



Light at Eventide

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# LIGHT AT EVENTIDE,

AND OTHER

**Gospel Narratives.**

By X.

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THIRD EDITION.

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*LIGHT AT EVENTIDE.*



## LIGHT AT EVENTIDE.

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“The entrance of thy words giveth light.”—PSA. cxix. 130.

“**D**RAW the curtain back a little, Annie dear, that I may see the sun set, and bring your chair nearer to me and read something—something that will give me comfort.” And the sick girl sighed wearily and turned restlessly on her couch, now watching with a troubled look her sister’s movements as she hastened to fulfil her requests, now fixing her large lustrous eyes on the deep bay-window of her room, through

which the sun, setting with unusual splendour for a winter's afternoon, was plainly visible.

Yet it was not of the sunset that the young sufferer dreamed, nor of any earthly light, as presently she softly murmured, "At evening time it shall be light . . . At evening time it shall be light:" then, with deep feeling, "Oh, Annie, Annie, it is evening time with me *now*, but it is *not* light, it is *not* light."

Her sister drew closer still, and took the little wasted burning hand, which rested outside the coverlid, in both of hers, and, as she looked lovingly on the troubled face of the one so dear to her, her own reflected the trouble of it.

For a moment neither spoke, but hand clasped hand more tightly; then the sick girl broke the silence once more.

“Annie, tell me, tell me truly, if you were as I am, if you were *dying*, would *you* be afraid? You need not try to contradict me, dear, I know now that I am dying. I heard every word Dr. —— said yesterday. Do not be grieved, my pet sister, it is better I should know, and but for that I should not have guessed it even, for I am not so *very* ill?” Her eyes had a questioning look, as though she would fain have asked, Could she have made a mistake?—in spite of the certainty of her previous tone.

Sorrowfully Annie bowed her head; she had no words. The death-knell to all their hopes for that bright young life had been given the night before, when their kind physician, who had known her all her life, and who loved her like his own child, had said, “It is only a question of a week or two at longest, not that even, if the disease continues to make the same rapid progress.”

This was his judgment, and they had listened to it with the agony only those can understand who have thus hearkened, once, at any rate, in their lifetime, to words that tell them that the life, for which they would gladly lay down their own, is ebbing surely and rapidly away; that no love of theirs, no tender care, can stay the loosing of the "silver cord" which binds the beloved one to earth, but that soon, very soon, the parting which looks *so* terrible *must* come.

A half-checked sob had been Annie's only answer to her sister's last words. Each was thinking of the other. Then, as a flood of crimson and golden light poured into the room, the young sufferer returned to her question.

"*Would* you be afraid, Annie? Tell me."

"I do not know, Nellie, dear; it is so

hard to tell beforehand. I do not think I should, for," she whispered, "you have Jesus, and Jesus will be with you and carry you through."

"But I am not SURE, and, oh, remember, Annie, it is *for ever*, and *for ever*, and *for ever*. I must make no mistakes now. What can I do to be *sure*?" And, trembling with emotion, her face flushed with excitement, she raised herself slightly on her elbow, and gazed into her sister's face.

"But, Nellie, darling, we came to Jesus, you and I both, did we not? And we read together of His love, and His willingness to receive us, in His own Word. You remember the day when we found out we were sinners and needed a Saviour, and we came to Jesus. I have never doubted since, and I did not think you had."

"I was never *sure* as you were, Annie;

and last night, when I heard the doctor say I must die, and die soon, I was terribly afraid. I used to be happy sometimes when we were singing hymns together ; and when ——'s letters came with the verses of Scripture to meet my dark doubts. I sometimes thought I saw it all, for a moment, but the doubts came back, and now I am so afraid, and I cannot find comfort."

"Look to Jesus, Nellie dear," her sister tremblingly said, hardly knowing, in her deep love, and sorrow, and anxiety, what to say.

"Yes, but, Annie, He might forget me ; I've known so little about Him, and I have not served Him. I do not know Him *enough to die with*, Annie. He might let me go. It is like a big, dark river in front of me, and I am afraid to go down into its deep black waters alone." The words were

spoken almost convulsively, and the slight frame quivered as though in mortal agony. Eternity in all its reality was before her, everything she had clung to on earth was slipping from her grasp, and there was not the certainty in her soul that underneath her were the Everlasting Arms.

Have you, my reader, ever for one moment, in the darkness and silence of the night, with no human eye near, faced eternity *alone* with God, without the peace-giving knowledge that your life was hid with Christ in God, that His life, His joy, His home, were yours? If you have thus faced it, in all its solemn reality, you will understand *something* of this young girl's agony of soul.

I say *something* of it, for probably you have never yet been in the borderland between time and eternity, with the cer-

tainty that only a few more setting suns, and for you time would be no longer, and eternity would have begun.

These two young sisters, of whom the dying girl was the elder, had but a very short time previously been awakened to a sense of their lost condition, and their need of a Saviour, through reading a paper in the pages of "God's Glad Tidings." Annie, the younger, had, in simple faith, at once appropriated Jesus as *her* Saviour, His death, His blood-shedding, as the atonement for *her* sins. She had no questions, no doubts. At the very moment when she discovered her need, the One who could meet that need was presented to her, and she received Him, and trustfully had clung to Him.

With Nellie it had been different; though alive to the fact of her need, she had as yet never laid bare her soul before Jesus and let

Him meet it all. There had been reserves in her heart, doubts and questionings in her mind; and now, with death before her, as she said, she did "not know Him enough to die with."

For a moment, as Nellie finished speaking, her sister leaned her head upon her hand, quietly asking the Lord Jesus she so simply trusted, to come in and lighten the darkness in her sister's soul. Then she said, "Nellie, Jesus does not want you to go down into the dark waters alone, He will go with you; I know Him well enough to know He will never forget you, never forsake you, if you trust Him. I wish I knew more to tell you better, but I know there is a verse in the Bible that says He will never let anyone go that has come to Him, if only I knew just where to find it."

The dying girl had sunk back on her pillow

exhausted, but now she once more raised herself, and said eagerly, "Find it, and show it to me in the *Bible itself*, Annie, for I cannot believe anything else now. Oh, if it only said He would never let *me* go;" and the burning flush on her fair young cheek deepened alarmingly.

Afraid of the consequences of such intense excitement, Annie said soothingly, "Will you not lie still a little while now, and try to be quiet, and to-morrow I will find it and read it to you."

"To-morrow!" answered Nellie, "I may not be here to-morrow, and I might be in *hell*. 'It may be very sudden at the last, and she may go at any moment,'" she added, quoting the doctor's very words. Then, after a moment's pause, "This is not half as bad for me, Annie, as lying thinking of it alone, as I have been all the time, though

you did not know it. I cannot rest till I am *sure* that Jesus will have *me* and not let *me* go."

Annie felt the truth of her words, and, opening her Bible, searched carefully for the verses she wanted, but she was as yet young in the faith, and knew very little of the Scriptures, and page after page of the precious Book was turned over, and anxiously but unsuccessfully examined, while her sister watched her with almost impatient eagerness.

The short January afternoon was rapidly closing in ; the last gleam of sunlight was dying away, and Annie was bending low with her little Bible, that the bright firelight might shine on its pages, when a knock came at the bedroom door, and a servant entered with the contents of the evening's post-bag.

There were several letters and parcels,

but one only, a small pamphlet tied round with a piece of green string, seemed to have any interest for the dying girl, and as soon as the servant had closed the door, after lighting the shaded lamp, and drawing in the curtains, she said, quickly and eagerly, "Perhaps God has a message for me in this, Annie. He sent us one before through it. Open it for me now."

Surely the Lord, in His pitying love for that poor, anxious, weary heart, sent that silent messenger at that very moment, and in even a more seemingly trivial thing still connected with it, His heart assuredly planned, His hand guided.

The pamphlet was the January 1876 number of "God's Glad Tidings," containing the deeply touching story of the conversion and "going home" of "The Young Doctor." The paper cover that had been tied round the little

book was folded in at the thirteenth page, by accident doubtless on the part of the sender—by design surely on His part who numbers the very hairs of our heads. So that as Annie, at her sister's anxious appeal, tore the cover away, the thirteenth page lay open before her, and the first words that met her eye were, "Listen to His own words, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I *give unto them eternal life*, and they shall never perish, neither shall any (man or devil) pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' (John x. 27–29.) There, will that do?" In loving wonder and praise she read the paragraph through, with its question at the end, which was just her own heart's question to her sister.

“There, Nellie,” she said, “there are the very verses I was trying to find; God has sent them to you Himself, straight, now you *will* believe them.”

Awe, and wonder, and hope, and a dawning sense of relief, struggled together on that dying face. “Give me the book, Annie,” she whispered softly, “and my Testament, and put the lamp by me, and leave me a little while. You need not fear, dear one—I promise you to ring if I feel worse, or when I am ready for you.” Annie rose and obeyed her directions, only waiting to coax her sister to take part of a glass of fresh milk that had just been brought up.

