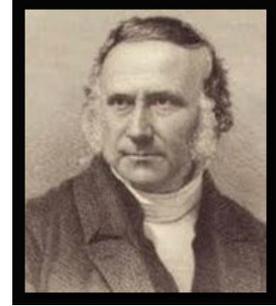


The Dawn of Heaven



Sixteen years after the death of Mary Ann (mentioned in the preceding sketch), I was summoned to the sick-bed of her sister. She was a younger sister, whom I had never seen since she was a mere child, and of whose religious character I had no knowledge. She had married; and after many trying changes, she was now in the city of New York. A kind lady, one of my own friends who resided in that city, and who had formerly known something of her family in another State, had accidentally heard of her illness, had called upon her, and now did me the favor to bring me the sick woman's request, that I "would go and see her." She told me I should find her in a very destitute condition, very much unbefriended and alone, though she had herself done something for her, to make her a little more comfortable. I received this message in the evening, and early the next morning I made my way to the house, to which she had directed me.

I found the sick woman in a boarding-house, among strangers, where nobody knew her except her husband, and manifestly nobody cared for her. She was in the garret, in a little room close under the roof of the house. The scanty furniture and the whole appearance of the room, showed me, at a glance, how unenviable was her condition. There was but one chair in the room, and this was used for a table (the only one she had), on which were placed some vials of medicine, a tea-cup and a saucer, which constituted all the furniture of the room, except her humble bed. But all was neat and clean. If there was scantiness, there was decency.

As I entered the room, I perceived at once her hopeless condition. She was emaciated, pale, tormented with a hollow cough, unable to speak but in a whisper, and her cheek was flushed with that round spot of peculiar red, with which I had become too familiar to mistake it for anything else than the fatal signal. I approached the bed on which she was lying, told her who I was, and offered her my hand.

“I am very happy to see you,” said she (speaking with effort and only in a whisper, and compelled to pause at almost every word). “I did not suppose you would remember me at all, and for a long time I could not have courage to send for you, or let you know that I was here. But I remembered you visited my sister, Mary Ann, when she died, and I had a great desire to see you.”

“I am very glad,” said I, “to be able to see you; but I am sorry to find you so ill. I wish I had known that you were here, sooner.”

“You are-very kind, sir; but I was afraid to trouble you. I have not seen you before, since I was a little child; and I supposed you had forgotten, that there was such a person. I am very thankful to you for being so kind as to come to see me.”

“Have you been sick long?”

“Yes sir, a good many months. I have lately been growing much worse, and I want now to get home to my mother, this week, if I can. I think I should be better there for a little while, though I cannot tell.”

“Do you think you are well enough to go home?”

“I hope I could go in the boat and live to get there. The hottest of the summer is coming on soon and our place here is very uncomfortable; but most of all I want to see my mother, once more before I die.” And the big tears rolled fast over her fevered cheeks.

“I hope,” said I, “you may be able to see her; but you do not seem to have much strength just now.”

“Indeed, sir, my strength is all gone. I cannot stand on my feet any longer. Before I became so weak I used to work with my needle and help my husband earn something; and then, we had a more comfortable place. But I can do nothing now and so we came to this garret to save rent.”

“Have you much pain?”

“Yes sir I am in—great pain now, the most of the time.”

“Do you expect ever to get well?”

“Oh, no sir, I shall never get well. I know I am to die before long; the consumption is a hopeless disease. This painful cough will soon end my days.”

“Are you afraid to die?”

“Oh, no sir,” said she with a smile, “Jesus is my hope. He will save me.”

“Trust Him,” said I, “you trust eternal rock. He has promised,”

Interrupting me, she replied,

“What can anybody want more than the promises? It seems to me the promises are enough for everybody; so sweet they are so full. Why, God has promised to make an everlasting covenant with us poor sinners!” And tears of joy coursed down her smiling face.

I conversed with her as long as I thought it best for her. All her conversation was in the same happy strain. She appeared very much exhausted, and I had little hope that her desire to “see her mother once more,” would ever be gratified. Indeed I did not think she would live till sunset. I prayed with her, and promising to call again in the afternoon, I left her.

Some little arrangements were made for her comfort, and in the afternoon I called there again. She was evidently worse, but her joy was full. Said she,

“I bless my God for all my pain for the disappointments of my past life, and the strange strange way in which he has led me on. I have had trials many trials. My husband did not prosper as he hoped to do, and sometimes we have been in distress. But my trials have done me good. Now we have few wants. You know I cannot eat anything now, and I hope his wages will keep him from suffering. I came to this little room when I could not work any longer, on purpose to relieve him. The rent is cheaper here in this little garret, and I want to be as little burdensome to him as possible. I used to think when I first made a profession of religion trials

would overcome me; but God makes me happy in them. I find if one is not worldly trials are easy to bear; and if we look towards God and heaven they are nothing at all but mercies.”

“And does your husband feel as you do? Is he a pious man?”

She turned her languid head upon her pillow, glancing around the room, to see if the nurse who had been procured for her, had left the room, and perceiving she was not there, said she:

“I suppose I may speak freely to you about my husband, since we are alone. He is not religious, and that is the trouble of my heart.”

