



PRAYER AND POTATOES (Children's Story/Parable)

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An old lady sat in her old armchair,
With wrinkled visage and disheveled hair,
And pale and hunger-worn features;
For days and for weeks her only fare,
As she sat there in her old armchair,
Had been potatoes.

But now they were gone; of bad or good,
Not one was left for the old lady's food
Of those potatoes;
And she sighed and said, "What shall I do?
Where shall I send, and to whom shall I go
For more potatoes?"

And she thought of the deacon over the way,
The deacon so ready to worship and pray,
Whose cellar was full of potatoes;
And she said, "I will send for the deacon to come;
He'll not mind much to give me some
Of such a store of potatoes."

And the deacon came over as fast as he could,
Thinking to do the old lady good,
But never thought of potatoes;
He asked her at once what was her chief want,
And she, simple soul, expecting a grant,
Immediately answered, "Potatoes."

But the deacon's religion didn't lie that way;
He was more accustomed to preach and pray
Than to give of his hoarded potatoes;
So, not hearing, of course, what the old lady said,
He rose to pray with uncovered head,
But she only thought of potatoes.

He prayed for patience, and wisdom and grace,
But when he prayed, "Lord, give her peace,"
She audibly sighed, "Give potatoes;"
And at the end of each prayer which he said
He heard, or thought that he heard in its stead

The same request for potatoes.

The deacon was troubled; knew not what to do;
'Twas very embarrassing to have her act so
About "those carnal potatoes."
So, ending his prayer, he started for home;
As the door closed behind him, he heard a deep groan,
"Oh, give to the hungry, potatoes!"

And that groan followed him all the way home;
In the midst of the night it haunted his room,
"Oh, give to the hungry potatoes!"
He could bear it no longer, arose and dressed;
From his well-filled cellar taking in haste
A bag of his best potatoes.

Again he went to the widow's lone hut;
Her sleepless eyes she had not shut;
But there she sat in her old arm-chair,
With the same wan features, the same sad air,
And entering in, he poured on the floor
A bushel or more from his goodly store
Of choicest potatoes.

The widow's cup was running o'er,
Her face was haggard and wan no more
"Now," said the deacon, "shall we pray?"
"Yes," said the widow, "Now you may."
And he kneeled him down on the sanded floor,
Where he had poured his goodly store.

And such a prayer the deacon prayed
As never before his lips essayed;
No longer embarrassed, but free and full
He poured out the voice of a liberal soul,
And the widow responded aloud, "Amen!"
But spake no more of potatoes.

And would you, who hear this simple tale,
Pray for the poor, and praying "prevail?"
Then preface your prayers with alms and good deeds;
Search out the poor, their wants and their needs;
Pray for peace, and grace and spiritual food,
For wisdom and guidance, —for all these are good,—
BUT DON'T FORGET THE POTATOES.