An hour passed, and Nellie’s bell did not ring, and Annie scarcely dared to intrude, but when another hour had nearly gone by, she crept anxiously to the door, and opened it softly. There was no sound. She

moved noiselessly into the room, almost dreading to look towards the bed. But her fears were groundless; the sight that met her eye filled her heart with gladness. Nellie was sleeping sweetly, a half smile on her slightly parted lips, and a look of untroubled peace on her fair young face such as Annie had never seen there before. The little pamphlet, with its precious verses from God's own Word, was lying open, just where the full light from the lamp shone upon it, and close by her side; while one hand still clasped her New Testament, also open at the tenth chapter of John's Gospel, as though she had searched for herself, and found the words in her own Bible, and, in the rest of soul they had given, the body had found rest also. Quietly Annie sat down and watched her, till at last she began to fear lest her beloved sister would never again

awaken, and rose anxiously to call their mother and others of the family, praying all the time—oh, so earnestly!—for just one word, one assuring word from her own lips, to tell her for certain that the look of rest on her face was the rest that Jesus gives to every weary one who comes to Him.

The Lord gave her, as He delights to do far more than she asked Him for.

The movement, slight though it was, had awakened Nellie; she opened her eyes, and, seeing her sister, said, with a bright beaming smile, “Oh, Annie! I seem almost to have been in heaven. ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.’ So He came to save *me*, for that means every sinner, and it is nothing at all to do with *my* holding on to Him, or serving Him well, or even knowing Him well, though I would like to, for He says, ‘I know them,’ so He knows

me well, all my badness too, and yet He says, 'Neither shall *any* pluck them out of my hand.' . . . That *must* mean that I cannot even take myself out of His hand. . . . How good He is, yes, that will do, even to die with."

Tears of deep, holy joy filled the eyes of both, and songs of thanksgiving their hearts. Presently Annie asked, "Did you see it at once, dear?"

"No, not at once. When you read those verses, I felt there might be something for me: I was sure it was the Lord who had sent that message just then, and I wanted to be alone with Him to have it *settled*. Then something, I suppose it was Satan, whispered, 'Yes, He holds *His own sheep*, of course, but suppose you are not His sheep at all?' Then I was as badly off as ever, and even worse, for my hopes had

been raised. Then, in my agony, I turned over the pages to see who it was had had this same fear in dying as I, and my eye caught these words, a page or two further back, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.' Oh, how sweet that word *sinners* was! . . . 'If I am not one of *His sheep*, I am a *sinner*,' I said aloud, and Jesus came to save sinners. Even Satan cannot cheat me of that name, a sinner, nor deny His right to save me. . . . And those He saves He holds fast. . . . I wonder I did not see it before; . . . but, oh, Annie, what it is for peace to come after such agony!"

A smile of almost more than earthly beauty lit up her face, and again her eyes closed, and, though not sleeping, she lay quite still, as though absorbed in her new-found joy

For some weeks after this, Nellie lingered. It seemed as though the entering in of His Word had given not only light to her soul at evening time, but even strength to her body, as though for a time the very joy of her heart kept her above pain and weakness.

One day, when she had been speaking of Jesus very earnestly to a young friend, her mother entered, and, seeing her look so bright and animated, said, "Why, Nellie, I believe we shall have you well again after all, my child."

"Yes, mother dear, Jesus has made me whole," she answered; "not as you mean though," she added, "I am going to the land, where the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick, but better still, I am going to Jesus."

Nellie could not keep the treasure she had found to herself; her heart was filled with the burning desire to be the means of im-

parting it to others, to be the channel of communication between a giving God and needy hearts, even though they recognised not their need.

Life was a reality to her, death was a reality, eternity was a reality, and, above all, Christ was a reality; and she longed that others whom she knew and loved might not wait till a death-bed to have everything thus made real.

“ My only regret now in dying,” she said one day to her younger sister, “ is that even eternity cannot give us the honour of being on Jesus’ side when all the world is against Him, of pleasing Him by being loyal and true; but you still have time, Annie, dear; be true to, be out and out for, Jesus; win His ‘ She hath done what she could.’ I shall rejoice to hear Him say this of you in that day.”

Taught by the Holy Spirit, whose delight is to take of the things of Jesus and to show them to us, she learned much in those few short weeks. Whenever it was possible, she craved to have the Word of God read to her, or to read it for herself. "I want to know as much as I can of Jesus before I go to Him," she would say to her sister, who was the sharer of all her thoughts, and to whom this was a time of real profit, for Nellie was the teacher now instead of the learner; not that she took that place, only there was a constant bubbling-up of the living waters wherewith Jesus had filled her soul, which refreshed and strengthened all who came near her.

When the last week in January came to a close, and February set in, it was evident, even to those who tried to blind themselves to the fact, that Nellie was sinking fast.

Her sufferings were intense, so intense that even Annie, who clung to her sister with more than ordinary sisterly love, could no longer desire to keep her here. Yet the young sufferer bore all so uncomplainingly, very unlike the lively, high-spirited Nellie of a few months back, who, though an almost universal favourite, and loving and generous even to a fault, could yet brook little patiently that crossed her thoughts and will. Very unlike, too, the weary, restless, miserable Nellie of a few weeks back. But who can teach like Jesus?

“How *can* you bear it, my child?” was her mother’s almost heart-broken expression one day, when the pain had been even more than usual.

“He gave *Himself* for me,” was the soft reply; “Himself, Himself.”

Many times during those weeks she asked

to hear again the record of that death-bed which had been the means of bringing peace to her—"God's message to me," as she called it.

It was still early in February when the end came. Those who loved and watched her had feared it would be terrible suffering at the last, but gently, peacefully, Jesus Himself put her to sleep.

The sun was setting with almost as brilliant colouring as on that January afternoon just five weeks since, when, in bitter agony, Nellie had told out to her sister the terror and dismay of her soul. She seemed to remember it, for, turning her eyes towards the glowing west, she murmured softly, "Evening time, . . . and Jesus *is* . . . the light. . . The city . . . had . . . no need of"— She stopped; a radiant smile of intense satisfaction lit up her face, there

was a slight movement, a half-drawn sigh, and Nellie's freed spirit was in the presence of Him who is the light of heaven, and who had been the light of her young heart, in the otherwise dark hours of suffering and death. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord," she was tasting what it is to be "with Jesus in Paradise."

And now may I ask you who have read Nellie's simple story, do *you* know this Jesus "enough to die with"?

Knowing about Him is not enough, talking about Him or singing hymns about Him is not enough. To meet death *peacefully*, I must know that on Calvary's cross He fully glorified God, and entirely put away *my* sins, every one of them, so that I stand in God's sight without a sin on me; and to meet death *joyfully*, I want to know more still, even the Person of the One to whom I

am going, want to know Him, not only as the rest for my conscience against this terrible charge of sin, but as the satisfying portion for my heart. Need this to be true of me :—

“There *no stranger God* shall meet thee,  
Stranger thou in courts above;  
He who to His rest shall greet thee,  
Greets thee with a well-known love!”



*“BOAST NOT  
THYSELF OF TO-MORROW.”*

## “BOAST NOT THYSELF OF TO-MORROW.”

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“Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”—PROV. xvii. 1.

IT was in one of the sick wards of a crowded city poorhouse that the following solemn events occurred, which have left too deep an impression on me ever to be effaced, and the memory of which again and again comes to me as a voice from eternity, bidding me seize the present moment to speak *now* of Christ to any Christless soul within my reach, for to-morrow may be too late; and oh, dear reader, may this little paper have a voice for you, saying to you, “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.” I had been visiting con-

stantly some of the sick ones in the poor-house, and, as I one day approached the bed of a dear sufferer in whom I was deeply interested, she said, "Oh, I am so glad you have come ; I have been watching the door all the morning in the hopes you would be in to-day."

"Why, Maggie," I said, "you did not think I should forget you ?"

"No, no, it wasn't that," she answered ; "I knew better than that ; but I thought maybe you mightn't find out where I was, and it wasn't so much myself I was thinking of either, glad enough though I always am to catch sight of a bit of your dress coming round the door ; but there's a poor young thing in this ward that I want you sorely to speak to ; maybe she'll listen to you."

The Lord had opened Maggie's heart to receive the glad tidings of His love only a

few weeks before, and now she was very anxious that others should know the precious Saviour whom she had found. Since my last visit, a few days previously, my poor friend had been removed from a ward in which I knew the occupant of each bed, to the present one, into which I had never before been, and this accounted for her fear that I might not find her. I looked round as she spoke. The ward was a very large one, with beds ranged each side, beds across the top, and a double row of beds, turned head to head, down the middle. Oh, the tales of want, of sorrow, and of suffering, written upon the faces of the occupants of them! Nearly all were comparatively young—few had reached the age of thirty; and my heart ached as I asked, “Which bed is your friend in, Maggie?”

