

"Listen! Did you ever hear a sweeter voice than that?"

I had heard the voice before, and thrilled under its power. It was a female voice of wonderful richness and volume, with a touch of something in it that moved you strangely—a sort of intensity that set your pulses to beating faster, while it entranced you. The whole of the spacious grounds were flooded with the melody, and the passing teamsters on the public highway would pause and listen with wonder and delight. The singer was a fair young girl, with dark auburn hair, large brown eyes, that were at times dreamy and sad, and then again lit up with excitement, as her moods changed from sad to gay.

"She will sit silent for hours, gazing listlessly out of the window, and then all at once break forth into a burst of song so sweet and thrilling that the other patients gather near her and listen in rapt silence and delight. Sometimes at a dead hour of the night her voice is heard, and then it seems that she is under a special *afflatus*—she seems to be inspired by the very soul of music, and her songs, wild and sad, wailing and rollicking, by turns, but all exquisitely sweet, fill the long night hours with their melody."

The shock caused by the sudden death of her betrothed lover overthrew her reason and blighted her life. By the mercy of God, the love of music and the gift of song survived the wreck of love and of reason. This girl's voice, pealing forth upon the still summer evening air, is mingled with my last recollection of Stockton and its refuge for the doubly miserable who are doomed to death in life.

THE REBLOOMING.

IT is now more than thirty years since the morning a slender youth of handsome face and modest mien came into my office on the corner of Montgomery and Clay Streets, San Francisco. He was the son of a preacher well known in Missouri and California, a man of rare good sense, caustic wit, and many eccentricities. The young man became an *attaché* of my newspaper office and an inmate of my home. He was as fair as a girl, and refined in his taste and manners. A genial taciturnity, if the expression may be allowed, marked his bearing in the social circle. Everybody had a kind feeling and a good word for the quiet, bright-faced youth. In the discharge of his duties in the office he was punctual and trustworthy, showing not only industry, but unusual aptitude for business. It was with special pleasure that I learned that he was turning his thoughts to the subject of religion. During the services in the little Pine Street church he would sit with thoughtful face, and not seldom with moistened eyes. He read the Bible and prayed in secret. I was not surprised when he came to me one day and opened his heart. The great crisis in his life had come. God was speaking to his soul, and he was listening to his voice. The uplifted cross drew him, and he yielded to the gentle attraction. We prayed together, and henceforth there was a new and sacred bond that bound us to each other. I felt that I was a witness to the most solemn transaction that can take place on earth: the wedding of a soul to a heavenly faith. Soon

thereafter he went to Virginia to attend college. There he united with the Church. His letters to me were full of gratitude and joy. It was the blossoming of his spiritual life, and the air was full of its fragrance, and the earth was flooded with glory. A pedestrian tour among the Virginia hills brought him into communion with nature at a time when it was rapture to drink in its beauty and its grandeur. The light kindled within his soul by the touch of the Holy Spirit transfigured the scenery upon which he gazed, and the glory of God shone round about the young student in the flush and blessedness of his first love. O blessed days! O days of brightness and sweetness and rapture! The soul is then in its blossoming time, and all high enthusiasms, all bright dreams, all thrilling joys, are realities which inwork themselves into the consciousness, to be forgotten never; to remain with us as prophecies of the eternal springtime that awaits the true-hearted on the hills of God beyond the grave, or as accusing voices charging us with the murder of our dead ideals. Amid the dust and din of the battle in after years we turn to this radiant spot in our journey with smiles or tears, according as we have been true or false to the impulses, aspirations, and purposes inspired within us by that first and brightest and nearest manifestation of God. Such a season is as natural to every life as the April buds and June roses are to forest and garden. The springtime of some lives is deferred by unpropitious circumstance to the time when it should be glowing with autumnal glory, and rich in the fruitage of the closing year. The life that does not blossom into religion in youth may have light at noon, and peace at sunset, but misses the morning glory on the hills and the dew that sparkles on grass and

flower. The call of God to the young to seek him early is the expression of a true psychology no less than of a love infinite in its depth and tenderness.

