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HER HAND.

Her hand!
So small and soft and slender—
A fairy hand!
I held it with a pressure tender,
Then slipped upon one shapely finger
A golden band.
Her hand!
So warm with gentle passion—
A lover's hand!
When placed in mine with shy concession
Of her love a mute confession
I understand.
Her hand!
Now all for me resigning—
A precious hand!
With joyous thrill I saw the shining
Ring about her finger twining
In gleaming strand.
* * *
Her hand!
No more may it be clasped to pray—
A perished hand!
I sit and hold it day by day,
I feel its creeping flesh decay
At God's command.
Her hand!
So thin and white and chill—
A deathly hand!
I see, but feel no joyous thrill,
Around one shrunken finger still
A golden band.

H. B. ALEXANDER.

Elmore's Minister.

[Concluded from last week.]

Church services were held in the school house. On Sunday evening, the day before school began, I went to hear my minister preach. (I stayed with the children to let the mother go in the morning.) There was no written sermon, just a talk. And it was a vivid description of the hard times with

Pharaoh's dream about the seven lean ears and the seven fat ears for a text. The minister waxed eloquent and stopped abruptly, ending in a low weak voice with, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth."

I stayed a few minutes after the others were gone to see that all was in order for the next morning. I was not afraid, although it was growing dark, for I felt sure I could catch up with the minister. It seemed as if he hadn't the strength to go fast, poor man!

I hurried along the road. Soon I heard the minister ahead of me, saying in a deep hollow voice,—

"Why haven't we had any rain? Our crops have failed for three years. All we need is water. There is water in the ocean. Why doesn't the ocean open its flood gates and give us water? Just a little! What have we done that we should merit such treatment?"

He was alone. I did not understand. This was very much in the same strain as the sermon. It must be some passage for next week's sermon, to be skilfully woven in with some small word of hope.

I came nearer the minister, just as he broke out again. I could see his wild gestures this time.

"What will we have to eat this winter? What will we have to burn? What will our children live on? Will they starve? We will have nothing to put into their mouths, not even a stone when they ask for bread."

He walked on a few minutes. I was close behind and just about to speak to him when he began again. I put out my hand to touch him, but he moved on a little more quickly. He was saying, both arms lifted up—

"If we don't have any crops, we won't have anything to eat; we won't have anything to burn when it is cold, cold, in the winter. No! We won't have anything to burn. We will have to come out here and shove up the

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