“She is not a friend of mine,” she said:

"she is much above me, and it's little I know about her, for she has not been in here many days, and she does not talk to the nurses or the other patients as most do ; but I know she has seen a great deal of trouble. She came in here because she couldn't bear that her husband should see her dying of want before his eyes, and she thinks she'll be well in a month and able to go out again ; but the doctor says she will not live much more than a month, and there is no one to tell her that, or to speak to her of Jesus, and I am afraid she hasn't much thought about Him herself. Many a time I've longed to go to her in the night when her bad times came on, if I were only able."

Maggie's illness had left her partially paralysed and quite unable to move. I was waiting till she ceased speaking, to ask her

again which was the bed, when a half-cry, half-moan, followed by such a distressing cough and seeming struggling for breath, made me look up. In a bed at no great distance, and half sitting up, was a lovely girl, who, from her appearance, could scarcely have seen twenty-one summers. I needed not Maggie's "That is she" to tell me it was the one of whom she had been speaking. A more complete contrast to the scene in which she was could not be imagined. You could only picture such an one in a home of luxury, with every loving care being lavished on her, instead of lying on a little workhouse bed in a crowded ward, a tin mug with water in it by her side the only refreshment for her parched lips, and dependent for all care on the kind feeling of the pauper nurses. These, though rough in appearance, seemed really kind-hearted.

At that first half-cry two of them had gone quickly forward to her, and one raised her in her arms, while the other gently put back the masses of beautiful hair that had fallen over her shoulders, speaking evidently soothingly to her.

Well I knew that the colour of her cheek and the bright light in her eye were no signs of health, even if the cough had not told too plain a tale, and yet it seemed impossible to look on her and believe that death was as near as the doctor had pronounced. I longed to go to her—to be a sister to her—above all, to tell her of Jesus; but the nurses stayed by her side. A patient, too, from the next bed—the only one in the ward able to be dressed—was standing at the foot of the bed, and I feared to add to her distress by going forward. I could think of no excuse for seeming to intrude. In vain I

searched my pockets for a little bottle of eau-de-Cologne that I generally carried when I went to the poorhouse, and had often found useful and refreshing to one and another ; this day I had forgotten it. I had given away in other wards all the grapes I had brought in with me ; how I longed for a few of them now !

Presently I heard her say, “ Am I *very* ill ? I can't be so *very* ill. If I were dying, nurse, what should I do—oh, what *should* I do ? ”

Though really addressing the nurse, her large dark eyes fell on me as if speaking to me, and instinctively I half rose to go to her, but the devil whispered—“ You could not speak to her with those three women standing round, and while she is so suffering ; you are just throwing away an opportunity by being so hurried ; you are a stranger in

this ward, even the nurses do not know you; you would only provoke them and frighten her by intruding now. Better come back to-morrow, and bring anything you can think of; she may be alone then, and you may be able to get her away from here and to see her often while she lives; you will only defeat your object by being in such haste."

I did not recognise the voice; the advice seemed good, and yet I knew not how to leave the ward. I had already long overstayed my time, but yet I lingered and lingered; but the three women still stood there, and my coward heart, beguiled by Satan's suggestion of "expediency," won the day. I will come back early to-morrow, I thought; and, saying this to Maggie, I rose to leave.

Many times before reaching the end of

that long ward I nearly turned back, for the eyes of the sick girl seemed to follow me, and deep down in my heart the words still sounded, “If I were dying, nurse, what should I do?” but the devil’s “to-morrow” again triumphed.

All through a restless night the words rang in my ears, “If I were dying, nurse, what should I do?” In vain I tried to comfort myself with the doctor’s words.

Next day, as early as I could gain admittance, I went to the poorhouse, taking with me the finest grapes I could procure, and other things that I thought an invalid might fancy. As I opened the door of the ward, I saw the nurses all engaged at a long table near the door. I was glad. “She will be alone,” I thought: “I will go straight to her, without waiting to see Maggie first.” I felt that I had no message, no words, and yet

that I must go to her, and I could only ask the Lord to do with me as He would. Without speaking to any one, I walked straight up the ward towards her bed. A screen, which sheltered it from the fire, also hid it from the lower half of the ward. And oh! the sight that met my gaze, as I passed that screen, I shall never forget. Was it the sight of suffering and weakness—the sound of a tearing cough, or restless moaning, that thrilled me so? No, no; even these could not have produced such a pang of anguish. All was still! A clean coarse sheet was drawn up over the bed. Too well I knew the meaning—too well I knew that the still, silent form underneath that slight covering would never listen to human voice again, had gone beyond the reach of human aid for evermore—and oh! where? where? The agony of that moment was unutterable.

I stood rooted to the spot, till one of the nurses took me by the arm, and, leading me to a seat by Maggie's bed, said kindly :

“ You are over tender of the heart for sights like this, my poor young lady; though even we, who get pretty well used to them, have been sobbing like children over that young thing that's gone. I've never seen the like in my time here.”

I could not answer her; the very kindness of the woman only bowed me down afresh, for she was one of those before whom I had feared yesterday to speak of Jesus to the one now in eternity. Presently she spoke again :

“ The men are going to bring in the shell just now to remove her,” she said, in a hurried tone; “ and you look fit for your coffin already; let me take you into another ward till it is over.”

"No, no, nurse; it is not fear of the sight of death that has upset me so," I said; "but oh! where has her soul gone? Did she know Jesus? Was she saved? 'That is my trouble.'"

The woman looked still more solemn.

"Eh, but that's the great question for us all," she said, and the door opening at the moment, she turned my chair rapidly round, that I might not see what followed, and hurried away to her duties.

There was absolute silence in the ward. Never had I so realised eternity, or the value of a soul, as then; and my own failure looked blacker and more hideous. I leaned my head on my hand and sat motionless. As soon as I could speak, I asked Maggie, "When did she die?"

"It was just at daybreak that she got all of a sudden much worse," she said, "and the

doctor came in to see her. He did not think there was any great danger, but an hour or two after she died just quietly, so the nurse told me, and a little before she died she thought she was better. I heard the night nurse—that’s the woman that spoke to you—repeating the Lord’s-prayer to her, but she isn’t sure if she had her senses then.” Some strange feeling prompted me, and I asked :

“ Has the woman from the next bed, who was up and dressed when I was here yesterday, gone away?” for I had noticed that the bed was empty, and made up as for a new patient. The hesitation in Maggie’s manner made me look quickly up. “ What is it, Maggie ?” I said, for tears filled her eyes. “ She cannot surely have died too ?”

“ Yes,” she said, “ she died in the night ; when the other one got worse she jumped out of bed to go to her, as she often did, but

fell on the floor. They thought it was a faint at first, but it wasn't—she was really dead. It was her heart, they say, but no one knew there was anything wrong with it; she had been ill with rheumatism most all the winter.”

I could ask no more; the very room seemed whirling round with me. Oh, for that one day back again! oh, for that lost opportunity of speaking for Jesus! Two out of the four in and round that bed yesterday were in eternity to-day, and a third was willing to listen, and ready to own the deep importance of the Lord's salvation. I had thrown away the opportunity, and now it was *too late!* My poor friend seemed to enter into the agony of my soul, and attempted no words of comfort till after a long, long pause, when she gently touched me, and said:

“ Did you not tell me once that *He* knew exactly all our weaknesses and all our failings, when He loved us so much, that He chose us and died for us ? ” She was turning teacher and comforter now : her words came to me as from the Lord, and fell on my heart as the Lord’s look of love must have fallen on Peter’s ; she had struck the right chord, and the pent-up tears flowed freely. Maggie waited awhile ; then, presently, very softly she said :

“ There are many very ill in this ward : in the bed under the window in that left-hand corner lies one who can’t last long, and no one goes near her ; will you take her the message you brought to me ? Maybe, the Lord would like her to hear it from you. ”

I could but recognise how divine grace had taught and refined her ; she loved her Lord, and she knew I had failed in courage

for Him, and she loved her earthly friend, and her heart was full of sympathy for the agony that failure had caused.

Almost reverently I took that poor, wasted hand, that rested on my arm, and held it for a moment in mine, while my heart echoed Peter's cry of old, "Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee;" then rising, I turned towards the bed she had pointed out.

The same fatal disease—consumption, was fast hurrying the one whom I now saw to an early grave—an early grave, I say, for I found out afterwards she was quite young, though a more experienced eye than mine might have failed to detect any sign of youth about that wan, haggard face, with its deep lines and dull, hopeless expression. There was nothing to deceive here—the hand of death was only too plainly marked.

