

## **CLEAN CONTACTS**

Harry Foster

ERNEST had once been let down by the failure of the batteries in his electric torch, so after that he always kept two batteries in reserve so that he should not be caught again in this way.

When the power cuts came a few months ago he was therefore ready -- or at least he thought he was. The lights went out and his big sister, Eve, called for his help, so he soon got hold of the [78/79] torch and switched it on. Alas, the old batteries were nearly finished, and the torch only gave a feeble flicker of a light which was no use at all. Eve, who seemed bad tempered at that time, soon began to call him a silly for not being ready, but this did not daunt him, for he knew exactly what he was going to do. He found his way to his room and, opening the table drawer, drew out the paper bag in which the spare batteries were being kept, and then proceeded to make the exchange. This was not difficult; it simply meant that he had to take the two used batteries out of the torch and replace them by inserting the new batteries which he had been storing up for just such an emergency.

Of course it had to be done in the dark, but even so it was easy enough. Ernest shut his eyes while he was doing it. He often did this when he was moving in the dark; it seemed to help him to concentrate. All the time Eve was telling him to hurry up, but at last they were in and the cap screwed tight, so that he could press the switch and open his eyes. He wondered if he had really opened them, for he saw no light, but Eve soon cleared up this point by saying impatiently, "What's the matter? Why isn't it lighting?", then adding, "I suppose you have pressed the wrong switch!" But no! He tried the "off" switch and of course nothing happened, then he tried the "on" switch again, but still there was no light.

Well, Eve had a few other sharp things to say, including an opinion that he had probably muddled things again and put the old batteries back instead of the new ones. Ernest really had been careful, so he did not think that he had made this mistake, but as he could get no light he finally began to wonder whether after all he

had done so, for he knew that the two batteries from the paper bag had never been used. There was nothing more that he could do, so they both had to go into the kitchen with their parents and share the one candle there.

Next morning, however, Ernest opened up his torch again and removed the batteries to see if he could find the cause of the trouble. The first battery had a shining knob for its contact, but when he took out the second, he found that the contact stud was not bright at all. It was dull. It was dirty. Some sort of film seemed to have formed on it. At first this seemed to confirm Ernest's fear that perhaps he had put an old battery back, but then he suddenly had an idea. He got his penknife and lightly scraped the metal stud. It didn't exactly shine like the other one, but at least it seemed cleaner for the scraping, so he carefully put both batteries back, screwed up the cap and switched on.

What a difference this time! Excitedly he called to his sister, "Look, Eve, it's all right after all. It was only a dirty contact". At first Eve could not believe that young Ernest had mended the torch so easily, but then -- rather pleased with himself -- he said to her, "it just shows the importance of clean contacts". The words meant much more to Eve than Ernest could know. It was just as though God was using his boyish words to explain what was wrong in her own life. For, although she was a Christian, she had been slipping into unkind ways and for some weeks past there had been more gloom than light about her life.

A few days before this, the tear-off calendar in the kitchen had the text, "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isaiah 52:11), and now the words came back to her, together with Ernest's remark about clean contacts. In her heart she knew that the reason for her bad temper was that her contact with the Lord Jesus had got dirtied over with selfishness. It would take more than a penknife to clean up that kind of hindrance to Christ's flow of love, but the Lord Himself could do it for her, and He did so as she humbly confessed her need and got back into real touch with Him again.

Every Christian boy and girl needs to watch their contact with their Saviour, for if that is spoiled then there will be no power or light of His presence in their lives.

Ernest gave us all a good bit of advice when he told Eve how important it is to have clean contacts.

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