

IN KANSAS.

I deem it no betrayal of confidence to state that the Wesleyan quartet did not have a large house in Corning, Kan., nor that after a week of poor houses, the finances ran low. All organizations that travel have been embarrassed at times for want of lucre. And storms and lack of good advertising are apt to take the wind out of the most carefully constructed sails.

Before we arrived in Corning, while we were yet cramped in the bobbed, an optimistic youth met us with a gun thrown over his shoulder. He was voluble in his predictions for a big house. Had not the entertainment the night before been one grand fizzle? Was not the public waiting to blow in its hard earned coin on the Wesleyan quartet? Well, I rather guess. And so our jaded hopes were spurred to the highest pitch and in our minds we were bowing before an immense multitude of Corningites and our treasurer was already fingering the corpulent receipts. How sweet a thing is imagination! Had it not been for this adjunct to human experience we never would have had that audience and those fat receipts. For when we went to the opera house a few people were scattered about the room like corn stalks in a shorn field. Behind the crude scenery five despairing individuals met. The treasurer, with his bubble of prosperity pricked and the joyful anticipations of the other four knocked higher than a kite. With a mask of smiles and simulated light hearts we gave our concert to the little sample of an audience and went our way back to the hotel sad and sullen as the hotel biscuits.

We hid ourselves to our room and counted the cash. As fate would have it there was just enough money to get four men on to the next date. I was the fifth wheel in the coach so I had to remain behind in Corning while the singers went on to earn enough money to liberate me. I stormed and begged the boys not to leave me alone among strangers, but there was no help for it and I had to see them go away through the night on an old freight train, while I—heaven help me—had to go back to that hotel and go to bed.

My heart was heavy as lead and sleep came at last, a welcome anaesthetic to the horrors of being alone in a town the size of a henyard, awaiting the fickle favor of a Kansas audience to extricate me.

The next morning I took up living again where I left off the night before. I was subjected to the sly inspection of the natives, a penalty I suffered from being advertised a Nebraska post—seemingly a being queer, and one to be stared at as a species of one-ringed circus. I read all the old newspapers, wrote some letters and watched the little clock on the show case. And speaking of the show case reminds me of the primitive honesty of the natives of Corning. The landlord, who came from a farm in western Kansas to operate the hostelry, was always on the street talking politics. In consequence the cigars in the show case lacked the presence of a salesman. But this did not stop the rubes. Well I should say not! Every user of the weed in town seemed to be on to the combination of the show case and money drawer and whenever he wanted to smoke he came in and took a cigar and made his own change. It saved lots of trouble on the part of the bewhiskered landlord, whose principal desire seemed to be to avoid as much exertion as possible and still live and have his being.

In the evening I went forth in search of some entertainment. The only thing going on was a revival in the Baptist church. Now this church is not as large as the proposed Lincoln auditorium and there was no lack of fuel, so the place was so hot that one's mind flew

naturally to the place the preacher emphasized so tremendously. Everybody was there. The sermon was a wild plea for sinners on the brink of hell to climb out and be saved. All over the church there were little explosions of "amens" and "O Lords!" and when the invitation came for the lost ones to seek the altar the interest was intense. Weeping women put up wild prayers for reprobate husbands. Strong men cried aloud for salvation to come to their lost neighbors. Every move made was watched with the greatest interest by the churchfull of people. The confessions of poor erring humanity were listened to with avidity. It was a drama of the intensest human interest, the plots being made of the escapes of human souls from the jaws of perdition.

Back to the smoky hotel office again. One of the guests had asthma. He could not go to bed. The landlord, kindhearted in his slowness, bethought him of a barber chair and he dragged it from the lumber room and the afflicted man was soon in the green plush arms fast asleep and snoring only as a man with asthma can snore. Later on the landlord's daughter, a comely miss, big and wholesome, tiptoed into the room with a pillow which she placed near the sleeping man, and out she went. With the sweetness of the bashfully kind act in my mind I sought the upper regions and locked myself in an ice chest for the night.

The next morning I awaited a telegram from the quartet as a man sentenced to be hanged awaits the news of a pardon. The hours dragged themselves slowly through the day, but no yellow missive came to drive me into a delirium of joy. Had I been forgotten? Was I to remain forever alone in Kansas? Well, the telegram came after the last train had gone. I could get away from Corning by taking a freight at midnight. I took it.

I think that when Kansas was made everything was used but a few scraps and they were thrown together in a hodgepodge and they called it Corning. The very birds will not fly over the place, they go around it. It should be blotted from the map. It should be hammered into the earth and the hole hammered in after it. It has been forgotten by everyone and everything. A man who would voluntarily go there and live could enjoy life in the penitentiary. The very name is synonymous with ennui, with desolation and dreariness. The town is a wart on the warty state of Kansas. If I had an enemy whom I hated I would not like to banish him forever to Corning. Bah! the very name of Corning, Kansas, tires me to death.

WILLIAM REED DUNROY,
With the Wesleyan Quartet.

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IN THE PATH OF THE WOLF.

All night long in my garret room
I tremble with cold and fear,
For in the dingy hall outside
A soft footfall I hear;
The black, grim wolf of poverty,
With fangs so sharp and white.
Has made his lair beneath my stair
And haunts me day and night.

When the candle burns low he comes
And keeps my soul awake;
I hear him gnaw at my batten door,
And its frail hinges shake.
I quake with dread in my poor bed,
Since he may win at last,
And gnat his hunger once for all—
The wolf that gnaws so fast.

And when the dawn comes creeping in,
The while to work I go,
He follows me a step behind;
I cannot shun him so.
And then I hear the tempter near;
"The wolf is on your track;
May I protect you from his fangs?"
I fly and look not back.

And when I earn my pittance small
Again I hear a voice;
"The wolf is crouching at your side;
"Is he your friend from choice?"
Great God! is labor then a lure
That fiends may snare their prey?
And round I turn and thank the wolf
That keeps such hounds at bay.

But, oh! the hunger and the cold,
And, oh! the grinding pain,
And, oh! the bitter, bitter tears
That fall like dreary rain;
To think the years are flying fast
And lives like mine must be,

With never one glad burst of sun
To brighten poverty.

For, oh! the stream is dark and deep,
And, oh! but life is dear,
For all the thorns that pierce the morn
And make the evenings dear.
I pray for strength to drive the wolf
From underneath my stair;
But should he stay, Almighty God,
Give me the strength to bear!

Feast, Croesus, at your golden board,
And drink your sparkling wine;
Touch not the garments of the poor,
Nor hear when they repine.
But wonder not when they do faint
And in the struggle fall,
Since Want is such a hungry wolf,
And oh! your crumbs so small!

—Chicago Record.

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