As I neared her bed she feebly lifted her mug to her lips—it was empty. I went closer and said, “Will you try a few of these grapes instead of the water?” She did not answer me, only looked at me as if half bewildered. I fed her with as many as she could take, then, as I put some more on the bed within her reach, she said :

“Who are you who will show any kindness to me?”

“You would not know me if I told you my name,” I said, “but I am not the only one ready to show you kindness; I have a message for you from One who loves you.”

“Ah, you’ve made a mistake; I knew you had,” she said, and the wee glimmer of light that had come into her face died out again, leaving it more wan, and haggard, and hopeless than before. “Why, there’s never a one in all this wide world that would do as

much as you have done just now for Jenny, let alone love her."

"I have not made any mistake, Jenny," I answered; "the One I speak of is not in this world now: He was in it once, but now He has gone back again to heaven, and it is from heaven that He sends you His message: would you like to hear it?"

She shivered, and a look of terror came over her face. "Is it God or Jesus you mean?" she said. "Why, they hate me worse than all. The devil wants my soul, and he will have it very soon, but he's the only one that wants me." And the look of hopeless terror deepened as she went on: "Lady, I tell you you don't know me, or you yourself wouldn't stand by my bedside and talk to me. Go away. You've been kind to me, and I wouldn't like any one to see you talking to the likes of me. Why,

my own father and mother have forsaken me.”

Silently I cried to the Lord for the right words to speak. Then I said, “Jenny, Jesus was the friend of sinners; when He was on earth Jesus died for sinners; He will be *your* friend if you will have Him.”

“No, no,” she said, “they always told me God hates sinners, and I’ve been wicked since I was ever such a child. I’m not very old in years now, lady, but I’m old in sin; it is too late now. I can’t change my life—it is past—and *God hates sinners.*”

“It is you who are making two great mistakes now, Jenny,” I said; “it is *not* too late, and God does *not* hate sinners. Listen to this—these are His own words: ‘God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were *yet sinners*, Christ died for us;’ and again, ‘For when we were yet

without strength, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*.' Does that sound like God's hating sinners? He hates sin, hates it so much that He gave His own beloved Son to die to put it away, that He might be able to show only love to the poor sinner." I saw she was listening intently, and I went on: "It is not too late for *you*, either, Jenny, for God is still saying, '*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation;' and Jesus says, 'Him that cometh unto me I will *in no wise* cast out.' *Jesus* wants to have you. The devil would seek to destroy your soul, I know, but *Jesus* wants to save it. Will you let Him? 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth *from all* sin.' *Jesus* is able and He is willing to save you—will you come to Him? will you trust Him? *Jesus* is a Saviour, Jenny, a Saviour of just such sinners as you and I."

“Ah, lady, you—I believe He will save you, but you don’t know all my sins. He *won’t* save me. No, no, it’s too late, too late, too late.”

“Listen,” I said, “God’s own words are best: ‘Though your sins be as *scarlet*, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ And, Jenny, your heart and mine are both alike, bad in God’s sight, and Jesus will receive you as willingly as He received me.”

“Would He have me?—are you sure?” and for a moment a gleam of hope lit up that poor face; then it passed again, as evidently a fresh remembrance of her past life came before her, and she said, in tones of wailing despair, “No, no, not me; my sins are *too many*. He couldn’t bear to have me near Him.”

I turned to Luke vii., and began to read

of the woman at the feet of Jesus. "Was a sinner," she murmured; "*that's* like me. Did He turn her away?"

"No, Jenny, He had only a welcome for her; He has only a welcome for you. Listen still." And I read on.

When I came to the verse "her sins which are many *are forgiven*," she gasped out, "Is that verse really there? You wouldn't deceive a dying woman. Does He really say that? You look true, and you've been kind to me. Read it again, and read it slowly; I didn't know that verse was in the Bible." I read it again. "That must have been some one just like me," she said, half to herself—"her sins which are *many*."

"Yes," I said, "and shall not this be like you too, '*are forgiven*'?"

"Sins be as scarlet—are forgiven—precious blood—Jesus," she muttered, and her

head, which she had tried to raise a little, sank back on the pillow. I pressed the juice of some grapes into her half-closed mouth, and bathed her forehead with some eau-de-Cologne : then I said, “ You are very exhausted, I had better leave you for to-day.”

“ Oh, no,” she said, though she spoke with effort now ; “ don’t go, tell me more—I shall be gone when you come back—tell me all now—all His message—read me that once more—you know—about all forgiven—did you—say—that was me ? My—sins—are—many.”

“ Jesus says it of every one who trusts Him. He says to you, if you trust His precious blood, ‘ Thy sins are forgiven.’ ”

“ Which—are—many—are *all*,” she put in. Her soul clung to that.

“ Yes,” I said, “ that is it, and there is

something more that He says: 'Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace.'"

"Yes," she slowly said, and her whole face changed and brightened, though she could only speak in a whisper now, "that's all—for—me, all! God—does—not—hate—sinners; Jesus—died—for—sinners; my sins—which—are many—are *all* forgiven; I do—trust—Him; peace—peace." Her eyes closed. I sat in silence for some little time, then, thinking she was sleeping, I moved to go. She opened her eyes. "Good-bye," she said; "I can't—thank—you—now; next—time—I see—you I shall—be able—to."

I wondered for a moment did she think she would get better; but she added, after a pause, "Up there; with Jesus, the friend of sinners." She was right. I never saw her on earth again, but I look to meet her, as she said, "with Jesus, the friend of sinners."

Dear reader, do you know that your sins, be they few or be they many, are *all* forgiven? One single sin is enough to sink your soul in hell for ever; but the blood of Jesus is enough to put away the guilt of a whole world. Oh, delay not to come to Him! to-morrow may be too late for *you*—to-morrow *you* may be in eternity. Will you risk meeting God with all your sins upon you, and this crowning sin of all—that you refused all His offers of mercy, despised the blood of His Son, would not have Jesus as a Saviour? The devil wants your soul to destroy it, and he says, “to-morrow;” Christ wants your soul to save it, and He says, “*to-day—now.*” Whose voice will you listen to? Whose friend will you be? The devil knows well how many a one his fatal “to-morrow” has lured on till they have found themselves sinking in the black

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morass of eternal ruin, with *no* escape. Christ's "to-day" leads into life, and light, and peace, and joy unspeakable, for evermore; for "In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."



*DELIVERED FROM THE PIT; OR,  
A SAILOR'S CONVERSION.*

## DELIVERED FROM THE PIT; OR, A SAILOR'S CONVERSION.

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“**T**HERE’S a sick sailor man bides over yonder as wants to see you, and I’m to carry him back an answer, please.”

The words were spoken by a bright young boy at my side, and his message led to my knowing the sailor Andrew —, and being a witness of the work of God in his soul, delivering him from the power of Satan, and leading him to find his soul’s salvation and his heart’s rest in the work and person of Jesus, the Saviour-God.

“Tell others,” he often used to say, “how He snatched me from the very jaws of hell, and spared my life to save my soul. There’s

many a lad as sails under the Union Jack that would listen to the story of how a mate got safe into port, for I am *in port*, you know, though I haven't got my discharge yet," he would add with a smile, quoting the lines of a well-known hymn—

“ Amid the stormy, wintry sea,  
We are in port if we have *Thee*. ”

It was a bright, almost a cloudless day, after a week of storms; the blue waves were dancing and sparkling in the sunlight, as if the whole face of the mighty deep were welcoming with a smile the unveiled presence of the sun again. The shore was a busy scene; the most adventurous fishermen had been compelled to a week's inactivity in the height of the fishing season, and now all seemed bent on making up for lost time; and as I watched boat after boat put out to sea, I longed with a special long-

ing to be the bearer of God's glad tidings of eternal life through Christ to some of those whose natural lives were thus, by their calling, peculiarly exposed to danger. While the desire was forming itself into a distinct prayer in my heart, the boy's words sounded in my ears. "Where does 'over yonder' mean?" I asked of the young messenger, for I had previously discovered that the phrase was ambiguous in this locality, and might mean the opposite corner of the street, or it might mean any number of miles away. "Well, ma'am, the bit cottage is away out beyond that point that you see: you can't miss it, for there's no other; when you get to that point it's just ahead of you; it's not so far if you could go by the shore and up the cliff as I do, but it's a goodish way round by the road."

I looked in the direction he indicated,

and hesitated ; many circumstances seemed to make it impossible to go, while still I shrank from refusing.

The little fellow evidently saw the look of doubt in my face, for he said, entreatingly, "I was to carry him back an answer, PLEASE, and he's very bad and lonesome like." As he spoke, a voice seemed to say in my ear, "Have not I commanded thee, be strong and of a good courage," so clearly and distinctly, that, without waiting to think of the obstacles, I answered rather this voice than the child's, with the words, "Tell him I'll come." " *When*, ma'am, please ?" " To-day."