She could say no more: she wept and sobbed aloud. After a little time, becoming more composed, evidently struggling to suppress her emotions, she continued,—

“I must leave that I can’t speak—of him. Oh, it seems to me as if the careless, who neglect salvation, have never read God’s promises. If they had and knew what they meant they could not help trusting them. I am happier now than ever I was before. It is sweet to suffer this pain, when Christ puts such delights into my soul.”

She was now stronger than I had expected to find her. I prayed with her, and promising to see her again the next day, I left her.

I was prevented from calling to see her the next morning, as I had intended; and when I called in the afternoon, I perceived her end was very fast approaching. Her countenance was changed, her pulse more feeble and fluttering, her voice was now perfectly restored, and she could speak with strong, clear articulation. She mentioned her recovered voice as an instance of God’s goodness to her, and both she and her husband took it as an evidence that she might live to reach her home. To me it was only an evidence to the contrary. She did not appear to be at all aware how near she was to death, and still entertained the hope of starting the next day, “to go home to her mother.” I felt very reluctant to crush that hope; but I thought she ought to be made acquainted with the prospect before her. She was still very weak and in some pain, and when I mentioned her sufferings to her, and expressed my sorrow that she had so much to endure; her face lighted up with a glad smile: said she,—

“Oh, it is pleasant to suffer, when we know it is our God that brings us to it. He does not afflict me too much. My poor body is weak and almost gone; but my God fills me with the delights of his love. My heart is full of joy. I am perfectly happy. I shall soon be where Christ is, and love Him forever.”

“I suppose,” said I, “you are aware that you cannot now last but a little while; and are prepared to go, at any moment when God bids.”

“I have no desire, sir, to get well. Why should I have? There is nothing in this world for me. You see we have nothing. I have parted with all my little furniture and my clothes, to get bread and pay our debts; and I don’t want the world; it is nothing to me now, and I leave it willingly. I am happy. God makes me happy. Christ is enough for me. I love to trust God’s promises. I trust Him for all I want, and He makes me very happy. Death seems like nothing to me. It is my friend. I welcome it. Dying is only a step, and then I shall be at home, at home!” and tears of joy coursed down her smiling face. The last word—home, which she had uttered, seemed to remind her of her earthly home, and she added,—

“To-morrow, I hope to go home to my mother, and see her and all my other friends once more; perhaps I may.”

“I am afraid not, my dear friend. You are very low, and I wish you to be ready to die at any moment.”

Turning her death-glazed eyes upon me, she asked,—

“Shall I die to-night? If you think so, tell me plainly. Don’t weep so for me. I thank you for all your kind sympathy; but I am perfectly happy. God fulfils to me all His promises. I leave all in His hands—gladly, joyfully. But I think I can live to get home. You think I shall die to-night. I thank you for letting me know it; and I am ready if God calls. But if I am alive, may I see you in the morning? God will reward you, I know, for all your kindness to me.”

“Yes, my child; you may expect me here in the morning; but if you have anything you wish to say to me, you had better say it now.”

“I have no more to say, but to thank you again. Your kind words have done me great good; and it has been sweet to me, very sweet, to join

with you in prayer. Help me to praise God for the delights that fill my soul. Don't weep so for me."

I prayed with her, and praised God as she desired, and then bade her farewell. "Do not think I weep because I am sorry," said she, "I weep because I am overcome with joy. Delights fill my happy soul. This is the dawn of heaven. My heaven is begun. Dying is sweet to me. I go to my blessed Lord. I thank you for coming to me. Farewell, farewell."

Early the next morning I returned to that privileged garret. It was empty! Even her corpse was not there! She had died about four hours after I left her; her body had been placed in its coffin, conveyed on board the vessel, and on the very day in which she expected to see her "mother once more," her mother received the lifeless corpse of her child.

It now lies buried in the grave-yard of her native valley. She and Mary Ann sleep side by side. And they shall rise together from the dead, in that coming day when our Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, 'to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.'

If grace is there, how instructive, how glorious is

THE DEATH OF THE POOR.

"Tread softly—bow the head—
In reverent silence bow;
No passing bell doth toll—
Yet an immortal soul
Is passing now,
Stranger! however great,
With lowly reverence bow;
There's one in that poor shed—
One on that paltry bed—
Greater than thou.

"Beneath that beggar's roof,
Lo ! Death doth keep his state

Enter—no crowd attend:
Enter—no guards defend
 This palace gate.

That pavement, damp and cold,
No smiling courtiers tread ;
One silent woman stands—
Lifting with meagre hands
 A dying head.

"No mingling voices sound—
 An infant wail alone ;
 A sob suppressed—again
That short, deep gasp, and then
 The parting groan.

"Oh ! change—Oh wondrous change— Burst are the prison bars ;
This moment *there*, so low, So agonized, and now Beyond the stars.

Oh! change—stupendous change There lies the soulless clod; The
sun eternal breaks— The new immortal wakes- Wakes with his God."