

HELP THAT COMES TOO LATE.

This a wearisome world, this world of ours, With its tangles small and great, Its weeds that smother the spring flowers, And its hapless strifes with fate; And the darkest day of its desolate days Is the help that comes too late.

Who fain would help in this world of ours, Where sorrowful steps must fall, Bring help in time to the waning powers Ere the pier is spread with the pall, Nor send roses when the flags are hurled, And the dead beyond your call.

For budding now in this weary world, With its tangles small and great, Its lonesome nights and its weary days, And its struggles forlorn with fate, Is that bitterest grief, too deep for tears, Of the help that comes too late.

—Margaret E. Slinger.

THE MAN WHO WORKED FOR COLLISTER.

Perhaps the loneliest spot in all the pine-woods was the big Collister farm. Its buildings were built in the center of it, where they could keep one another in countenance, but each stood by itself, facing the desolate stretches of gray sand and pine stumps in its own way.

In Collister's day he and the man who worked for him were the only strangers who had need to watch the pines. A land-improvement company had opened up the farm, but after sinking all its money in the insatiable depths of sandy soil where the Lord, who knew best, had planted pine-trees, the great bustling company made an assignment of its stumpy fields, and somewhat later the farm passed into the hands of Collister.

He looked her over as critically as she had first looked at him. "It's a dangerous business answering for Collister," he ventured; "but maybe if I asked him to, he would."

"Well, you are bigoted," she asserted. "I can't noways see what there is betwixt you. Why, they say that whilst you're working he comes out in the field, an' bosses you an' me an' me an' me—"

"You ain't no hand to do that," he declared. "I've done him a heap of mean turns, too; but they was always done 'cause I didn't know any better, so he don't hold me any grudge."

"Wouldn't he mind if he knew you were a-losing time by sitting here talking to me?" she asked. "No," he answered cheerfully; "he wouldn't care—not for me. There isn't anybody else he would favor like that, but he makes it a point to accommodate me."

"The girl gave her head a little turn. 'Do you think he would accommodate me?' she asked. He looked her over as critically as she had first looked at him. 'It's a dangerous business answering for Collister,' he ventured; 'but maybe if I asked him to, he would.'"

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"Then I think he had ought to dress you better, an' give you some shoes," she said. "He does—winters," the man answered calmly. She gave an impatient shake of her sun-bonnet. "That isn't the thing—just to keep you-all warm," she explained. "A man like Mr. Collister had ought to keep you looking ristoecratio."

"The man who worked for Collister grinned. 'Not very much in Collister's line,' he said. 'We might get mixed up if I was too dressy.' He pulled a cracker-box forward, and dusted it. 'If you ain't in a hurry, you'd better come inside and take a seat,' he added.

"The girl sank to the door-step instead, taking off her bonnet. Its slats folded together as she dropped it into her lap, and she gave a sigh of relief, loosening some crushed tresses of hair from her forehead. She seemed to be settling down for a comfortable inquisition. 'What kind of clothes does Mr. Collister wear?' she began.

"The man drew the cracker-box up near the doorway, and sat down. 'Dressy,' he said; 'bout like mine.' The girl gave him a look which dared to say, 'I don't believe it.' 'Honest truth,' the man nodded. 'Would you like to have me call him up from the field, and show him to you?'

"Not to assent would have seemed as if she were daunted, and yet the girl had many more questions to ask about Collister. 'Pretty soon,' she said. 'I suppose if you don't call him, he'll be coming for you. They say he works you mighty hard.' It is never pleasant to be spoken of as something entirely subject to another person's will. A slow flush spread over the man's face, but he answered loyal. 'Collister may be mean to some folks, but he's always been mighty good to me.' He smiled as he looked off from stumpy to stumpy across the clearing to the far rim of the forest. The stumps seemed to be running after one another, and gathering in groups to whisper secrets.

"You've got to remember that this is a God-forsaken hole for anybody to be stuck in," he said. "But 'in' in humanity for him to keep his soul as white as natural, more'n his skin; but there's this to be said for Collister: he's always good to me." "I'm right glad of that," the girl said. She too was looking out at the loneliness, and a little of it was reflected on her face. "You-all must think a heap of him," she added wistfully.