The boy lingered still. "Please, I was to tell you," he said, "that it's a bad road, and not fitting for you, unless you get back into the town before dark begins ;" and he looked at the sun and then back at me, as

if to remind me that the day was wearing on.

“I will follow you *now*, as soon as possible,” I said; and quite satisfied with the *now*, which meant something definite to him, the little fellow hurried off with his message.

An hour or two later I stood by the bedside of Andrew ——. The Lord had cleared the difficulties out of the way one by one, and had done much more—given me the fullest confidence that He was going to work, and was going to let me stand by and see His salvation.

I had expected to find an aged tar, worn out by the storms of many a winter: to my great surprise the “sick sailor man” was a fine, powerfully built young man of two or three and twenty, laid thus low and helpless through the effects of an accident. “As

strong as Andy ——," had been a proverb among his shipmates, and his appearance even now impressed you with the idea that he had been possessed of unusual physical strength. He had a very pleasing face, so open and honest, with clear, blue eyes, that had a truthful as well as a fearless look in them, and the almost sunny smile with which he bade me welcome seemed natural to him; the expression of bitter agony, which followed almost instantly, sat strangely on his face. The same young boy whom I had already seen was standing near the bed, busily engaged with a ball of twine.

Poor though the sick man's surroundings were, yet everything was so exquisitely neat and clean, and arranged with so much care, that there was an air almost of comfort about the room; it was evident he was ministered to by some one who loved him.

One great lack, though, I remarked at once—there was no book of any kind near him; the reason of this I learned afterwards.

“Come in, ma'am, and welcome,” he said, as he saw me; “I'm real glad to see you, for it's but few faces I see most days, and it's weary work lying brooding over our miseries. Tim, draw mother's big chair over nearer for the lady. Eh! but it's hard lines not to be able to jump up and get it for you myself, very hard; but I'm nought but a log now, no use to anybody, nor myself neither, and never shall be again, that's worse.”

“But sick people are not expected to get up and wait on their visitors, and I came to see if I could help you in any way, so you must not let me begin by distressing you.”

He half smiled, and said simply, “Thank

you ;” then added, apologetically, “ Harry ——, that’s a mate of mine, told me you would tell me something that would be a comfort to me ; that’s more nor a week since. I didn’t half believe, but yet his words have stuck by me till, this morning, I couldn’t help sending little Tim with the message.”

“ Then you are in need of comfort ? ” I said, hardly knowing what to say, for all the circumstances were so new and strange to me.

“ You may well say that, ma’am ; the doctors say I’ll never move about again ; and oh ! to spend one’s life chained to one spot, it’s enough to turn one’s reason.” And his brow contracted, while a low groan, of more than physical agony, escaped his lips.

There was a moment’s pause, and then I asked, “ Have you been long ill ? ”

“It's nigh on to four months now since my accident; I was over three months in the hospital.”

“Will you tell me how you met with your accident, or does it trouble you to talk of it?”

“No; it would be a bit of relief to speak of it to you, for you see, when mother comes home from work of nights, I mustn't give way; it's hard enough on her to have to work all day to keep me. I couldn't let her come home to hear my groanings, too, poor mother! I could bear it more like a man if it wasn't for her; but just as I thought she should be comfortable for the rest of her life, and never have to work hard again——” He stopped, a sob that was more like a groan, choking his voice; but, mastering his emotion presently, he went on to tell me how he had been a ship's carpenter. The

sea was his delight, and he had made many a prosperous voyage, come through many a storm, till, from his great strength and his "great luck," as he expressed it, he had grown reckless as to danger ; but, returning from his last voyage, and when almost within hail of the harbour, he was up in the rigging repairing some slight damage. The day was very fine, and the sea like glass, but a breeze from the land suddenly caught the vessel, and she lurched to seaward. He, as usual, careless and thoughtless of danger, was taken unawares just as he was about to come down, missed his hold, and was thrown violently backwards from a great height. As soon as the ship got into port he was removed to the hospital ; but, after all had been done for him that could be done, the surgeons pronounced that his spine was so injured he would never walk or even stand again.

“ When they could do nothing more for me in the hospital, I was brought home,” he said ; “ and here I am, more helpless than a baby, and nought but a trouble and a care. It drives me well nigh crazy to see mother come in so pale and tired, and I to lie here ; though *she* never grumbles, but always says God has done it, and His ways are best. I’m glad she can think so, if it helps her ; but it seems to me as if, instead of being the God of the widow and the fatherless, as she says, He has forgotten her, and kept me from helping her too.”

“ Has your mother no other child ? ”

“ None ; she had five, but the others all died when they were little, and father was drowned at sea, when I was no more than three or four. He told mother when he started on that last voyage, ‘ Please God. when I come back I’ll settle down ashore ;

but the *Caroline*—that's the brig he sailed in—put to sea and was never heard of again. God Almighty has been hard on us, ma'am, very, very hard."

I felt powerless to attempt a word of comfort, and could only look to God to reveal Himself in His own true character to this poor, broken-hearted one, who had such dark thoughts of Him. It seemed as if I could go with all the more confidence to Him because the case was so far *beyond* human aid, just fitted for a Saviour-God. The sick man watched me strangely, then said, in a disappointed tone, "I told Harry no one could bring *me* comfort ; but it was kind in you to come, ma'am, all the same."

"Yours *is* a great trouble, Andrew, and human words are of little use, I know, though ever so full of sympathy ; but there is One who *can* help, *can* comfort you, and

I know Him, but you have let in bitter thoughts about Him. You may think it is easy for me to talk, not suffering as you are ; but will you answer me one question? You have brought some heavy charges against God—He has broken His word, forgotten the widow who has trusted Him, dealt hardly with the fatherless ; have you *nothing* to say on the other side?—*No mercy to remember?* ”

He turned his head on his hand, and looked fixedly at me, but did not speak.

“ You believe there is a God and a devil, a heaven and a hell ? ” I asked.

“ Yes, I believe the Bible ; it's mother's book, and it was father's. ”

“ From what height did you tell me you fell ? ”

He seemed astonished at the sudden change in the question, but answered readily,

“Nigh on to sixty feet.”

“And was that high enough for the fall to have killed you ? ”

“Why, yes, ma’am. High enough ! why, the miracle to every one is, that I was picked up alive. Two mates of mine, when we were out in South America, fell not over 30 feet, and they never spoke again.”

“And if you had never spoken again on earth, where would your voice have been next heard—where would you have been at this very moment, in heaven or in hell ? ”

There was a silence. The unseen world seemed very near as I recognised how close he had been to it. After a moment or two, in a deep, hollow tone, he said—

“I should have been in hell, for the devil had a fast grip of me then.”

“Yes, and was seeking to hurry you straight down to the pit, saying to himself,

‘Now, while his heart is far off from God, without any warning of coming danger, or any time, through a wasting illness, to think of his soul’s salvation—now, whilst I have him captive, I will compass his swift destruction, and he shall be my prey for ever.’ But the Lord’s eye was on you—the eye of Him whom you charge with forgetting the widow and dealing hardly with the fatherless, and the mighty word went forth from that heart of love, ‘I want that soul; deliver him from going down into the pit—I have found a ransom.’ You say it was a miracle that you were picked up alive, that no one can tell what broke the violence of your fall. It was the Lord’s love and mercy going out after your soul. He spake the word, and those messengers of His that do His pleasure interposed unseen hands between you and the eternal destruction the

devil had planned for you ; and, though you are crippled, yet, oh ! you are still outside hell. You have still the door of heaven standing open to receive you ; still Jesus is waiting to be gracious to you, offering you salvation through His precious blood, saying, ‘ Come unto me and I will give you rest.’ He offers you eternal life—Himself as your companion through suffering here, and an eternity of glory with Him by-and-by, instead of the eternal hell from which His love alone rescued you four months ago. *Did He forget the widow and her fatherless boy when He did this ? ”*

I shall long remember the expression of his face, or rather the changing expressions of it, though he never stirred. I had spoken rapidly ; the whole scene seemed like a vivid picture before me, of which I was only reading him the description, and little Tim had

crept up closer, and was gazing wonderingly first into my face, then at his friend, as the words burst forth at last from the latter, "I'm the biggest fool and the blackest wretch outside hell's gates to-day; I've let all my chances of heaven go by, and blackened the God that offered them!"

"He offers them still. He says still, 'I will in no wise cast out him that cometh me.'"

"No; He can't offer them again to the wretch that has done nothing but abuse Him for His love. Why, my sins were nothing before my accident to what they've been since. I've done nothing but blacken Him. I wonder He hasn't killed me with the words on my lips."

"'The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin,'"

I repeated.

"But mine can't be meant. Mine is

worse than any. Oh, if I had only seen His love before !”

