

BROTHER WALTON.

[KATHARINE MELICK.]

For The Courier.

The little country school house was dimly lighted. The lamps flickered along the walls and seemed to be trying to beat back the dark night that looked in at the windows. The worn desks shone faintly, and the faces of the little company assembled there shone yet more faintly. Fired heads drooped. The little prayer meeting was lagging at a slower pace than usual.

Presently, from a dim corner, a stranger rose.

"Brethren," he said, "I'm not acquainted with you, but I'm acquainted with God."

The voice was thin, but piercing. It was not a large voice, but it did not come from a large man. It rose higher as he went on.

"Why, bless you, he's my captain. Praise His name! I've served under Him for nigh on to twenty-five year. Hallelujah! I've got my marchin' orders an' I'm goin' on, sure of victory. I'm a minute man for God. Bless his name! That's what he wants in his army, beloveds. We must always be ready to fire a shot at sin and Satan. Amen! Praise the Lord!"

The enthusiasm of the speaker had carried his tones almost to a shriek. He sat down and began to sing in a hoarse voice.

"Am I a soldier of the cross—"

"Who is he?" was the unspoken thought of every mind, as one after another followed the injunction of the little stranger to be "minute men."

"I wonder if it isn't the man that's rented Uncle Abram's place?" said Phineas Benton to himself, as the congregation filed out into the cool, dark night. Must be he's been in the army. He don't walk like a farmer. Well, if it is, we'll have him for a neighbor."

The next morning two rosy cheeked, smiling little lads marched up to Farmer Benton's door, and asked for "the loan of a hammer." They belonged to the new neighbor, "Brother Walton," they gravely explained, and then, catching a roguish twinkle in Tommy Benton's eye, were convulsed with snickers. The farmer looked after them, half-pitifully, as they went away.

The man that takes Uncle Abram's place has no easy time of it," he said to his wife. "Them little lads won't have so gay a time as they're a-countin' on."

The little lads had no easy time, truly. Farmer Benton often pitied them as he saw them toiling through the fields behind plow or cultivator.

"They ought to be in school," he said to himself. "It's hard enough for a man to have to work like that, but they're too young. He might take some thought for them, if he don't for himself. He always brings them to meetin', too. I'll warrant they'd a heap sooner stay to home an' rest."

Whatever the little Waltons would "sooner" have done, they did as their father bade them. Their love for their mother, dear old Mother Walton, with her great, loving heart and her great, portly frame, was unmixed with this fear that their father inspired. The old soldier had learned to obey orders, and he proposed to have his sons do likewise.

One Thursday evening Phineas Benton took his way to the little school house slowly and wearily. His son Tommy went with him, for he had a matter of special importance to communicate to the Walton boys.

Brother Walton was already in his accustomed place, and Tommy soon discovered his friends in a cozy dark corner. He sat down beside them and entered into an animated discussion about a ball team that their school was organizing. The whispers grew loud

and louder. Brother Walton turned his head.

"Boys," he said, "this is a house of prayer, even if services hasn't commenced. Let us sing 'We're Marching to Zion'."

"It's the house of school," whispered Johnny Walton as soon as his father's head was turned, and Tommy snickered, but John had already rolled up his eyes and was singing at the top of his voice.

"Let those refuse to sing," rose the strain, and Johnny looked at his friend so solemnly that poor Tom giggled again. However, the singing drowned such minor discords, and soon the order of service changed.

It has been said that Farmer Benton was weary. Perhaps that was why, when they knelt to pray, he dropped on one knee. Perhaps it was a mere accident. At any rate, what was his amazement to hear an earnest supplication rise,

"Oh, Lord, help us to get down on both knees before thee!"

Phineas remembered little more of that petition. He looked down from his tall height upon the slight form of the petitioner, when the service was closed, and involuntarily straightened himself at the sight of that erect figure. Those shoulders had never bent to the storms of life. The eyes that had looked through the smoke of battle were undimmed.

"It's just his way," thought the good-natured farmer. "I've no call to be put out."

