

✿ ✿ The Story Page. ✿ ✿

A Drone in the Hive.

BY HELENA H. THOMAS.

"I admit that I expected great things from him and that he has sorely disappointed me; but, my young brother, I have been such a disappointment to myself, from youth to old age, that I can make more allowances for others."

"Well, if you have been a disappointment to yourself, you have not to your friends," was the laughing rejoinder, "and I am still in the dark as to the why of your ready excuses for one who, like Harold White seems willing to bury his ten talents out of sight, and be a nobody in Christian service."

"Because I have loved him from his babyhood," said Dr. Roberts, running his fingers through the time-silvered hair, "and, besides, it is easy to have charity for those we pray for. If you have not realized that to be the case, I would earnestly ask you to unite with me in praying that Harold may, in some way, be led to a realization of the fact that he will be held responsible for his many gifts. Will you?"

"Yes, indeed!" was the hearty response, "and we will note the result. Your sweet spirit is a constant rebuke to one of my impulsive, outspoken nature, and I humbly ask your pardon for such severe criticisms of your young friend. But you know he had just returned from college when I came into the church, and he seemed so much superior to most young people, that I congratulated myself on having such a helper; but I have not been able to count upon him in any direction. He only attends church now by fits and starts. But you need not shake your head, my venerable brother, for not another word will I say against the one we will unitedly pray for."

And then the one who was still called "the new pastor," because Dr. Roberts, who had been forced to resign his charge on account of advancing years, still lived where he had for over a quarter of a century, bowed himself out of the presence of the one who was a constant inspiration to him.

The following Sunday was so stormy that the aged minister could not venture out, and he was not surprised that none of his former parishioners had looked in upon him. Still, as he sat alone in the gloaming, with only a housekeeper with whom he could exchange a word, he was lonely and heart-hungry, and gladly welcomed the "ting-a-ling" herald of some one to break the monotony.

"It was exceedingly kind of you to take pity on your old pastor, Harold," was the warm greeting of the man who grasped the hand of a perfect specimen of strong manhood, on the sunny side of thirty. "Now tell me what your pastor preached about this morning, and everything of interest, for it still seems to me as if I were shepherd of that flock, and only laid aside for a little while."

"There, I was afraid that you would corner me into admitting that I did not attend church to-day," rejoined the one who, meanwhile, had removed his storm-coat, and seated himself opposite his genial host with an air of a come-to-stay caller, "but, nevertheless, I determined to risk your censure, for—for I feel the need of your counsel."

This last was uttered in so low a tone that it did not catch the time-dulled ear of the one who was reminded by the first admission of the new pastor's disappointment, in the handsome, as well as gifted, young man before him, and of the united prayers that were daily offered for him. But years had strengthened the natural tact of this man of God, and so he gave no hint of his growing laxity in church duties, but silently prayed that even while the wind whistled around the chimney, wisdom might be given him to so speak as to arouse the seemingly indifferent youth before him. He half forgot the prayers which had been previously offered for this young brother, and so was surprised—like many another when prayers are unexpectedly answered—when Harold opened the subject lying so near his heart, by saying abruptly:

"I have been in the depths to-day, so I did not feel like seeing anyone but you, my dear old pastor."

"Why, Harold White! you quite take my breath away. You are the last person I would suspect of having even a touch of the blues. You are surely jesting."

"I wish I were," said Harold, with a rueful smile, "but I would be slow to confess it to anybody else, except my far-away mother. I imagine people do not give me credit for having a serious thought, but I pity anyone who thinks more seriously than I have to-day."

"A most encouraging outlook, surely, my boy," was the hearty comment, "for so long as one is thoughtless there is little room for improvement. But do you mind telling me why you are especially depressed to-day?"

"No, indeed, for I came here for that very purpose. It came about in this way. I had planned to go to church, as I had failed to secure an interesting book for the day, and feared that time would hang heavy on my hands—how heavy could not have been conceived of then—and as I was making prepara-

tions, I threw open some blinds for more light, which brought to view a great elm, under whose branches I have spent many a Sunday with my books. But as I looked at the tree, which, snow-covered, gives no sign of life, it seemed to be a type of the fruitless life I am now leading. I could not rid myself of the idea, nor have I since been able to shake off the impression it made upon me."

"Don't try to, Harold, I beg of you!" exclaimed the eager listener, "for I am sure it was sent to you in direct answer to united prayer. For, my dear, young friend, I am not the only one who has mourned over your apparent lack of spiritual life, and many a plea has winged itself to the throne of grace that you might weary of the life so fruitless of good works; weary of the worldly husks upon which you have been feeding since you came home from college. You know you cannot serve two masters, Harold."

"I am finding it out, to my sorrow," said the young man, who now looked very unlike the one who, because of his ready wit and brilliant conversational powers, was a favorite in society; "but tell me frankly, my old friend, if you can, why my life seems so like the leafless trees. Now do not hesitate," continued he, pleadingly, "for nothing which could slip from your lips would wound me."

"Well, I was about to say, my boy—for in spite of your years, you will always seem like a boy to me—that it is because you have not given God a chance."

"Not given God a chance?" repeated Harold, in a tone of surprise, "why, as you know, I have always led a clean life."

"Yes, yes, I admit that," was the hearty rejoinder; "still, if you will carefully study the later years of your life, you will not, I am sure, take any exceptions to the statement which I have just made."

Here the tactful old minister took up his constant companion, the Book of Books, and opening it readily, turned to the following passage, which he read aloud: "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." And then he said:

"Jesus was willing to perform mighty works in Capernaum, but he was hindered because the people did not give him a chance. He could not enrich their lives, because they were not ready to claim him as their King. It is just so in our day, Harold. If you want God to make the most of your life, you must give him the opportunity."