“ When *God* said *all* sin, didn't He know what He was saying, and didn't He mean it ? He did, and, oh ! He knows too, He only knows, the *full* value of the blood of His Son.”

The sick man covered his eyes with his hand, and I waited silently. After a long pause, he suddenly looked up and said :

“ It seems too great that He could forgive me outright ; but, oh, do you think He'd listen to me if I told Him what a wretch I've been, and ask Him to let me love Him for all He has done for me, *if it's even in hell ?*”

The broken-hearted earnestness of the man, and the strangeness of his question, on the one hand, and the unutterable joy of knowing the love that was yearning to give

the Father's kiss to this returning prodigal, on the other, almost choked my voice as I said :

“ That wouldn't be worthy of God ; He does not forgive by halves. That is like the prodigal who thought in the far country that he would ask his father to make him a hired servant ; but do you remember how his father received him ? ”

“ Nay, I don't mind it. I never read the Bible for myself, and, all those years at sea, I forgot what mother used to read ; but I do mind there's something there about it. ”

The daylight was waning fast, and by the flickering firelight I could not see to read ; but I repeated from memory the well-known parable to ears that listened eagerly ; he sobbed aloud as I finished.

“ That was love, sure, but, oh, even that man was never so bad as I ; the father

hadn't sent out after him as God has after me."

"But, Andrew, it is not a question of how bad you are, but whether the blood of God's Son is enough to cleanse you. God cannot look upon sin at all, and only the blood of Jesus could bring one of us into His presence; but God says that His blood cleanseth from *all* sin. Will you say that there are some sins it cannot wash away; or, will you say that there are some returning prodigals the Father has not love enough to receive? I am going away now, and I want to leave you two short verses to think over: 'God is love;' 'The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin.'"

He repeated them two or three times after me slowly. Then, as I rose to leave, suddenly he seemed to notice the fast-growing darkness, and, distressed at my going

alone, would have had "little Tim" come with me; but I assured him there would One go with me to whom darkness and the light were both alike; and, promising to return if possible on the morrow, I left.

It was not possible to return next day, much as I longed to. When next I entered his room, he almost shouted out, "I've got it! I've got it!" His face was beaming.

"Got what, Andrew?"

"Why, everything 'most, ma'am, except the glory, and that's the port I'm bound for, and I've got my Pilot aboard, and given up the helm to Him, and He knows the way in sure enough."

"Tell me all about it."

"Well, ma'am, after you went away, I was just miserable again. I could only see my sins, and my black ingratitude as the very worst of them all. What a night of it

I had, and all yesterday, when you didn't come, I thought God had given me right up now ; and I couldn't tell mother, though I saw her look at me and sigh ; but in the middle of last night, when I was 'most in despair, I don't know how it was, but I left off thinking about myself and my sins, and began trying to call up all that about the father going out to meet that poor man in his misery, and forgiving him out-and-out like ; and then, when my sins came back again, something seemed to say to me, ' Andrew, man, if you're a bigger sinner than that man, that only makes Him a bigger Saviour to be able to save you ; ' and I just said out loud, ' That's it, Lord ; I've got it now : Thou art a big enough Saviour to save even such a wretch as me, for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.' And with that it almost seemed as if I were

in heaven. I don't know how the night went. I never felt any pain or anything, and I just kept on talking to Him."

"Does your mother know your joy?" I asked.

"Ay, ay, that she does. I couldn't keep it in. As soon as I heard her stirring in the morning I just sang out to her, and, when she heard, she went straight down on her knees and told the Lord He had made the widow's heart to sing for joy, and answered all her prayers; but I couldn't tell you half she said, for we were both just crying for joy together. You see it's *His great love* that knocks one over."

It was touching to hear him tell his tale so simply, like a child. His every thought of God was changed; instead of feeling himself hardly dealt with, and blackening God, he now blackened himself and justified God.

while his heart seemed brimming over with a sense of His unutterable love.

“ Will you tell me that again about being delivered from the pit ? ” he said presently. I read him Job xxxiii., and then, at his request, read it a second time. “ I have found a ransom, ” he kept repeating, as if the words verily entranced him. “ Deliver him. I have found a ransom. Oh, how good He is ! And I had been a rebel all my life, and hard to mother too, for she never wanted me to go afloat, and apprenticed me to a carpenter, but I couldn't rest. All our people had been sailors, and when I saw the blue waves come curling round that bit of rock yonder, the land seemed unbearable, and, when the wind rose angry-like and dashed the big waves, all white with foam, against the cliffs, I wanted still more to be out fighting with them, till at last I couldn't

stand it no longer, and came to mother and said, 'Mother, give me your blessing and let me go.' It was cruel of me, for she had only me, but she just said, 'The Lord has been beforehand with you, my son, and given me strength even for this.' Often when I kept watch at nights I wondered and wondered whatever mother meant. The words always made me feel like a coward, but I know all about it now."

I greatly desired to see this widow, whose faith seemed so bright, and of whom her son spoke so touchingly, but weeks passed on before my desire was gratified, for she could not return from her work earlier, nor could I be later. At last we met; one look at her face told of the peace within. Her son was very like her; she had the same clear blue eyes and frank expression, and the same sunny smile I had noticed at first in him,

only with her there was a look of indescribable sweetness and calm that was more than mere patience and resignation, the look of one who had long walked "softly" with the Lord. I took knowledge of her that she had been with Jesus, so much with Him that I seemed to know Him better from knowing her. There were no glib expressions nor set phrases, though, when she spoke of Him it was as of One whom she knew well, and on whose love for her she had long been used to reckon ; yet her tone was as reverent as her answering love was deep.

She was far too humble to dream what a time of refreshment, and strengthening, and encouragement, that visit was to me, what a sweet savour of Christ it left ; but, as she thanked the Lord for His tenderness in answering her prayer that we might meet, I could only feel the gain had been all mine.

Meantime, I had seen her son very often, nearly every day for some weeks ; for I soon found out he was unable to read, knew little more than the letters of the alphabet, and this accounted for there being no books of any kind near him, which I had noticed at first ; but his eagerness to be able to read the Word of God for himself was so great that he hailed with delight my offer to help him, and his progress was wonderfully rapid. Some days he was too suffering, and then I only read to him. There were days when he seemed hardly fit for this even ; but his disappointment was so great when once I went away quietly, because he was lying with closed eyes, looking, as I thought, too ill to be disturbed, that I never did that again.

“It never wearies me, but always does me good,” he said ; “it’s like going aloft to

catch the first sight of land when you're homeward bound to hear all the beautiful things you read, and I understand them better as you read them to me."

He delighted in the Word and in hymns—his naturally bright, joyous spirit found new expression in songs of love and praise to the One who had redeemed him. I wondered sometimes if, after the first joy, there would come back any of the old feeling of trouble at his helplessness, but there never did, though many a time I marvelled as I thought "what has God wrought" for the strong, fearless sailor. The one who had been foremost in helping and doing for others, who had so gloried in his independence, to be content to be wholly dependent, even for the smallest thing, seemed a stranger sight than the suffering so cheerfully borne. Once I asked him if the days were ever

long? "Why, no, ma'am," he said, so simply; "you see, I'm never alone now, for Jesus is here, and, though I'm helpless, yet He's strong; it isn't hard to be dependent on Him. And, as to mother, why I just tell Him He loves her better even than I do, and I know I can trust Him to look after her. After all His love, how can I ever doubt Him? And, oh! you wouldn't believe the lots of little bits of things He gives even to me to do for Him; I ask Him to, and He does."

Once only I saw a cloud cross his face, when some shipmates were saying to him what a sore thing it was and that God Almighty had dealt hardly with him; he shrank then, as from a blow. "Don't say it, mates, *don't*; it minds me of my own black ingratitude to Him; why, He snatched me out of the very mouth of the pit of hell

and, oh ! if you only knew Him ! I wouldn't change places with either one of you, for He has done so much for me. I would not be again your old mate Andy, for I didn't know Him then." And then he spoke to them so simply, so touchingly, of Jesus, till a coat sleeve was brushed rapidly across more than one rough face to remove the unbidden tears that would trickle slowly down from eyes little used to weeping. To several of his old companions the Lord used him for blessing, and "little Tim" learnt the blessed story of the love of Jesus from his lips.

It was his own "black ingratitude" that convicted him ; it was the "wonderful love of God" that converted him ; the devil had been at work with him, repeating to him his old lie, with which he has deceived thousands of others besides Eve, that God

was a hard God who had withheld good from him, but he had learnt now the true character of the God who so loved us as to give His Son—learnt the heart of God in the person of Jesus, of whom he could then say thankfully, ay, exultingly, “He loved *me*, He gave *Himself* for *me*.” Reader, can you say the same ?