"You can just bet on that," he declared. "I've done him a heap of mean turns, too; but they was always done 'cause I didn't know any better, so he don't hold me any grudge." "Wouldn't he mind if he knew you were a-losing time by sitting here talking to me?" she asked. "No," he answered cheerfully; "he wouldn't care—not for me. There isn't anybody else he would favor like that, but he makes it a point to accommodate me."

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"Well, did he understand?" she asked. He lifted his shoulders in a way he had learned in the South. "To be sure," he said. "I told him at the time that it was a mean thing to do, but he said he simply couldn't help himself; young ones kept running there from miles around to get five cents' worth of baking-soda and ask for a stick of candy. But take some; he won't mind, for he's always good to me."

"She drew back her hand. 'No,' she said, pointing; 'I'm goin' to see in some time when he's hyar, an' see if he'll give some lagnappe to me.' 'I'll tell you,' the man said. 'Well, you are bigoted!' the girl repeated.

"I was to tell him to, the man persisted 'who should I say would ask for it?' She looked at him defiantly. 'I'll do the telling,' she said; 'but while we're talking about names, what's yours?' 'Well,' he answered, 'if you're not naming any names, I don't believe I am. You know considerably more about me already than I do about you.'"

"Oh, just as you please," she said. To be brought blankly against the fact that neither knew the other's name caused a sense of constraint between them. She picked up her bonnet, and put it on as if she might be about to go; and though she did not rise, she turned her face out of doors so that the bonnet hid it from him—and it was such a pretty face!

"Say, now," he began, after one of those pauses in which lives sometimes sway restlessly to and fro in the balances of fate, "I didn't mean to make you mad. I'll tell you my name if you want to know." "I'm not so anxious," she said. One of her brown hands went up officiously and pulled the bonnet still farther forward. "Is it true," she asked, "that Mr. Collister says he will marry any girl that can make good light bread?"

"The man formed his lips as if to whistle, and then stopped. 'Yes,' he said, eying the sunbonnet; 'it's true.' She turned round and surprised him. "I can make good light bread," she announced. "You?" he said. "Yes," she answered sharply; "why not? It ain't so great a trick." "But," he paused, meeting the challenge of her face uneasily—"but did you come here to say that?"

"You've heard me say it," she retorted. He rose, and stood beside her, looking neither at her, nor at the fields, nor at the encircling forest, but far over and beyond them all, at the first touches of rose-color on the soft clouds in the west. He seemed very tall as she looked up to him, and his face was very grave. She had forgotten long ago to notice his bare feet and tattered clothing. "So that means," he said slowly, "that you came here to offer to marry a man that you never saw?"

"She did not answer for a moment, and when she did her voice was stammering. 'No,' she said; "I came hyar to say that I know how to make good light bread. You needn't be faintin' me for his saying that he would marry any girl that could." "But you would marry him?" "I allow if he was to ask me I would." The man looked down squarely to meet her eyes, but he found only the sunbonnet. "What would you do it for," he asked—"A lark?" she echoed; "oh, yes; a lark."

"He stooped toward her and put his hand on her shoulder. 'Look up here,' he said; "I want to see if it's a lark or not." "Just said it was," she answered, so low that he had to bend a little closer to be certain that he heard. "You must look up into my face," he said firmly; "you must look up into my face." "I won't!" she declared.

"He stood gazing at her downcast head. There was something that shone in his eyes, and his tongue was ready to say, 'You must.' He closed his lips and straightened himself again. The girl sat behind him, except that once in a while there was a catch in her breath. He kept looking off into the empty, sighing reaches of pine-country, which could make people do strange things. 'We haven't known each other very long,' he said at last; "but a few minutes ago I thought we knew each other pretty well, and perhaps you don't have any better friend than I am in this desolate hole. Won't you tell me why it is that you want to marry Collister?"

"For his money," the girl answered shortly. His face darkened as if he was cursing Collister's money under his breath; but she did not look up, and he said nothing until he could speak quietly. "You must tell me why you want to marry Collister," he asked. "He did talk about marrying any girl that could make good light bread; but I don't suppose he wanted to do it unless she liked him a little too." "I allowed—maybe I'd like him a little, the girl explained; "an' I was right sure that he'd like me."