His college course finished, my young friend returned to California, and in one of its beautiful valley towns he entered a law office, with a view to prepare himself for the legal profession. Here he was thrown into daily association with a little knot of skeptical lawyers. As is often the case, their moral obliquities ran parallel with their errors in opinion. They swore, gambled genteelly, and drank. It is not strange that in this icy atmosphere the growth of my young friend in the Christian life was stunted. Such influences are like the dreaded north wind that at times sweeps over the valleys of California in the spring and early summer, blighting and withering the vegetation it does not kill. The brightness of his hope was dimmed, and his soul knew the torture of doubt—a torture that is always keenest to him who allows himself to sink in the region of fogs after he has once stood upon the sunlit summit of faith. Just at this crisis a thing little in itself deepened the shadow that was falling upon his life. A personal misunderstanding with the pastor kept him from attending church. Thus he lost the most effectual defense against the assaults that were being made upon his faith and hope, in being separated from the fellowship and cut off from the activities of the Church of God. Have you not noted these malign coincidences in life? There are times when it seems that the tide of events sets against us—when, like the princely sufferer of the land of Uz, every messenger that crosses the threshold brings fresh tidings of ill, and our whole destiny seems to be rushing to a predoomed perdition.

The worldly call it bad luck; the superstitious call it fate; the believer in God calls it by another name. Always of a delicate constitution, my friend now exhibited symptoms of serious pulmonary disease. It was at that time the fashion in California to prescribe whisky as a specific for that class of ailments. It is possible that there is virtue in the prescription, but I am sure of one thing—namely, that if consumption diminished, drunkenness increased; if fewer died of phthisis, more died of *delirium tremens*. The physicians of California have sent a host of victims raving and gibbering in drunken frenzy or idiocy down to death and hell. I have reason to believe that my friend inherited a constitutional weakness at this point. As flame to tinder, was the medicinal whisky to him. It grew upon him rapidly, and soon this cloud overshadowed all his life. He struggled hard to break the serpent folds that were tightening around him, but the fire that had been kindled seemed to be quenchless. An uncontrolled evil passion is hell fire. He writhed in its burnings in an agony that could be understood only by such as knew how almost morbidly sensitive was his nature, and how vital was his conscience. I became a pastor in the town where he lived, and renewed my association with him as far as I could. But there was a constraint unlike the old times. When under the influence of liquor he would pass me in the streets with his head down, a deeper flush mantling his cheek as he hurried by with unsteady step. Sometimes I met him staggering homeward through a back street, hiding from the gaze of men. He was at first shy of me when sober; but gradually the constraint wore off, and he seemed disposed to draw nearer to me, as in the old days. His struggle went on, days of

drunkenness following weeks of soberness, his haggard face after each debauch wearing a look of unspeakable weariness and wretchedness. One of the lawyers who had led him into the mazes of doubt—a man of large and versatile gifts, whose lips were touched with a noble and persuasive eloquence—sunk deeper and deeper into the black depths of drunkenness, until the tragedy ended in a horror that lessened the gains of the saloon for at least a few days. He was found dead in his bed one morning in a pool of blood, his throat cut by his own guilty hand.

My friend had married a lovely girl, and the cottage in which they lived was one of the cosiest, and the garden in front was a little paradise of neatness and beauty. Ah! I must drop a veil over a part of this true tale. All along I have written under half protest, the image of a sad, wistful face rising at times between my eyes and the sheet on which these words are traced. They loved each other tenderly and deeply, and both were conscious of the presence of the devil that was turning their heaven into hell.

“Save him, Doctor, save him! He is the noblest of men, and the tenderest, truest husband. He loves you, and he will let you talk to him. Save him, O save him! Help me to pray for him! My heart will break!”