*MINNIE GRAY;*  
*OR, SOUGHT AND FOUND.*

MINNIE GRAY;  
OR, SOUGHT AND FOUND.

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MINNIE GRAY'S cup of earthly happiness was filled to the brim when first the Lord spoke to her soul. Possessed of much that the world values highly, it smiled its sunniest smiles upon her, and she knew not that its favour was deceitful, and its smiles bestowed rather upon what she possessed than upon what she herself was. It all looked bright and fair to her, and she knew of nothing beyond to eclipse its brightness.

Minnie had been left an orphan at too early an age to know how great had been her loss; and the aged relative, under whose care she had grown up, had but one object

in life, the happiness of her charge ; and this she thought to secure by giving her her own way in everything.

It was early in the summer of 186— that, accompanied by several young friends, Minnie went one evening to a quiet-looking building, half chapel, half meeting-room in shape. The whole party went at Minnie's suggestion, out of curiosity, wondering what could attract so many people to spend a bright summer's evening in what seemed to them so gloomy a way.

“ We will just go in for a quarter of an hour and find out what the magnet is,” said Minnie, “ we can sit close to the door and easily slip quietly out again ; ” and, as usual, what Minnie proposed was seconded by her friends, and they entered.

Her plan, however, of sitting close to the door and slipping quietly out, was defeated ;

the building was already well filled, and though the strangers were shown seats, yet they were necessarily separated, and Minnie found herself away from all her friends, and directly in front of the preacher's desk.

For a moment she was disposed to be amused at the novel circumstances into which she had drawn her companions, as she pictured to herself their dismay at being compelled to spend an entire evening in this manner. But soon her whole attention was fixed. First the manner, the deep-toned earnestness, then the words of the preacher arrested her, and as he reasoned of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," Minnie, like one of old, trembled. She had heard of prayers and alms; she had never heard of righteousness and judgment after this fashion. The eye of the preacher seemed fixed on her, and she sat spellbound.

Everything else was for the moment forgotten, save the thought that this was truth, and how could she escape this terrible judgment, so near, so imminent. The fact forced itself on her soul that there was a hereafter, about which she had never yet thought, a God whose claims she had never yet recognised.

She knew nothing beyond earth and its delights, and suddenly eternity was unfolded before her soul's gaze.

The preacher warned the young, the gay, the careless, and such she felt she was. The terrors of the Lord made her afraid and long to flee from them. She almost asked aloud, "Preacher, is there no escape from this fearful judgment, this awful hell?" But even as the thought filled her mind, the preacher turned from God's strange work of judgment to speak of the love of His

heart; of the way of escape He Himself has devised and provided, through the blood of His own Son—of Christ the open door, the way in, for the vilest, to the Father's house, the only way in for any who would enter there,—the only way to escape from the wrath to come. The preacher grew more and more enamoured of his subject; it seemed beyond measure sweet to him to speak of the attractiveness of Christ, to dwell on His altogether loveliness, to hold Him up, that other eyes and other hearts might gaze on Him too, and be attracted to worship and to follow Him.

But Minnie saw no beauty in Him that she should desire Him. The eleventh of Matthew had been the speaker's theme, and he closed with the touching invitation from the lips of the Saviour Himself, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy

laden, and I will give you rest." But Minnie felt no weariness, no need of rest ; the world had been only a fair, bright scene to her, yet the words rang in her ears, as words she had heard before and would hear again, though they had no sweet sound for her.\*

She wanted to be sheltered from judgment, but she did not want Christ. To her, heaven seemed a dreary place, to which she only cared to go in order to escape the horrors of hell, when at some time she must die and leave the world, and that time she hoped was far distant. To be a Christian after the preacher's fashion seemed to her such a gloomy thing ; was there no resource, no middle ground between this and the

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\* Long after, she was told they had been her dying mother's last words, when she, as a little child, had been taken to her bedside to kiss her for the last time.

fearful eternity he had pictured, and which something told her was a true picture ?

Satan whispered to her that there was "Time enough ; that the preacher was an enthusiast ; and that there was no need to be in such a hurry, or to be distressed and anxious." She welcomed the suggestion, and, her conscience being lulled for a moment, she turned with quick eager glance to scan the faces around her, to see if she saw in them the reflex of her own terrors, or the preacher's anxiety. In one or two of all the number could she discover any traces of either. By their looks, by their very air, she fancied that most were, as she expressed it, "regular attendants there ;" but, though some were attentive, others showed signs of weariness ; some were restless, some pulled out their watches and seemed impatient ; little knowing they were

watched by a soul who was measuring the truth of God by their actions.

“ Oh,” she thought, “ my case is not so desperate; it is clear others do not think all he is saying is true, or they would be as earnest as he; he is *evidently* an enthusiast, led away by the subject; there *is* time enough, I need not decide yet; I will think about it. If they all seemed as concerned, I should feel as though it were now or never.”

Still the words “ Come unto me,” “ Depart from me,” rang in her ears, and made her bright face unusually clouded, as she left the building, and her friends rallied her on her silence, till one, more observant than the rest, said, “ Surely, Minnie, you are not thinking there was any truth in that man’s words.” Minnie coloured, but made answer, “ Suppose, after all, they are true, it is solemn

for us.” There was a general exclamation, and the one who had spoken before said, with a laugh, “Fancy Minnie Gray numbered with the Methodists! What will H. say?” Satan had been on the watch to catch away the word out of her heart, lest she should “believe and be saved,” and he knew well the right shaft to use to displace the arrow of conviction that had begun to rankle there. Minnie did not answer her friend’s last remark; she too began to wonder what would H. say, for in less than three months she was to be his wife.

For a moment, in her anxiety about the future, earth had been distanced, but now its hopes and joys began to crowd in again on her heart, with the thought of the one in whom they were centred, and the words that had so impressed her grew less powerful. In the stillness of the night and alone,

she could not quite so easily get rid of them, but again the devil whispered, "There is time enough. You are so young, do not decide now, you would have to give up so much, it *might* have to be H., for Christ." And she listened to what he suggested to her; resolutely she put aside the words she had heard, refused the call of Him who would have drawn her by cords of love to Himself, and chose earth as her portion; her heart was too full to make room for Christ.

But He would not give her up; she refused His *call*, He stretched forth His hand, and took from her the one who had come between her soul and Himself. Scarcely two months from the night when she deliberately stifled the voice of conscience, made her choice and turned her back on Christ, and just when everything

looked brightest and fairest, in a moment all was changed. A telegraphic message, with its terrible brevity, was her only preparation for the sorrow that changed her whole life, and she sat stunned and bewildered. She had never dreamed of death coming to him. It was sorrow too deep for earthly comfort; and she knew not the One who alone could heal the deep wound.

An aged Christian who had known her mother in her youth, was passing through the town and went to see her, trusting that in her hour of distress her heart might be opened to hear of Him who is the sorrow-bearer as well as the sin-bearer. But she had wrapped herself in her grief, and refused all attempts at consolation. Not knowing what had passed between her soul and God two months before, her aged friend quoted once more to her the words, "Come unto

me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and spoke to her of the love of Him who had uttered those words ; but she listened with a shudder ; she could see no love in the stroke that had made her life desolate ; she knew not the heart that was yearning over her in tenderest pity, saying, more beseechingly than even His aged servant could, "*Come, and I will give you rest.*" She was weary enough now, but she let her very weariness and sorrow shut out Christ, and harden instead of soften. Her mother's friend left her with words of prayer and deep pity, and though his visit seemed to have no effect on her, his words were blessed to the relative with whom she lived, and who soon after went peacefully home to the Lord, leaving her charge to Him in confidence that at some time, and in some way, He would bring her to Himself.

A year or two passed on, the world did its utmost to draw her back again into its charmed circle; she was still courted and caressed by it, but she was weary and restless. Then the fatal disease, consumption, that had taken from her both father and mother, began to manifest itself in her too. Others saw its symptoms plainly enough, but she would not believe they were anything more than the effect of long nights of wakefulness, and a cold. She did not care to live, but she feared to die, and entered into everything to shut out thought. Speaking of this some time afterwards she said, "I would not *come* to Jesus, so in His love for me He *drove* me to seek the shelter of His arms."

In the autumn of 186— her health failed considerably, and at the same time she lost almost all she possessed, and was left with a

bare pittance. Now she found out the value of the world's friendship. She could minister no longer to its pleasures ; and she found the very ones who had most flattered and courted her were the ones who held most aloof from her now, in the time of her need. A distant relative offered her a home for the time, and to her she went. Now she began to look back with agony of heart to the night when she had heard the preaching on the 11th of Matthew. She longed again to hear words like those, and yet she feared to open her Bible, and try to find them, for they seemed to condemn her. She could not pray, and there seemed no one to whom she could turn ; she was far from the place where she had heard that servant of God, and she knew neither who he was nor anything concerning him. The weeks rolled by, and her strength failed perceptibly ; the

proud spirit, too, that had struggled against everything, seemed broken at last. She felt herself a burden in the house in which she was. Minnie Gray with health, and brightness, and youth, and beauty, and money, as her possessions, and Minnie Gray the fretful invalid, were two very different people to those who looked on with the world's eye; and when one day her relatives said something about the hospital, she was almost glad to be removed there, and to accept the care of utter strangers rather than remain an unwelcome guest.