"The man looked away from her. 'Don't wish it,' he said huskily. 'Collister ought to be proud if he can have you for his wife; and he would give you a good home and everything your heart could ask for.' Tears sprang into her eyes, and she dropped her head upon her knees to hide them. "Oh, I know, I know," she sobbed; "but I'd rather marry you!"

"O-h-o!" breathed the man who worked for Collister; "I'd so much rather that you did." And with a laugh of pure delight he caught her up into his arms. When they left the store a red blaze of sunset shone between the trunks of the pine-trees. The man fastened the padlock behind them, and they started in a lovers' silence along the road. The big farm was as empty and lifeless as ever, except for the lonesome neighing of a horse in the barnyard and for a single straggling blue thread of smoke which rose from one of the little houses. The girl pointed at it, and smiled.

"He's having to get his own supper to-night," she said; "but I'll make it up to him; I'll make his light bread just the same." "Yes," he said, "you'd better; for, whatever he's been to other folks, he's always been mighty good to me; an', please God, he's going to be mighty good to you."

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"Good night," she said lingeringly; and he held her close and kissed her, whispering good night. Then he stood and watched her slender swaying figure as it grew indistinct between the trees; and just before it vanished he called out guardedly. "Say," he summoned, "come here!" She went laughing back to him. "You-all are bigoted," she said, "beginning to order me about!"

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Central Pennsylvania Methodist Conference.

What was Done at the Clearfield Meetings.—Previous Reports.—What the Various Districts Show in the Matter of Working for the Cause of the Great and Good Master.

The conference of the Methodist Episcopal church convened in the opera house in Clearfield on last Wednesday. Nearly three hundred ministers were in attendance. Bishop Nindé who was the guest of T. H. Murray living in Clearfield, presided. The public exercises of the conference began with the missionary sermon by Rev. W. P. Eveland, Ph. D. He took for his text Gen. IV: 9; his theme was "Universal Brotherhood, and the Obligations Resulting Therefrom."

Thursday morning the devotional exercises were conducted by Rev. F. B. Riddle, of Wrightsville. After the reading of the minutes came the report of Dr. D. S. Monroe, the presiding elder of the Altoona district. His report showed a most flattering condition of affairs in this large and important district. Credit was given to all the preachers for faithful and conscientious work. New churches were reported at Lloydsburg and Hunter's Run, Howard charge. There were over 2,000 conversions the greatest numbers being at Morrisdale Mines, Oshante, Fillmore, Shawmut and Pleasant. The Epworth league was reported in a flourishing condition, the reports to the conference convention showing that the Altoona district has the largest number of chapters, of members, and of moneys collected. All the benevolences are in advance of last year. The missionary collection is about \$1,000 in advance of last year's collection, exclusive of the special gifts.

Dr. E. H. Yocum, presiding elder of the Danville district, read his report. He said if you have a hard thing to do the best report to do is to do it at once. Therefore I report diminished benevolent collections. This, however, represents more hard work than the collection of last year. The missionary collection will be about \$500 less than it was last year. Church extension, owing to a special gift of H. J. Reeder, of

Catawissa, is slightly in advance. Conference claimants fall somewhat behind. There have been large revivals over the district. These aggregate 1,600 conversions. There are 1,400 probationers. New churches have been built at Healdy Grove and Freeland. In Bloomsburg a church costing \$50,000 is nearing completion. At Second church, Shamokin, a portion of what is to be a great church will soon be ready for occupancy. Pleasant Valley will also have a new church. Parsonages have been built at Irish Valley and one purchased at Wapwallopen.

The Harrisburg district was called and Dr. W. W. Evans read his report. He included feelingly to the deaths of Mrs. Anna Maclay Shannon, widow of the late Rev. J. V. Shannon; of Rev. S. W. Sears and of Rev. James F. Pennington. In the district 140 members were lost by death, yet the membership of the district increased by 600. There were over 1,200 conversions and about 1,000 probationers. These at Ridge avenue, Harrisburg and at Newport. The Epworth League has seventy-five chapters, with 5,000 members. The Junior League was also reported to be in a flourishing condition. In addition to having a large revival, the Ridge Avenue church, Harrisburg, Rev. A. R. Lambert, pastor, has built a handsome parsonage, costing about \$6,000. At Chambersburg a handsome church will be ready for dedication on June 13th. Other churches and parsonages throughout the district have been largely improved. The benevolent collections all show an advance.

