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A TENT OR A BUNGALOW?

By F. A. Agar

SOME friends have asked me to tell our church members a little story, so it must be done even if it does sound like a very foolish little tale—until you come close to the end of it. Then it begins to look more like the tale of a fool than a foolish tale, and surely no one can complain if I call myself a bad name by implication. So let the imaginative story speak for itself.

Let us suppose that in my early manhood, when I was married, I bought on the instalment plan a very ample and usable bungalow, with some very fine verandas around it that gave me splendid visions of wide reaches of lands full of wonderful prospects which I meant to enjoy with my bride for the rest of my life. Also there was a very nice green lawn which delighted my sentimental Irish soul. Yes, the weekly payments that had to be made to complete the transaction were rather heavy and did exact a real measure of planning

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and stewardship, but nevertheless I entered into the transaction with my eyes open and with a willing heart because of my love for my bride.

Well, the first few payments were made in fine order and the prospects looked good for a completed transaction in the course of time, until on my way downtown one day I spied in the window of a big hardware store a very attractive-looking tent. Yes, it did draw my attention because it was made of green-striped canvas of very excellent grade, and we poor Irish are always so very sentimental. So I went in and talked to the merchant, and he of course recommended the tent and extolled its usefulness, and did put some emphasis on "how nice it would look set up with some green grass around it." But I told him it could not be paid for just now as I was under some other obligations. That did not deter him from pushing the sale, for he said my credit was good and I could pay for the green-striped tent on the instalment plan. So I told him to set it up on my lawn beside the bungalow, and then and there I paid him some cash to make it a good deal.

The next day when an instalment was due on the bungalow I could not meet it because my money had been put into the tent. Each week thereafter the same trouble occurred because always the payment on the tent came due before that on the bungalow. In the

months that followed I was in hot water all the time, and it would not do to tell of all my troubles. They were, however, so many that it was very evident *the tent should not have been purchased until every obligation on the bungalow had been met*, for the resultant troubles spoiled the joy of the tent as well as the possession of the bungalow. Oh, if only I had not bought the tent, for then my bride would have soon possessed the house, while now—well, let's not go into any more details about what followed. Only all the neighbors called me bad names, which of course we will not print for you to repeat.

Some very interesting information can sometimes be obtained from a careful, common sense examination of church statistics. For instance, more than a fourth of the money raised by our local Baptist churches for beneficences or "other objects" evidently finds its way outside of denominational channels, which is virtually buying a tent. In some churches it is upwards of fifty per cent of the total money raised for all purposes other than for current expenses. A recent case came to my attention where a sum running into many thousands of dollars had been raised and paid to one object outside of the denominational life, and the total paid during seven months for all denominational purposes was only about half as much.

The tent with the green stripes seems to be in constant evidence in many a Baptist church, and in consequence the denominational bungalow is in sad repair and in danger, because our money is going into the tents instead of where it wisely belongs.

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