

future scratch it down and mail to Closing Wiggins Raymond W. C. H. A. 1

The Protective Hand

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By Lillian Miller

The confused hum of conversation drifted over the long white-clothed tables. The shade of two maples shifted with the slight breeze that moved with the tone of women's talk of children, flowers, and weather. Men, in little groups, stood in the shade of the country church with the rusted metal roof to argue over country politics and lament the grass in the pastures that the long draught was killing for miles around.

A tall woman with hands that told of her capability in the kitchen and garden allowed a thought that had rested on her face to be voiced to three others who were removing cakes and pies from boxes and placing them on a table, already filled. "Have you ever in all your days seen such a long dry spell? If it don't rain before long I don't know how people are goin' to get along." Evidence that the situation had walked the paths of thought in several other minds was climaxed by agreement in tones of wonder and anxiety.

"Mrs. Wiles," questioned an older woman with a face of genuine concern and eyes of kindly gray, "I wonder if we as a people have sinned against the good Lord, and He's tellin' us we ought to repent?" This statement had enough impact to cause a pensive silence to fall over the discourse of those who had heard.

Any replies that might have been given were hushed by the sound of the preacher's voice as he lifted his hand in a protective slant to the cool air above the humble heads of those who stood, silent, with heads bowed. His words, deep with sincere gratitude, prayed for humility and forgiveness of sin. He asked God to take their bodies and use them, and the food that had been prepared, for the furtherance of His kingdom to all the earth.

Drum-sticks and biscuits were given to the smaller children with ample sprinklings of caution about the musing of their Sunday suits. Women praised the fine texture of the chocolate cakes and the high meringue of the lemon pies. Men piled plates high with colorful potato-salad, chicken, and at least three pieces of cake. The subjects of previous conversation were magnetic enough to draw them to shady spots while laughter shone from contented eyes.

After the food was cleared away the congregation gathered to continue their worship. "Give us thy showers of blessing, O Lord," was the prayer of the simple trusting man who stood among his people. The old organ sounded and the congregation began to sing. "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine . . ." From the open window came the sound of peaceful rain falling upon the hearts of these people and their land.

Tranquility

Silver frost tipped the dreams of autumn
And winter winds called to the serenity of spring;
Summer rain whispered of remembrance and peace.

—By Lillian Miller