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What the Alarm Clock Said.

(Helen A. Hawley, in the 'Christian Endeavor World'.)

'You must certainly buy an alarm-clock, Ruth. I don't like to have you wait another night. You'd better get it this evening on your way to meeting; the stores will be closed when you come out. Get one of those little dollar clocks; you can wrap it in your scarf when you go into meeting, and no one will see it.' Mrs. Trueman laid her hand on her daughter's cheek.

'I can't have you waking at all hours for fear it is time to get up. You're growing pale already,' she added.

Mrs. Trueman and Ruth did their own housework, and had recently taken in two mechanics as boarders. These men must have an early breakfast and Ruth had the new experience of rising at half-past five. She insisted that it was her place to be the first one up, to start the kitchen fire and set going preliminaries of the breakfast, which her mother, more skilled in cooking, completed. Ruth dropped to sleep soon after her head touched the pillow; but these new responsibilities wakened her so easily, and she was lighting matches at all hours of the night to see whether it was time to get up. She said she never could tell whether she had slept one hour or six, when once aroused.

A protracted meeting was in progress, conducted by a devoted evangelist; but thus far the interest had not been such as usually resulted from his efforts. Night after night the church was filled with listeners; but, while Christians were somewhat revived, there was next to no response from the unconverted.

Ruth attended the meetings whenever she could. She was already one of the Lord's own, and very earnestly she prayed for one and another who were still strangers to his love.

On this night, in accordance with her mother's wish, she bought a clock on the way to service, and received careful instructions how to set it, the dealer assuring her that it was quite run down then. Concealing it under her coat, she went on to the meeting, which soon seemed to her more solemn than any which had preceded.

Then, just as the evangelist was pleading with all his heart, and the stillness of the audience was intense, that unlucky alarm-clock started! Whir-r! Whir-r! Whir-r-r! The speaker lost his hold. The solemn interest seemed at an end. Many faces turned toward the sound; some smiled broadly; the children tittered outright. In Ruth's confusion, she tried to smother it, but to no avail. Would the thing never stop? At length, with flaming cheeks, she almost ran from the place, scarcely halting until she reached home.

'Oh, mother,' she exclaimed, 'this dreadful clock has spoiled the meeting! I am so ashamed—and the man said it wasn't wound. There were two or three just alike, and he must have put up a different one from what he showed me first.'

By degrees Mrs. Trueman reduced Ruth's incoherent words to sense. 'You are not to blame at all, girlie, and have no need to feel ashamed.'

'But it was so ludicrous, mother; and they laughed—laughed!' Ruth repeated in a tragic manner.

'Naturally they did, and I am as sorry as you are. But it was only unfortunate.'

Was it unfortunate, though? The evangelist deemed it so, certainly, when he was trying to gather the scattered thoughts

an alarm-clock to break the lazy habit. He told me when it went off it would always say, "Now! now!" and I was to jump up the instant I heard it. I came into the meeting last night with no motive than curiosity and to pass the time. When that clock started off, it seemed funny to most of you; but, I'm telling you the truth, to me it said, "Now, now!" just as it used to; only in some way the words were linked with the speaker's message; both were from God. They repeated, "Now is the ac-



from so many brains back to his important theme. Sadly he realized that one brush of the ridiculous has power to sweep aside the most sacred impulses. It was some minutes before he could regain any hold, and at the close with sinking heart he gave the usual opportunity for any who wished for prayers to rise. No service of his should end without this offer, but the glance he sent over the audience that night was perfunctory. To his joyful surprise, to the surprise of everyone present, a young man arose immediately, and not only stood for a long minute, but said in a distinct tone, 'I ask your prayers.' And then, after the general dismissal, a few faithful souls gathered about the young man, praying for him, helping him to find the One who has promised a welcome to all who come.

The next evening, both Ruth and her mother went to meeting.

'You must go to keep me in countenance,' Ruth said. 'I couldn't have the courage to face the people I know after last night; and, though Mrs. Trueman answered, "Silly girl!" she quite understood her daughter's embarrassment.'

There was a new feature that night. The leader, more sure of his ground, after a short exhortation, threw the service open for testimony; and the same young man rose again, with face illumined. At sight of him, Ruth found self-control was difficult. It was Jack—Jack Henderson! For him to testify in meeting meant a great deal to Ruth! This is what he said:

'When I was a little fellow in my home five hundred miles from here, because I liked to lie in bed late, my father gave me

accepted time," "Now is the accepted time." I expected to be a Christian some day, but last night I couldn't get away from that "Now!" I don't know who had the clock. I couldn't look around then, but I shall always be thankful it was here to speak to me. For—he hesitated as if to make his declaration more emphatic—for it made me arise and go to my Father, and he has received me for Jesus' sake. From now on, God helping me, I am a Christian.'

No one smiled over the incident after that. There were tears of joy on many of the faces; there was conviction working in other hearts. It was the beginning of a harvest of souls.

As Ruth and her mother started for their home, Jack Henderson joined them.

'O Jack,' the girl said, 'what a glad surprise!'

'You weren't here last night,' he answered. 'I looked for you at the close.'

'And you didn't know! It was my clock went off; and, when it wouldn't stop, I simply had to run away.'

'Your clock!' The young man's voice trembled as he said it. 'So you helped in the great decision. The thought makes me happy.'

'O, but Jack, I have been praying for you a long time.' Ruth hardly realized what that admission meant, but the gentle pressure of her hand on his arm added force to the words; and Jack laid his other hand over hers in a caressing touch.

Mrs. Trueman, who was walking on the other side of Ruth, discreetly closed her ears, repeating the whole to herself,

'God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.'