Poor child! her loving heart was indeed breaking; and her fresh young life was crushed under a weight of grief and shame too heavy to be borne.

What *he* said to me in the interviews held in his sober intervals I have not the heart to repeat now. He still fought against his enemy; he still buffeted the billows that were going over him, though with feebler stroke. When their little child died, her tears fell freely, but he was like one stunned.

Stony and silent he stood and saw the little grave filled up, and rode away tearless, the picture of hopelessness.

By a coincidence, after my return to San Francisco, he came thither, and again became my neighbor at North Beach. I went up to see him one evening. He was very feeble, and it was plain that the end was not far off. At the first glance I saw that a great change had taken place in him. He had found his lost self. The strong drink was shut out from him, and he was shut in with his better thoughts and with God. His religious life rebloomed in wondrous beauty and sweetness. The blossoms of his early joy had fallen off, the storms had torn its branches and stripped it of its foliage; but its root had never perished, because he had never ceased to struggle for deliverance. Aspiration and hope live or die together in the human soul. The link that bound my friend to God was never wholly sundered. His better nature clung to the better way with a grasp that never let go altogether.

"O Doctor, I am a wonder to myself! It does seem to me that God has given back to me every good thing I possessed in the bright and blessed past. It has all come back to me. I see the light and feel the joy as I did when I first entered the new life. O, it is wonderful! Doctor, God never gave me up, and I never ceased to yearn for his mercy and love, even in the darkest season of my unhappy life!"

His very face had recovered its old look, and his voice its old tone. There could be no doubt of it—his soul had rebloomed in the life of God.

The last night came. They sent for me with the message: "Come quickly! he is dying."

I found him with that look which I have seen

on the faces of others who were nearing death—a radiance and a rapture that awed the beholder. O solemn, awful mystery of death! I have stood in its presence in every form of terror and of sweetness, and in every case the thought has been impressed upon me that it was a passage into the great realities.

"Doctor," he said, smiling, and holding my hand, "I had hoped to be with you in your office again, as in the old days; not as a business arrangement, but just to be with you, and revive old memories, and to live the old life over again. But that cannot be, and I must wait till we meet in the world of spirits, whither I go before you. It seems to be growing dark. I cannot see your face, hold my hand. I am going—going. I am on the waves—on the waves"—

The radiance was still upon his face, but the hand I held no longer clasped mine—the wasted form was still. It was the end. He was launched upon the infinite sea for the endless voyage.

SAN QUENTIN.

I WANT you to go with me over to San Quentin next Thursday, and preach a thanksgiving sermon to the poor fellows in the State prison." On the appointed morning I met our party at the Vallejo Street wharf, and we were soon steaming on our way. Passing under the guns of Fort Alcatraz, past Angel Island (why so called I know not, as in early days it was inhabited not by angels, but goats only), all of us felt the exhilaration of the California sunshine and the bracing November air, as we stood upon the guards watching the play of the lazy-looking porpoises, that seemed to roll along, keeping up with the swift motion of the boat in such a leisurely way. The porpoise is a deceiver. As he rolls up to the surface of the water in his lumbering way he looks as if he were a huge lump of unwieldy awkwardness, floating at random and almost helpless; but when you come to know him better, you find that he is a marvel of muscular power and swiftness. I have seen a "school" of porpoises in the Pacific swimming for hours alongside one of our fleetest ocean steamers, darting a few yards ahead now and then, as if by mere volition, cutting their way through the water with the directness of an arrow. The porpoise is playful at times, and his favorite game is a sort of leapfrog. A score or more of the creatures, seemingly full of fun and excitement, will chase one another at full speed, throwing themselves from the water and turning somersaults in the air, the water boiling with the agitation, and

their huge bodies flashing in the light. You might almost imagine that they had found something in the sea that had made them drunk, or that they had inhaled some sort of piscatorial anæsthetic. But here we are at our destination. The bell rings, we round to, and land.

