

## “Andrew’s Last Night On Earth”

It was evening. The house-doctor accompanying the surgeon had paid an unusually late visit to the male ward of the hospital; and the surgeon was now preparing to leave when he met the nurse at the door. "It is a pity, nurse!" he said, "but that fine young fellow at the top of the ward will be dead by morning. It's a pity, but we've done our very best."

Startled out of her usual calm she answered, "Oh! Is that possible, doctor? But you told him he was doing fine! And he is quite expecting to live."

"Well, he has put up a grand fight for life, and there is no use in depressing him. He will probably be unconscious in a few hours and never know he is dying." With these words the great surgeon went down the corridor.

The nurse stood for a moment hesitating: then she said to the house-doctor, "Will you not tell him, doctor? His friends are all far away, and he may have something to settle, or some message to send. It is hard that he should not know. Do tell him."

"No, no, I shall not tell him. It is easier for him not to know," said the doctor. Then he added, "You can tell him if you like, nurse."

"Then I must," she said; but within herself she thought, "How can I? Will he believe me in face of the doctor's cheering words? Is it of any use after all to upset him?"

Still her first thought returned, "He may have something to settle, some message to send." She finished her evening duties then with slow steps made her way to the ward, pondering how she was to impart her dread tidings.

The night nurse was already at her post, and the lights turned down in the ward, when she took her seat by the side of the one whom she knew was dying.

"This is kind of you to come and pay me another visit, nurse," he said, "The doctor said I am doing fine. Does he think it will be long before I can be moved? You will write to my mother, won't you, and make the best of it to her?"

She was silent a moment, then she said gently, "I'm afraid the doctor made you think what is not true, Andrew. You are very hurt. There is more danger than any of us thought at first."

It was Andrew's turn to be silent; then, as a look of dismay came into his eyes, he said, "You do not mean I am going to die?"

Her grave look and the tear that rolled down her cheek answered him.

Again there was a pause. He had been a strong man, had faced death over and over again on the battlefield, but this was different. It was night in a hospital ward, all was quiet, with nothing to distract or take off the solemnity of knowing he had God and Eternity to face. Presently, with quivering lips, he spoke only three words: "How long, nurse?"

She dared not hide from him the stern truth; and then came a low despairing cry, "But I can't die, nurse, can't die! I am not ready to die." The momentous question engaged his mind, and he asked, "What must I do to be saved?"

She had said to the doctor, "He might have something to settle," but she had thought of earthly things, things of time. He had indeed something to settle, but it meant for ETERNITY. And all she answered was, "I don't know; I am not saved."

Then with pleading voice, he said, "Won't you pray for me? Do pray." But the sad answer came, "I can't; I don't know how."

What a moment for both of these souls! Both lost; both just finding it out. In the case of one the last grains of sand in life's hourglass were fast running out, with the question unsettled, "What must I do to be saved?"

The nurse was scarcely less agitated than the dying man. Then a Spirit-given thought surely came to her, as she said, "If it will be any comfort to you, I will sit up and read the Bible to you."

Andrew caught at the suggestion, as a drowning man might catch at a rope thrown out to him. "Do! Do!" he eagerly said.

She turned up the light above his bed enough to enable her to read, and took a Bible that was lying near. She hardly knew where to begin, but the Bible fell open at the Gospel of John, and in a low clear voice she read of one who came to Jesus by night. She read of that man's need and of God's love. She read slowly, distinctly; and he listened eagerly, trying to grasp something to answer the absorbing anxiety of his soul.

Pausing a moment, she continued to read of the woman who had her thirst quenched and her heart satisfied. Still there was no word from the suffering man, and his eyes besought her to go on. Finally she came to John 5:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation;

but is passed from death unto life." She looked up as she finished reading this, and saw a change in his face, the haggard look of agony was disappearing, and he said. "Stop there, nurse. Light is coming in. I see; I see. Leave me alone, but come back soon. Thank you. Oh thank you!"

Alone with God he remained for half an hour. When she returned his face was radiant: "I have heard His word," he said, "I believe the Lord Jesus Christ bore my sins when He was lifted up, and He has received me; all guilty as I was. It is not death for me now, nurse; it is everlasting life; He has forgiven me."

After a minute's rest he spoke again: "Nurse, will you meet me in heaven? You can never say again you do not know the way."

"It isn't clear to me. I can't grasp it as you have," she answered.

"He knew I had no time left. So He let the light in quickly," the dying man said, but He will make it clear to you. Tell my mother Christ saved me the eleventh hour. Peace! Peace!"

These were his last conscious words. The gray look deepened on his face, and very soon, as the surgeon had said, he had a slight convulsion, and then sank into profound unconsciousness only to awaken with the Good Shepherd who had sought and found His lost sheep.

"And what of the nurse" do you ask?

The enemy plied her with doubts and difficulties of all kinds. She wondered how Andrew had gotten assurance, and could meet death so calmly, without a doubt that his sins were forgiven while she was tossed with doubts and fears. She did not recognize that he had looked to the Lord Jesus Christ and got a sight of His dying upon the cross for his sins; and that had changed everything for him in a moment; but she was looking at herself, and found nothing there but sin and misery.

In this slate, four years rolled away, four dreary years; a ray of hope coming in sometimes, but quickly followed by darkness and despair. Then she became acquainted with a visitor to the hospital, to whom she opened her heart. This friend invited her to meet a servant of God, and to hear him preach, one that was much used in showing the way of peace to troubled souls.

The preaching was good, but it did not meet her case. They had some conversation, but nothing seemed to touch her. Finally the preacher turned to John 5:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

Suddenly the light broke in. Like Andrew, she too said, "I see!" and peace entered her soul. The same words that had met the dying man four year before, now claimed every doubt and fear in her heart, and she could thank God that for her also all was settled.

**"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;"**

(1 Corinthians 15:3)

**"Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once."**

(Proverbs 28:18)

**"For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."**

(2 Corinthians 6:2)

**"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;"**

(Hebrews 2:3)

Reader is it settled with you? John 5:24 is also a message for you as it was for Andrew and the nurse.