She had been in —— Hospital some weeks when I saw her first; and then was scarcely four-and-twenty, beautiful still, but with an expression of suffering and trouble and care on her face, that made her at times look much older. I had been staying for a time in ——, and had often passed the hos-

pital, and as often felt a great desire to go in, but, unless to see a patient whom you knew, and then only at regular visiting hours, no visitors were allowed in. It was a gloomy-looking building outside, so gloomy that it all the more made me think as I passed of the sorrow and suffering that must be inside. Often I told the Lord of my wish to get in, and asked Him, if He pleased, to open the door. I had just given up asking, when one night very late I received a message from a lady, whom I knew by name only, begging me to go to this very place for her, and see a dying girl who was very anxious about her soul, as she was too ill to go herself. She sent me the name of the girl and the number of the ward, and also told me that I might go at any hour, for the permission to visit her at any time, so full of sad meaning to loving hearts outside, had been sent out in this case.

When I reached the ward to which I had been directed, early the next morning, I stood for a moment just inside the door, looking round for a nurse to tell me which was the bed of the girl I had come to see, when a voice said to me from the bed close to the door :

“ You have come to see me, I know.”

I was astonished, and asked, “ Is your name Ellen H——?”

“ No,” she said, “ it is not ; but do not say you have not come to see me, for I have been praying all night that God would send some one this morning, and when I saw you I thought He had sent you to me.”

“ I trust that He has,” I said, “ and I will come back to you shortly, but I have first to find Ellen H——, for I have promised to see her at once.”

“ Do not leave me,” she murmured, “ it

will be like everything else—snatched from my grasp. I hoped God had sent you, and, oh, I am so weary !”

“ Do you not know the One who said when He was on earth, ‘ Come unto me all ye that labour and are *heavy laden*, and I will give you rest,’ and who says the same from heaven now ?” I asked.

I was startled by the effect of my question : she trembled violently, then raised herself quickly up, and, looking very eagerly at me, said, in a very excited tone :

“ Now I am certain it is to see me you have come, for I asked God all night long, to send some one to me this morning who would speak to me of Jesus, and I thought if He did I should know there is really a God, and that He does hear; and I have watched that door since early morning, almost since daylight, though of course, I

knew no one could come to the wards as early as that, to see if my prayer was answered; and when you came in just now, I felt sure you were a Christian, and I found myself actually praying again that if you were the right one, you would quote those very words to me. I have not said a prayer, till last night, for five years. I did not think God would hear *me*, but He must have."

She was quite exhausted from the effect of speaking so rapidly, and from the excitement, and I left her to recover from whatever the remembrance was that was agitating her so, and I turned to find Ellen H——.

Her bed was just at right angles to Minnie Gray's, near enough for every word spoken to the one to be distinctly heard by the other.

Death from the same disease was fast

approaching this poor girl, and her mind was wandering, but all her cry was that she was *lost*, too great a sinner to be saved, Jesus would not have her. It was distressing to hear her. It seemed as though she could see something which filled her with terror. "I know I am lost!" she kept crying, and then, with a fearful shudder, "It is awful to go to hell!" For some minutes I stood irresolute, it seemed useless to attempt to speak to her, for she appeared quite unconscious of all that was taking place around; then this word came to me; "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

I thought, If it can divide between soul and spirit, enter between joints and marrow,

what is to hinder its entering even here ? So I sat down by the bed, and as clearly and distinctly as I could, though in a low tone, repeated these three verses again and again : “ The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost ; ” “ The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin ; ” Jesus said, “ Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.”

The woman in the next bed said, “ It’s no use talking to her ; she has not been conscious since last night, and they do not expect her to be again, though indeed she has done nothing but rave about these things ever since she came in.”

I knew well it must seem useless, but still, with the strong conviction that God’s words could find an entrance where man’s could not, I still repeated them a great many times, how many I do not know. She grew

quite composed and quiet, and though she never was conscious again, the look of agony and despair went away from her face, and she kept on murmuring now, "to seek and to save, to seek and to save from all sin." She died that night, so I never saw her again, but the woman in the next bed told me that just before she died she opened her eyes, and said quite clearly, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin," and then never spoke again.

When I returned to Minnie Gray's side, I was struck with the changed expression on her face. She did not wait for me to speak, but began eagerly, "Those words were all for me that you have been repeating. I was lost, and so He came to seek and to save *me*; I am full of sin, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin. I have come to Him this morning, and He will not cast *me* out ;

tell me more about Him. I was so unwilling you should leave me and go to that girl's bed, but perhaps you might not have read those very words to me. Do read me more."

I asked if she had anything special she would like me to read?

"Yes," she said, "read me the chapter where that verse is, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It is the chapter the preacher spoke from that night five years ago. I have never opened a Bible since, for fear I should see the verse again, and now I long to see it."

I thought she, too, must be wandering, as I knew nothing then of what she was referring to, and evidently she guessed my thought, for she said:

"You think I do not know what I am saying, but it is not that;" and then she

told me of that evening five years before, of the solemn preaching, and how deeply it had impressed her, how she was "almost persuaded," but deliberately turned away from Christ, and yet how she could never quite get rid of what she heard that night. I read to her the 11th of Matthew—read many times the last verses, at her desire.

"It is rest to trust Him," she said ; " but will He never let me go ?"

We turned to John x. 28, 29.

"I see," she said, " it is *He* who keeps fast hold, not we."

"What brought you here to-day ?" she suddenly exclaimed.

I told her I had been asked to come.

"When ?"

"Late last night, about eleven o'clock." She thought for a moment, and then said .

"That was just the time when I began to

ask the Lord to send some one to me to-day who knew Him."

It was only little by little I learned her history. Weeks passed, and I had seen her very often before she referred at all to the past, save to the night of the preaching, and what she evidently avoided I did not feel I could touch upon. I saw she was naturally proud, and sensitive, and very refined, and I waited till she wished to trust me. As she grew worse in bodily health, her faith, and her peace too, deepened. It was never exactly *joy*, but deep, deep peace and rest, with ever such a sense of the grace that had met her. The expression of care and trouble left her face, and she looked even younger than her twenty-four years, almost childlike at times, save for an expression in her eyes, which seemed to tell of calm *beyond* the storm.

Bit by bit, now a little and then a little,

she told me all her past history, a few of the details of which I have given, though she never referred to it save to magnify the grace of Him who had sought her *until* He found her; who had, as she said, never let her alone until He "drove" her to rest in Himself. "He might have said to me," she once added, "that because He had called me and I had refused, had stretched out His hand and I had not regarded, that He would laugh at my calamity, and mock when my fear came. I only deserved that, but instead, He received me, just as I was, in all my wretchedness, when I had nothing to bring Him but a wasted life, almost run out. *He* received me, when nobody else cared to. What a friend Jesus is! This ward has been like the gate of heaven to me. I would not change it now for my old home, and my old health, and my old

prospects, to be again a Christ-rejecter. If I could only go back five years, and give Him my best; I only would like that, because I love Him. I know He wants nothing at my hands, and I delight to owe everything to Him. I think no one in heaven will owe Him quite as much, not even the thief on the cross.

“ ‘Twas the same grace that spread the feast  
That sweetly *forced* me in ;  
Else I had still refused to taste,  
And perished in my sin.’ ”

Next to her Bible there was no book she so delighted in as “Meditations on the Song of Solomon;” she used to say it brought Jesus Himself nearer to her, and that it reminded her of “that evening’s preaching.” I had lent it her, and she asked me to let her keep it till the last. I left before the end came. She had so wonderfully rallied, that even some hopes were entertained of her

being able to go out again ; but the improvement was very temporary. Two sweet letters I had from her, full of Christ, and some touching verses she had written, on our first meeting. Then came a pencilled message directed by another hand—a week or two more, and Minnie Gray rested with Him who had loved her and washed her from her sins in His own blood, who would not give her up till He had her by His side for ever.

“ Do,” she often said, “ tell all those you meet who are *almost* persuaded, but who fear quite to decide for Christ, because they think, as I did, it is a gloomy thing to be a Christian, and they would have to give up so much, tell them they lose everything, and gain nothing, by their indecision. Tell them to belong to Jesus is the brightest thing even for this life; tell them how I drank at

every cistern of this world, and always thirsted again, but at last I drank of the water that Jesus gives, and have never thirsted more, and never shall for all eternity.”



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