At San Quentin nature is at her best, and man at his worst. Against the rocky shore the waters of the bay break in gentle plashings when the winds are quiet. When the gales from the southwest sweep through the Golden Gate, and set the white caps to dancing to their wild music, the waves rise high, and dash upon the dripping stones with a hoarse roar, as of anger. Beginning a few hundreds of yards from the water's edge, the hills slope up and up and up, until they touch the base of Tamelpais, on whose dark and rugged summit, four thousand feet above the sea that laves his feet on the west, the rays of the morning sun fall with transfiguring glory, while yet the valley below lies in shadow. On this lofty pinnacle linger the last rays of the setting sun, as it drops into the bosom of the Pacific. In stormy weather the mist and clouds roll in from the ocean, and gather in dark masses around his awful head, as if the sea gods had risen from their homes in the deep, and were holding a council of war amid the battle of the elements; at other times, after calm, bright days, the thin, soft white clouds that hang about his crest deepen into crimson and gold, and the mountain top looks as if the angels of God had come down to encamp, and pitched here their pavilions of glory. This is nature at San Quentin, and this is Tamelpais as I have looked upon it many a morning and many an evening from my window above the sea at North Beach.

The gate is opened for us, and we enter the

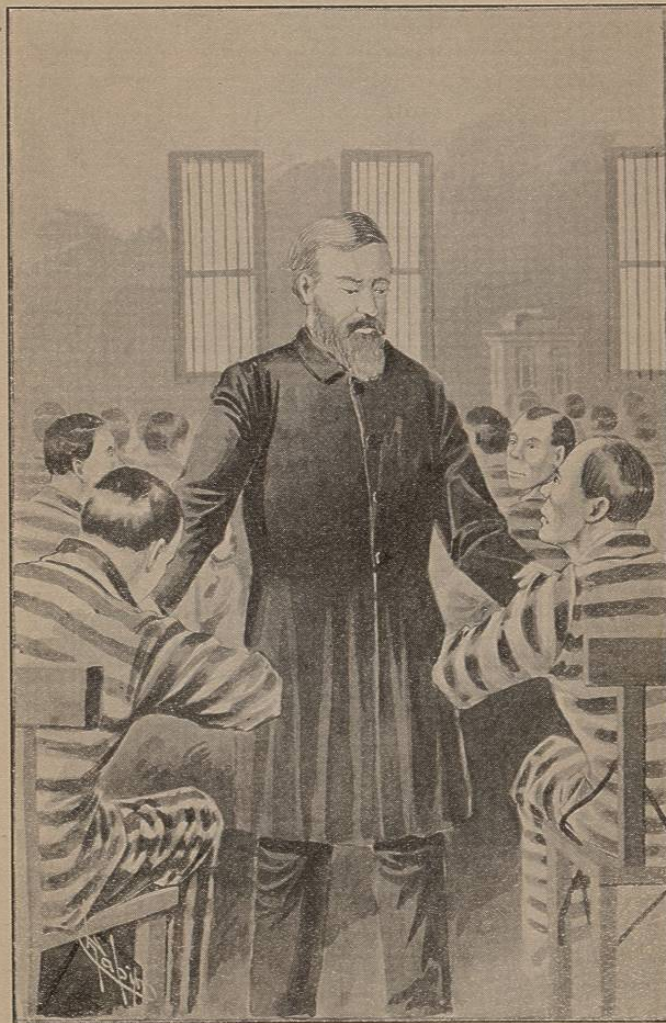
prison walls. It is a holiday, and the day is fair and balmy; but the chill and sadness cannot be shaken off, as we look around us. The sunshine seems almost to be a mockery in this place where fellow-men are caged and guarded like wild beasts, and skulk about with shaved heads, clad in the striped uniform of infamy. Merciful God! is this what thy creature man was made for? How long, how long?

