. Usury becomes respectable under the name of 'interest'; cupidity becomes praiseworthy ambition. Under the broad new tolerance. 'Thou Shalt Not, become 'Do As You Please.'

"The man who holds a definite view and expresses it is to be avoided; he is dangerous! Vacillation replaces the straight line. The successful politician is the adroit pussy-footer, the popular man, the energetic glad-hander. Talk all you will about the universal brotherhood of man or the lovely aspect of a spring flower. They are safe subjects. But beware of those that have been declared taboo! We are living under the smothering influence of the great hush-hush."

Where no moral issue is at stake, a compromising of the differences may be all right, but God's cause must never go into the market for a price when a principal of righteousness is involved.

Our Lord met this feature in the third temptation in the wilderness. Compromise was Satan's last offer. He proposed to give his claims on the world in return for worship. Of course, the Master rejected that proposition with scorn, and so should we deal with all such compromise with a firm hand.—The Wesleyan Methodist.

WHAT THEN?

When the great plants of our cities
Have turned out their last finished work;
When our merchants have sold their last yard of silk
And dismissed the last tired clerk;
When our banks have raked in their last dollar
And paid the last dividend;
When the Judge of the earth says, "Close for the night,"
And asks for a balance—
What then?

When the choir has sung its last anthem,
And the preacher has made his last prayer;
When the people have heard their last sermon
And the sound has died out on the air;
When the Bible lies closed on the altar
And the pews are all empty of men
And each one stands facing his record—
And the great Book is opened—
What then?

When the actors have played their last drama,
And the mimic has made his last fun,
When the film has flashed its last picture,
And the billboard displayed its last run;
When the crowds seeking pleasure have vanished,
And gone out in the darkness again—
When the trumpet of ages is sounded,
And we stand up before Him—
What then?

When the bugle's call sinks into silence
And the long marching columns stand still,
When the captain repeats his last orders,
And they've captured the last fort and hill,
And the flag has been hauled from the masthead,
And the wounded afield checked in,
And a world that rejected its Saviour,
Is asked for a reason—
What then?

—Anon.—The Wesleyan Methodist.