

The Collier and his Children

D.L. Moody:

When I was holding meetings a little time ago, at Wharneckliff, in England, a coal district, a great burly collier [coal miner] came up to me, and said in his Yorkshire dialect, "Dost know wha was at meetin' t'night?" "No," I answered. "Why," said he, "So-and-so" (mentioning name). The name was a familiar one. He was a very bad man, one of the wildest, wickedest men in Yorkshire, according to his own confession, and according to the confession of everybody who knew him. "Well," said the man, "he cam' into meetin' an' said you didn't preach right; he said thou didn't preach nothin' but the love o' Christ, an' that won't do for drunken colliers; ye wan't shake 'em over a pit, and he says he'll ne'er come again." He thought I didn't preach about hell. Mark you, my friends, I believe in the pit that burns, in the fire that's never quenched, in the worm that never dies; but I believe that the magnet that goes down to the bottom of the pit is the love of Jesus. I didn't expect to see him again, but he came the next night, without washing his face, right from the pit, with all his working clothes upon him. This drunken collier sat down on one of the seats that were used for the children, and got as near to me as possible. The sermon was love from first to last. He listened at first attentively, but by-and-by I saw him with the sleeve of his rough coat, wiping his eyes. Soon after we had an inquiry-meeting, when some of those praying colliers got around him, and it wasn't long before he was crying, "O Lord, save me; I am lost; Jesus, have mercy upon me"; and he left that meeting a new creature. His wife told me herself what occurred when he came home. His little children heard him coming along; they knew the step of his heavy clogs, and ran to their mother in terror, clinging to her skirts. He opened the door as gently as could be. He had had a habit of banging the doors. When he came into the house and saw the children clinging to their mother, frightened, he just stooped down and picked up the youngest girl in his arms, and looked at her, the tears rolling down his cheeks. "Mary, God has sent thy father home to thee," and kissed her. He picked up another, "God has sent thy father home"; and from one to another he went, and kissed them all; and then came to his wife and put his arms around her neck, "Don't cry, lass; don't cry. God has sent thy husband home at last; don't cry," and all she could do was to put her arms around his neck and sob. And then he said, "Have you got a Bible in the house, lass?" They hadn't such a thing. "Well, lass, if we haven't we must pray." They got down on their knees, and all he could say was:

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity—

for Jesus Christ's sake, amen." It was a simple prayer, but God answered it. While I was at Barnet some time after that, a friend came to me, and said, "I've got good news for you. So-and-so (mentioning the collier's name) is preaching the gospel everywhere he goes, in the pit, and out of the pit, and tries to win everybody to the Lord Jesus Christ."