Seated upon the platform with the prison officials and visitors, I watched my strange auditors as they came in. There were one thousand of them. Their faces were a curious study. Most of them were bad faces. Beast and devil were printed on them. Thick necks, heavy back-heads, and low, square foreheads, were the prevalent types. The least repulsive were those who looked as if they were all animal, creatures of instinct and appetite, good-natured and stupid; the most repulsive were those whose eyes had a gleam of mingled sensuality and ferocity. But some of these faces that met my gaze were startling—they seemed so out of place. One old man with gray hair, pale, sad face, and clear blue eyes, might have passed, in other garb and in other company, for an honored member of the Society of Friends. He had killed a man in a mountain county. If he was indeed a murderer at heart, nature had given him the wrong imprint. My attention was struck by a smooth-faced, handsome young fellow, scarcely of age, who looked as little like a convict as anybody on that platform. He was in for burglary, and had a very bad record. Some came in half laughing, as if they thought the whole affair more a joke than anything else. The Mexicans, of whom there were quite a number, were sullen and scowling. There is gloom in the Spanish blood. The irrepressible

good nature of several ruddy-faced Irishmen broke out in sly merriment. As the service began, the discipline of the prison showed itself in the quiet that instantly prevailed; but only a few, who joined in the singing, seemed to feel the slightest interest in it. Their eyes were wandering, and their faces were vacant. They had the look of men who had come to be talked at and patronized, and who were used to it. The prayer that was offered was not calculated to banish such a feeling—it was dry and cold. I stood up to begin the sermon. Never before had I realized so fully that God's message was to lost men and for lost men. A mighty tide of pity rushed in upon my soul as I looked down into the faces of my hearers. My eyes filled, and my heart melted within me. I could not speak until after a pause, and only then by great effort. There was a deep silence, and every face was lifted to mine as I announced the text. God had touched my heart and theirs at the start. I read the words slowly: "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Then I said: "My fellow-men, I come to you to-day with a message from my Father and your Father in heaven. It is a message of hope. God help me to deliver it as I ought! God help you to hear it as you ought! I will not insult you by saying that because you have an extra dinner, a few hours' respite from your toil, and a little fresh air and sunshine, you ought to have a joyful thanksgiving to-day. If I should talk thus, you would be ready to ask me how I would like to change places with you. You would despise me, and I would despise myself, for indulging in such cant. Your lot is a hard one. The battle of life has gone against you—whether by your own fault or by hard fortune, it matters not, so far as the fact is

concerned; this thanksgiving day finds you locked in here, with broken lives, and wearing the badge of crime. God alone knows the secrets of each throbbing heart before me, and how it is that you have come to this. Fellow-men, children of my Father in heaven, putting myself for the moment in your place, the bitterness of your lot is real and terrible to me. For some of you there is no happier prospect for this life than to toil within these walls by day, and sleep in yonder cells by night, through the weary, slow-dragging years, and then to die, with only the hands of hired attendants to wipe the death sweat from your brows; and then to be put in a convict's coffin, and taken up on the hill yonder, and laid in a lonely grave. My God! this is terrible!"

An unexpected dramatic effect followed these words. The heads of many of the convicts fell forward on their breasts, as if struck with sudden paralysis. They were the men who were in for life, and the horror of it overcame them. The silence was broken by sobbings all over the room. The officers and visitors on the platform were weeping. The angel of pity hovered over the place, and the glow of human sympathy had melted those stony hearts. A thousand strong men were thrilled with the touch of sympathy, and once more the sacred fountain of tears was unsealed. These convicts were men, after all, and deep down under the rubbish of their natures there was still burning the spark of a humanity not yet extinct. It was wonderful to see the softened expression of their faces. Yes, they were men, after all, responding to the voice of sympathy, which had been but too strange to many of them all their evil lives. Many of them had inherited hard conditions; they were literally conceived



"Many hands were extended to grasp mine."