Rev. J. B. Polsgrove, presiding elder of the Juniata district, read his report. Rev. Levi S. Crone and Rev. George Berkstresser, two superannuated preachers, have passed away during the year. Illness in the homes of many of the preachers, has not prevented the most faithful work. New churches were reported at Adamsburg and McCabe chapel, Concord charge; and a course of erection at Blair and Asbury. A new parsonage has been erected at Millington, J. H. Mortimer. Other parsonages have been improved. For church improvements \$5,400 has been expended. Epworth League work is in a prosperous condition. There are eighty-seven senior and sixteen junior chapters. The interest in the district was appreciatively alluded to. The failure of the wheat crop; added to the general business depression, has made this a hard year financially. Notwithstanding this the missionary collection shows an advance of \$200 and other collections about equal to what they were last year. There are upwards of 2,200 conversions and 1,900 probationers. Among the churches that have the largest number of converts are Annsville, Lewistown and Burnham.

Dr. M. K. Foster, presiding elder of the Williamsport district, was the last of the presiding elders to read his report. New churches have been built at West Jersey charge, Hickory on Penfield charge, Liberty charge. There have also been built four new parsonages, and the parsonage of Pine street, Williamsport, has been rebuilt at a cost of \$3,000. There are also many churches and parsonages which had larger or smaller sums spent upon them for their improvement. Owing to the death of some of the largest contributors, the missionary collection shows a decrease. Dr. Foster said that this was the first time in a presiding eldership of eighteen years that he had been compelled to make such a report. Still the missionary collection aggregates \$9,800. This is the last report of Dr. Foster as presiding elder of the Williamsport district. During his administration the number of charges has increased from forty-eight to sixty; pastoral support has increased more than \$10,000; missionary collections increased \$2,000; thirty new churches have been built and fourteen new parsonages; an increase in the membership of over 2,000.

Rev. J. F. Kerlin was allowed to withdraw charges. Rev. T. A. Elliott was changed from an active to a superannuated relation. Dr. J. H. Morrow, secretary of the Pennsylvania Bible society, and Dr. Homer Eaton, agent of the New York Book Concern were introduced to the conference and Dr. Eaton said: During the past quadrennium almost half a million dollars have been apportioned among the several conferences. Last year the dividend was \$120,000. This year the agents have been authorized to distribute \$100,000. The share of the Central Pennsylvania conference is \$1,641.

Dr. J. H. Morrow showed a portion of Scripture with a unique history. About ten years ago a Mr. Richards went as a missionary to an African tribe the name of whose language was not known to scholars. He had practically to build up a language, and yet the book shown by Dr. Morrow was the work of boys of the tribe. They made the type, set it up, did the printing and all the rest of the work upon the book. Dr. Morrow also showed a copy of the soldiers' Bible that was distributed among the Japanese army. While speaking Bishop Nindé interrupted to say that he was in China and Japan during the whole period of the war. He said that the reason the Bibles were made so small was that the Japanese soldier might carry them up his sleeve. The commander of the army not only gave permission, but also offered every encouragement for the distribution of these books. There were 77,000 of the small copies of one book of the Bible distributed among the private soldiers, and 17,000 copies of the New Testament distributed among the officers.

On Saturday the bishop called forward the following class for admission into full membership: O. H. Albertson, Thomas W. McKenty, F. E. Pureell, George M. Realey, H. W. Newman, W. C. Wallace. The candidates were required to hand in the secretary written pledges that they were not in debt so as to interfere with their work in the ministry, also that they would wholly abstain from the use of tobacco.

The following were elected deacons and admitted to full membership in the conference: Francis E. Parrell, Harry W. Newman, William C. Wallace, P. H. Albertson and George M. Realey, having been previously ordained, were admitted to full membership. Thomas W. Kenty was continued on trial in the studies of the third year.

The conference decided to vote upon the constitutional questions without debate. W. G. Stevens, C. L. Benschoter, G. M. Conner, M. L. Ganoce and E. F. Dimmick were appointed tellers. The first question was upon the admission of women to the general conference, and