He thought of those words again when, some months after, he passed Uncle Abram's farm and saw his neighbor marching behind a cultivator, singing at the top of his voice:

"Are there no foes for me to face,
Must I not stem the flood;
Is this vile world a friend to grace
To help me on to God?"

"He's missed his profession," thought Phineas Benton; yet when autumn came Brother Walton's cribs and barns were filled to overflowing, and his toil-worn hand, when it grasped that of his, left there a note for an amount that would have made his easy-going neighbor stare.

Brother Walton did not believe in pride. He often addressed young people upon the folly of spending valuable time before a "lookin' glass." The good brother seldom spent his own time so

foolishly. One evening he strode into the little meeting with his collar fastened at the back, but no further. The ends curved up among his curling locks in a most worldly, unorthodox fashion, while he sung.

"Nor will we heed with Fashion's brood,
Nor put her baubles on."

One winter day a fierce storm swept over the little school house, and Tommy, with several other children, unable to make his way home against the hurricane, stopped at Brother Walton's house.

"Come in, come in and welcome!" cried the little man, "Praise the Lord we have a roof over our heads this awful night."

Tommy looked at him and wondered why he had thought Johnny's father cross. He watched the farmer wrap himself up and go with his boys to make the horses and cows and pigs comfortable. He saw him, presently, come staggering up through the snow with a heavy burden.

"Got room for one more, mother?" he called at the door, as his wife hastened to let him in, and then Tommy saw him holding a little lamb in his arms.

"It would get its nose cold tonight, I'm afraid. Can we make room for it?"

Tommy's eyes opened wide. Why he was surprised he could not tell, but he looked at the lamb for a long time.

"It's surprising what luck that man has," said a neighbor to Tommy's father one bright spring morning. "Your Uncle Abram's farm don't ginerly turn out so well."

"It aint luck," Phineas answered. "As near as I can make out, it's downright stick-to-itiveness. I never see harder working folks than that man and his two boys."

"Yet he allus has time fer meetins an' sich."

"Yes, he puts me in mind of Cromwell's soldiers: the harder they prayed, the better they fought."

The neighbor paused on his homeward way and looked over at the field where Brother Walton was spring-plowing. He was walking erect, with firm step, more like a sentry on duty than a farmer at the plow. The strength of his life in its prime had been wasted in a southern prison, but he had never lost the bearing of a soldier.

"He's mighty spry fer his age, an' bein' his health's broken," thought the watcher. "He'll soon have that piece ready for plantin'—But-what-in-Sam Hill is he up to? Has he found suthin in the furrow?—Or—Well, I will-be-bumfistigated! Prayin', as I'm a sinner! That does beat me!" The farmer walked down the road.

Down in the furrow, the lines in one grimy hand, the other on the handle of the plow, Brother Walton was kneeling. The horses started. He checked them with a word. It was long before he rose and went to work with a shout.