in sin and born in iniquity; they grew up in the midst of vice. For them, pure and holy lives were a moral impossibility. Evil with them was hereditary, organic, and the result of association; it poisoned their blood at the start, and stamped itself on their features from their cradles. Human law, in dealing with these victims of evil circumstance, can make little discrimination. Society must protect itself, treating a criminal as a criminal. But what will God do with them hereafter? Be sure he will do right. Where little is given, little will be required. It shall be better for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for Chorazin and Bethsaida. There is no ruin without remedy, except that which a man makes for himself by abusing mercy and throwing away proffered opportunity. Thoughts like these rushed through the preacher's mind, as he stood there looking in the tear-bedewed faces of these men of crime. A fresh tide of pity rose in his heart, that he felt came from the heart of the all-pitying One.

“I do not try to disguise from you or from myself the fact that for this life your outlook is not bright. But I come to you this day with a message of hope from God our Father. He hath not appointed you to wrath. He loves all his children. He sent his Son to die for them. Jesus trod the paths of pain and drained the cup of sorrow. He died as a malefactor, for malefactors. He died for me. He died for each one of you. If I knew the most broken, the most desolate-hearted, despairing man before me, who feels that he is scorned of men and forsaken of God, I would go to where he sits and put my hand on his head and tell him that God hath not appointed him to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. I would tell him that his Father in heaven

loves him still, loves him more than the mother that bore him. I would tell him that all the wrongs and follies of his past life may from this hour be turned into so much capital of a warning experience, and that a million of years from to-day he may be a child of the Heavenly Father, and an heir of glory, having the freedom of the heavens and the blessedness of everlasting life. O brothers, God does love you! Nothing can ruin you but your own despair. No man has any right to despair who has eternity before him. Eternity! Long, long eternity! Blessed, blessed eternity! That is yours—all of it. It may be a happy eternity for each one of you. From this moment you may begin a better life. There is hope for you, and mercy and love and heaven. This is the message I bring you warm from a brother's heart, and warm from the heart of Jesus, whose lifeblood was poured out for you and me. His loving hand opened the gate of mercy and hope to every man. The proof is that he died for us. O Son of God, take us to thy pitying arms, and lift us up into the light that never, never grows dim—into the love that fills heaven and eternity!"

As the speaker sunk into his seat there was a silence that was almost painful for a few moments. Then the pent-up emotion of the men broke forth in sobs that shook their strong frames. Dr. Lucky, the prisoner's friend, made a brief, tearful prayer, and then the benediction was said, and the service was at an end. The men sat still in their seats. As we filed out of the chapel, many hands were extended to grasp mine, holding it with a clinging pressure. I passed out, bearing with me the impression of an hour I can never forget; and the images of those thousand faces are still painted in memory.

TOD ROBINSON.

THE image of this man of many moods and brilliant genius that rises most distinctly to my mind is that connected with a little prayer meeting in the Minna Street Church, San Francisco, one Thursday night. His thin, silver locks, his dark, flashing eye, his graceful pose, and his musical voice are before me. His words I have not forgotten, but their electric effect must forever be lost to all except the few who heard them: "I have been taunted with the reproach that it was only after I was a broken and disappointed man in my worldly hopes and aspirations that I turned to religion. The taunt is just"—here he bowed his head, and paused with deep emotion—"the taunt is just. I bow my head in shame, and take the blow. My earthly hopes have faded and fallen one after another. The prizes that dazzled my imagination have eluded my grasp. I am a broken, gray-haired man, and I bring to my God only the remnant of a life. But, brethren, it is this very thought that fills me with joy and gratitude at this moment—the thought that when all else fails God takes us up. Just when we need him most, and most feel our need of him, he lifts us up out of the depths where we have groveled, and presses us to his fatherly heart. This is the glory of Christianity. The world turns from us when we fail and fall; then it is that the Lord draws nigher. Such a religion must be from God, for its principles are godlike. It does not require much skill or power to steer a