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Letter from December 10-17, 1888

Lavinia Coombs

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MIDNAPUR, Dec. 10 1/5 88.

My dear Bellie,

I didn't think it would take so long before answering your letter but this is the first chance I've got, aside from answering those letters seemed to demand attention first. You wrote shortly after your getting back from Ocean Park and now when you get this it will be nearly midwinter and a great deal has happened during this time both of public and private interest. We are made happy by the news we get from home. Harrison is elected and the missionaries have sailed. We are full of pleasant anticipation because of their coming both for themselves and because of what they will bring us as tokens of love & good.
will of the dear ones far away.
I doubt if they get here in time
for Christmas, but the dolls, etc.
and other things will keep for
another year. Our yearly meet-
ing is to be held here in Kentucky
in January and they will surely
be here by that time of noth-
ing happens. We shall be so glad to
be all together and to welcome
the new comers, but our gladness
will not be unalloyed for Mr. and
Mrs. Buckholzer and Hattie
Phillips are to leave for home
shortly after this meeting and
though we know they need and
deserve a vacation we know their
work must suffer. If we could
go on and on indefinitely without
wearing out or getting tired how
fine that would be. If I could
keep as well as I have been these
six years I wouldn't need to go
home for twenty years yet and
then by that time I wouldn't
Care to go at all, for every body
and every thing would be as changed that
the joy would all be taken out of it.
The longer I stay the more I think
I shall not go home at the end of ten
years unless I'm obliged to. But
remember that for the last few days
I have felt like sighing for a lodge
in some vast wilderness or for wings
like a dove that might fly away
and be at rest just for a little
while for my mind has been so bur-
dened with the misgivings of our
Christian people that I couldn't be
happy. I think it will do us harm
to think of our trials occasionally and
to let home friends all the while not
be concerned. We lead a Christian
life in the industrial school
here and two friends teachers. We had
three before & put a Christian teach-
er in and we bitterly disappointed us
but this one has been doing beautifully
and we were congratulating ourselves.
on the good influence necessarily brought to bear on the pupils, which to one day the truth comes out that he is a vile fellow who has seduced a married woman—another Christian—and they were both missing.

This woman is one who has been brought right among us and has been living an exemplary life all along—a teacher in one of the Ragged Schools—and now this is the outcome of it all. Isn't it discouraging! But then I think of the stories we hear from California land, with all that civilization and Christianity is supposed to have done in the line of merciful and this doesn't seem so awful, for this land is full of wickedness and evil has reigned so long that it is no easy matter to break away from it. Of course I believe in the power of God to save and keep a person true just as well as in America but very
few comparatively of our Chris-
trains I fear, realize the full mean-
ing of the Christian faith.

Our religion is so different
from the religions of this land that
it is hard for them to grasp the
idea of an entire change of heart.

Dec. 15th. 11 P.M.

We are in the midst of another experience of
a different kind. I am sitting with
Mrs. Burkholder while she watches
by her little boy Jamie who is hover-
ing between life and death.

They Curt & Mrs. Burkholder and
the children were out on a preaching
tour and enjoying it very much when
this little boy was taken suddenly &
seriously ill with dysentery. They hur-
ried home to Blumenau and sent a mes-
senger to Dr. Harry Bachelor who went
out immediately. He was there two days
but Jamie did not improve as he had
hoped but as his own baby was not well
Late — Sunday 16th

I had to get up just then for some little thing to help Mrs. Burkholder and didn't find the chance or the heart to sit down to write any before Judge Smith came to relieve me and I went off to lie down. The mother would not leave her boy for any rest, though she had been watching with him for several nights and had just taken the long drive of twenty miles from Monmouth holding him in her arms. Dr. Bachelor had come back home from the first summons and then the next day came another messenger with a note saying they found their little boy wouldn't live till morning and whether he come out again is possible. He hurried right off. That was yesterday — Saturday — morning and though he found him a little better than when the Post Messenger was there, yet the all thought it best to bring him in haste as they could have little medical advice and better advantage. They got him about 10 o'clock and the little fellow was so exhausted he seemed in a dying condition then but he rallied a little and we were hopeful till after midnight and then he soon began to show signs of sinking and passed away about 4 o'clock. He was a beautiful boy and the pet of the family. How often that very one seems to be chosen to go. This is the second child she has lost, but she bears it like the true Christian she is.

Monday 17th

This must go today. I began it a week ago hoping to send it then but couldn't finish it in time. I will speak of some things suggested by your letter. The Ocean Park meetings, The Story and the Programme.
sent, and your letter and Clarise gave me a very good idea of the
and there seems to be a growing interest in them. I wish that
our denominational brothers and sisters could get to them. I urge
those from the west and south-
but of course it is a long way for
and a big expense to be borne.

I was as surprised as you at the
impression made on you by Mrs.
Phillips. She is very intense
in her way of working and very
strong in her convictions, but she
is a power for good. I only wish she
was here. We hear that Dr. Phillips
has had a call to this country from
the Union Church at Sandia. The call
was telegraphed to him and we hear
that he has accepted, but even if
he does come we shall not likely see
him, for it is hundreds of miles
from Kansas City. I wish Dr. Phillips
could come too and be with them. I believe
she would rest and get well faster
than she can at home. For it is
a hill station and nice climate and
what is the matter.
Perhaps you would like to know
something further of those matters
I spoke of in the first of my letter.
My heart is lighter in regard to the
woman at least. Our pastor saw her
in the street and brought her to me
and I talked long with her, but she
seemed hard. We found that she had
entered a complaint against her
husband and that he was a drunkard
and beat her cruelly and she had
to flee for her life! Apart of this
was true but I was determined
we would not have a case in court
and leave so much extra disgrace
brought upon us. Her brother came
in to Midnapore and the next day
she had agreed to retract her accusa-
tion, and take it out of court. I went
with her to see about it, and then
went to the house where she had
been living for those few days to get
her things and there saw proofs
that she had not been living
there alone. She seemed a little
confused that day and promised to
stay quietly in a neighbor’s house.
she wouldn't have to be continually
going off to meetings here and there.
and using that strength she does
get in that way. But she can't leave
her children yet.

The death of Mrs. Dextén and Miss
Malcolmson must have been sad
news indeed and was an unusual
thing to happen both in one summer. Not
that it is an unusual thing for people
to die, but they were both closely connected with
the interest at the Park and this death
while those meetings were in action was
a coincidence.

We hear that our new missionaries
left Liverpool the 14th of November, and
so all goes well they must be in
Calcutta this week, and that will
bring them here before Christmas, which
will be very nice. I will send you
a card after Christmas and the
accompanying rush is over.

I haven't had a word from my brother
Elbridge for a long time. I don't know
till we could decide what to do.

To-day that the man in that house came to me
saying he didn't believe he could keep her for she
seemed very uneasy and didn't want to stay.

I went over and called her to come over and talk
with me. She came willingly but was in an almost
despairing mood. I had a long quiet talk with her
and she was all broken down, and prayed for herself as
penitently and breathlessly that my mind feels quite
tired about her. She will have to suffer but it is
right she should. I only hope she will have
strength to bear it.

I must send this off now or it will be too late again
your sister love

Vina
Miss Hellee Whitterson
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6. 8.