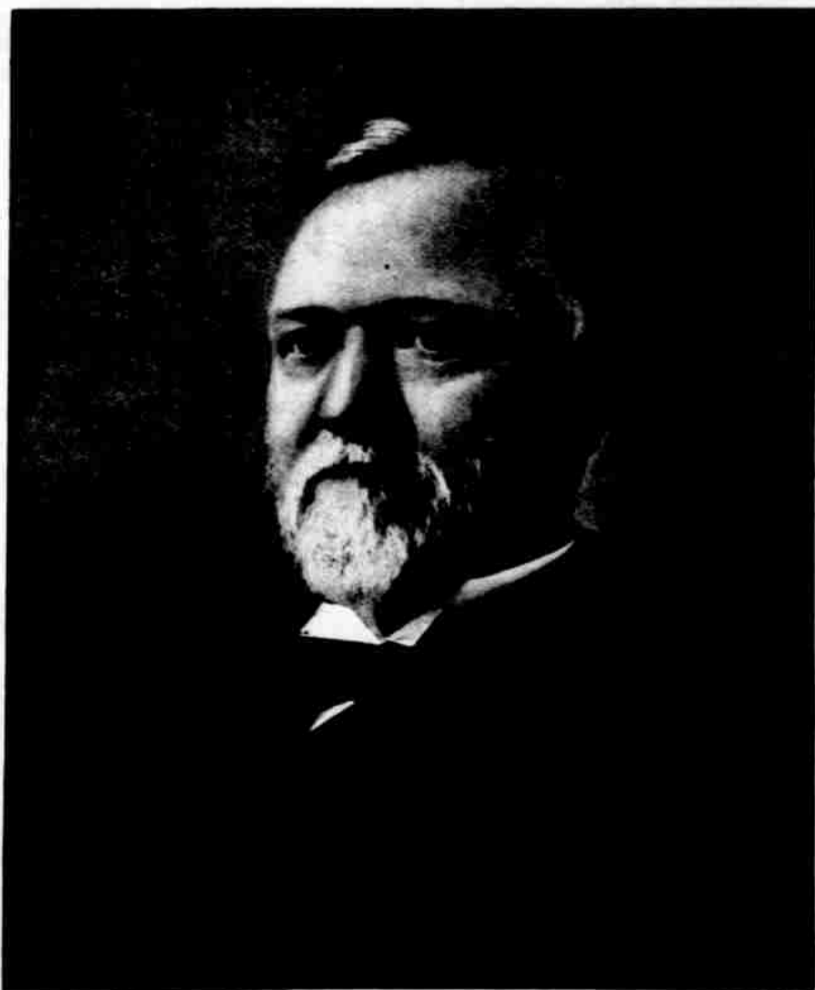
"Hallelujah! Get up Mose. Praise the Lord! Amen!"

And as he strode along his quavering voice rose:

"I'll tell you when I feel the best—
Glory Hallelujah!
It's after I am blessed—
Praise ye the Lord!"

Woman's Economic Independence.

This is the latest slogan of reform: "The wholesale prostitution of womanhood by making it necessary for any woman to find some man to support her must be stopped." Sounds well, doesn't it? But it isn't exactly a true statement of conditions. The aim of marriage is to reach a state in which the woman supplements and supports the man in her own way and according to the laws of her nature. No man can have anything much, if he be married, if his wife does not help him get it. She may contribute as much to the family resources by her sympathies and her kindness as he does by his hustling. Economic independence for women is all right so far as it goes, but it doesn't go far. A man does not support a woman half as much as a good woman supports him. A woman's contribution to the family in thought, in solace, in the services in which she is expert, has a value and it is recognized. She is paid for her work in any well-arranged home. She has a fair share of every good thing that comes to the union. Wives are not slaves simply because they do not handle all the money. They are relieved of the worry of handling it, and they spend the greater part of all a family spends. The average wife of any half-way decent husband gets more, as things go nowadays, than she would get if she were placed by her husband on salary. The wife "on an allowance" has, usually, a hard time of it. The allowance tends to the minimum. The wife who goes ahead and makes bills and leaves them to be met by her husband will get more things and meet with less grumbling than the woman on regular salary. The economic independence of woman is a delusion. A man must be able to support a woman because, as nature and observation show, the thoroughly well, strong woman in marriage is a rarity. Her earning capacity is smaller than a man's and a great part of the time it is nil—if we mean by earning capacity, ability to do hard work. On the other hand, in another sense, an ill or invalid wife may be worth more to a man's success than all the physical potentiality of an Amazon. Who shall measure affection and sympathy and even the value of a sweet woman's physical helpfulness as an inspiration to her husband, in mere dollars and cents? No woman is merely an appendage to a man in the married state. She has a value—for we are not considering the valueless sort of folks. And figuring out all the expense of the home the woman has her full share, when she does not voluntarily divert it to her children or when she does not deny herself to help her husband into a position wherein he may give her a greater share of the value of their partnership. Women drudge, of course; so do men. Each drudges for both. Put wives on salaries and the salaries will be small. Moreover, salaries will drive love out of their work which to be good, in the home must be loving work. The wife undoubtedly should have her own money, but she doesn't work for money. Marriage isn't wholly a business, as reformers think. Love is its greatest factor and the loving and beloved woman, in ninety nine cases out of one hundred, is not a dependent. Her share of the money made in the partnership will average up fairly well with that of the man.—The Mirror



Andrew Carnegie.