"In what way have I hindered his making the most of my life thus far?" was the low query.

"Could you tell me what books you have read during the past year, my boy?" was the evasive reply.

"Oh, yes," was the ready answer, "for I keep a list of all I read."

He then read over a long list of books recently issued, and ended with:

"Quite a long list for a business man, isn't it?"

"Y-e-s, so long a list that I wonder what time you found to study your chart," said the minister, placing his hand lovingly upon the Bible, as he said it.

There was no response, and so the speaker continued.

"It is written that all shall be taught of God. Now, Harold, God is wanting a chance to make himself known to you through his Word, but what chance has he when your every leisure moment is filled with the reading of books which are, to say the least, scarcely worthy to live, if I have been rightly informed."

"None, I fear," fell from the lips of the one whose eyes had been fixed upon the venerable speaker, as if trying to read even his unuttered thoughts, "but I have come to be regarded as the greatest reader of my circle of friends, and I count it so great an honor, that I am getting to be an omnivorous reader."

"I should judge so by the length of your list; but tell me frankly how many of those books strengthened your faith in Christ and your determination to serve him more faithfully?"

The silence was unbroken for a little space, save for the dismal roar of the wind, and then Harold answered fervently, "Not one, I fear."

"Oh, Harold! Harold!" exclaimed his former pastor, looking at him lovingly and earnestly, "is it worth while, for the sake of the admiration of worldly friends, to so fritter away the precious time which should be given to studying the Book, and reading what is along that line?"

A shake of the head was the only answer to the query put with the old-time fervor, and so he pressed the subject still further by saying, "If report says truly, some of the books on your long list would not bear the search-light of Paul's injunction: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure—think on these things.' Am I right in this conclusion, my young friend?"

Only a long-drawn sigh filled the pause, and then the man of years and discretion clinched what he

had been saying by this direct question, "Is that giving God a chance?"

"No! no!" was the decisive answer. "I plainly see that I have not given him the shadow of a chance to mold my life; and yet, only a few hours ago, I wondered why I seemed so far removed from him, and why my life was so bare and barren. But tell me, my faithful friend, how to put myself where God can use me, for I am weary of the useless life I have been leading."

"I will endeavor to do so most gladly, my dear boy," was the tremulous answer, "for I have both hoped and prayed for this glad hour. First, you must again consecrate yourself fully to your Saviour, as you did when you gave your heart to him years ago. Then I would suggest the years before you went to college as worthy of imitation in many ways. For you will bear me out in saying that the boy Harold was always in his proper place on the Lord's Day, and that he could be counted upon as faithfully performing his part in the various branches of church work; while the boy grown tall rarely gives God a chance to speak to him through his pastor's sermons and I would not be surprised to learn that he has been a stranger to the blessed influence of prayer meetings for many a year."

Here the speaker paused for a possible reply, but the one addressed kept his eyes fixed upon the floor and was silent.

"The trouble is, Harold, worldliness, in various ways, has so sapped your strength as to leave no room for Christian development," continued the man, who was bent on doing his best, to answer his own prayers, "consequently, at this sudden awakening, you are amazed at the barrenness of your life. But do you not see that you alone are responsible for what so depresses you, as well as what has brought grief to the hearts of those who, knowing of your God-given gifts, expected you to make rapid strides in the Christian life?"

"Yes, yes, it is all as light as day," exclaimed Harold, springing to his feet and pacing the floor with a look of determination on his face, and then, as when a boy, he threw an arm about the neck of his old pastor, and pleadingly he said, "Pray for me!"

It was late into the night when that memorable interview ended, but the one who once more faced the blinding storm heeded it not, for his heart was attuned to the last words which he had spoken as he pressed the hand of this saintly friend.

"I will no longer strive for the plaudits of the world, but give God a chance to use me."

A few weeks later the new pastor remarked to the old one, "I can count on Harold White every time now. He said to me only yesterday, 'Send me anywhere, or ask me to do anything, for I have been a drone in the church-hive so long that I have no disposition to select the easy places.' I tell you he is doing his best to brush up his buried talents."

The kindly face of Dr. Roberts was aglow with joy, but he did not attempt to voice his thoughts beyond saying, as if thinking aloud, "He is giving God a chance."—American Messenger.

Coincidence?

One day the noon mail brought to Rev. A. J. Gordon a letter from a young colored man, whose piety and scholarship had prompted Dr. Gordon to help him pursue his studies. He told the pathetic story of his struggles, of how sparingly he had lived—and inclosed list of his expenditures demonstrating that—and that he did not have a cent to pay his debts.

Doctor Gordon went to the telegraph office, and wrote a dispatch to the poor student to say that he would be responsible for one-half the amount needed, provided he could raise the other half from Mr. W. But as he could not remember the student's street number, nor the amount of money needed, he went back to his house to find the letter.

On his way he called at a certain place to pay a bill—thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents. He handed his check for the sum to the bookkeeper, who, on turning to the account said:

"This bill is paid, sir; you do not owe us anything."

"Who paid it?" asked Dr. Gordon.

"I cannot say; only I know that it was settled several weeks ago," and the book-keeper handed back the check.

Dr. Gordon, surprised to find himself so much better off than he expected, returned home, opened the student's letter, and found that his list of debts came to just thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents. He sent a check for the amount to the poor student.—Isa. 58: 11.

"Conscience."

"When I was a boy in Eastern New York peddlers would bring oysters in little kegs and mother would make soup of them. One day I found a little red thing in the soup, and I didn't know if it were by