GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Rain poured from the sky. It flooded the streets and gushed from the gutter spouts and swelled the already swollen river.

"I do hope there won't be anymore flooding," Mrs. Hollister remarked to her husband and son who stood beside her, watching the continuous downpour.
"God is still in control, my dear." Mr. Hollister replied, sliding an arm around the slender shoulders of his life's companion of more than forty-nine years. "He will take care of our humble riverside dwelling, and of the mission, too. After all, it all belongs to Him; it is His property. We are merely the overseers of it; He can do as He pleases, and as He sees is for the best."

Mrs. Hollister smiled understandingly and leaned tiredly into the bend of the strong arm around her. "I know this, my dear," she said tenderly. "And I know, too, that He will never forsake His own when they cry unto Him. Let us pray and ask the Lord to keep the river wall intact. The Scriptures tell us that He looked upon the proud waves and said, 'Hither shalt thou come, and no farther.' He can say the same to this fastly rising river."

"How true. How very true," came the husband's instant reply as they fell on their knees and began to pray.

It was the loud, raucous jangling of the telephone that brought them to a quick halt. There were always so many needs and/or needy who either came to the mission or called wanting help.

"I'll get it," Andrew said softly to his parents as he hurried to the phone. In no time at all, he was back in the room. "It was the constable's wife calling," he announced. "A man just jumped into the river up near the bridge. The current's bringing him down our way. We must rescue him, Father! It's urgent. The constable's on his way."

In a moment's time, Mr. Hollister and twenty-year-old Andrew were ready. They waited inside the doorway. The moment the constable's car pulled up in front a short time later, they hurried to where a rowboat was moored and pushed out into the churning, swelling, turbulent water.

"No easy task!" the constable shouted to the two Holisters, trying to make himself heard above the roaring of the water. "Pull hard on the oar there, Andrew," he added. "We must keep the bow against this fierce current; he's coming toward us and if we drift downstream ourselves we'll never get the poor man in time, He'll drown before we get to him."

"Yes, Sir. I'm doing my best," came the reply from the deeply-spiritual young man whose burden for the wayward and the outcast and the
downtrodden sinners was every bit as heavy and as great as was that of his parents.

"Here he comes!" Mr. Hollister shouted as Andrew drew the small fishing-rowing craft abreast of the dying man. The constable made a desperate grab, but the water pushed the man along at a rapid pace and he missed.

In a flash, and without a moment's hesitation, Andrew dived into the swirling, rushing waters after the man, and with his dive an oar slipped from the boat and was carried away. Now the unmanageable boat was drifting with the current fifty yards away.

Andrew swam. The drowning man was almost at his fingertips; then a great swell of water washed him away. Worse still, the water was now dragging he himself under. He rose to the surface, looking around helplessly for the victim whom he was trying to save; then, with cruel, unrelenting hands a fierce whirlpool dragged him under and the waters passed over him.

In vain and with many tears, the aged, trembling father and the constable . . . as well as the crowd upon the banks of the river . . . watched the spot of Andrew's disappearance, straining with eager eyes to see the young man surface. But nothing broke the surface of the water.

With bent form, bowed head, and a trembling hand, Mr. Hollister made his way, along with the constable, into their riverside home. His wife fell into his open arms. "I know. I know," she cried, sparing her husband the pain and the agony of telling the story. "One of the mission friends told me. Quoting from you, these few short minutes ago -- 'God is still in control, my dear,' let us trust Him to bring good out of this in spite of our great loss. I don't see how we can go on at this mission without Andrew; we are getting old and our strength is waning. But He will make a way. This is His mission, not ours. We are merely His caretakers of it until He releases us. Now come, a cup of hot mint tea will do us all good."

Long after the constable was gone, a steady stream of friends and loved ones poured into the humble dwelling, praying with the Hollisters and consoling and helping them in every way possible.
"It seems strange that God would not have allowed Andrew to rescue the man who committed suicide," a man said who had received help himself at the mission. "After all, he was trying to save the man and give him another chance to get right with God. And now, in the process, a saint died and is with the Lord and that sinner's in hell. This, in spite of Andrew's noble attempt to rescue him from hell."

"I suppose none of us will ever understand why some things happen," Mr. Hollister said, wiping tears from his eyes. "But I know that, hard to understand though it may be, God doeth all things well. He maketh no mistakes. And as to the man whom Andrew tried to save being in hell, let us hope that that man came to himself and begged God's forgiveness before he drowned. And now, hadn't we better be getting into the mission hall? It's almost time for the service to start."

"You mean you're going? Tonight? Right after your son drowned and gave his life for another man?"

"Yes, I am going, my friend. God's work must not be neglected. I cannot bring Andrew back but I can try to reach those who are still able to hear and to listen and try to bring them to Christ. Andrew would want it this way. His life, like his mother's and mine, was dedicated to this work." And together Mr. and Mrs. Hollister and the friend walked to the mission.

The building was filled with a great company of men and of women. They were there because they had heard of the tragedy. With a steady voice, Brother Hollister and the friend walked to the mission.

The building was filled with a great company of men and of women. They were there because they had heard of the tragedy. With a steady voice, Brother Hollister broke the Bread of Life to the crowd, ending with the account of the greatest of all sacrifices and the deepest of all loves: Jesus Christ Himself. "'Greater love hath no man than this'; he quoted, "'that a man lay down his life for a friend.' St. John 15:13. My son," he stated, "gave his life trying to save a suicide from hell's torments; Jesus gave His life that all may be saved. His call to you is, Come. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'" He quoted from Isaiah 1:18, "Who will heed this call and, tonight, . . . this very moment ."
...will come?" he asked brokenly as tears coursed from his eyes and ran down his cheeks.

In the crowd there was a man. One man! Upon him the effect of Andrew's death and the story of the greater, nobler, more sacrificial Lamb, Jesus Christ, was electrifying. Terror seized him. It held him powerless and rendered him helpless to flee from the mission hall. Beads of perspiration formed on his forehead and dropped onto the floor. His hands clenched the chair in front of him; his body trembled and shook like cottonwood leaves on a late fall day.

"Will you come to the mercy seat?" Brother Hollister asked with pathos in his voice. "Jesus is waiting for you. Come. Oh, come tonight! Don't put it off any longer."

Like one waking from sleep, the man put one foot forward, then another. And another. And another. Soon he was at the mourner's bench. He fell across it, begging for God's mercy and for His forgiveness. Peace filled his soul. Glory shone on his face. He was forgiven. Pardoned. Made new in Christ.

"I was desperate," he said, standing to his feet. "I was a hopeless wretch. I entered this mission hall with a heart as black and as dark as the night itself. I, too, like the man whom young Andrew gave his life for, meant to take the river as the way out. This very night, too!"

He shuddered. Then he sobbed. "Tonight, thanks be unto God, I saw myself for what I was: a dirty old rotten sinner who always blamed everybody else for all my failures and my misfortunes. I saw myself as a lost soul going to hell unless I repented, confessed and forsook my sins. Andrew's death was not in vain. He may not have bodily and physically rescued the man whom he gave his own life for, but God used him and what he died for to get to my soul. Tonight I am a new man -- all new in Christ. My sins are forgiven and I am on my way to the City. I am going to return home to my wife and children and ask them to forgive me for the way I have treated them and abused them. I intend to live the remaining years of my life for Christ, by His grace and His help."
The Hollisters were overjoyed. The sacrifice of their noble son was not in vain; his untimely death was not a failure. Already God was giving fruit for it and was bringing hope and light out of what appeared to be a loss.

They bowed their heads and wept -- for joy.

(Written around a true happening.)