

The Fireside.

FROM THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER

BY IAN MACLAREN.

The message had gone first to my house, and then was brought up to the vestry five minutes before service; and it was urgent. To come at once to a house in the neighborhood, because someone was dying and desired to see a minister. His time was very short, the letter went on to say, and it was desired that I make no delay. It is a good rule of our profession to place the call of the dying and the bereaved before all others, to lay aside a sermon even in the crisis of its composition, as well as to turn from any routine duty, that we may render quick aid in the black straits of life. If there had been any one to take the service, I should have thrown aside my robes, and hurried where death was on the threshold, returning for the sermon; but I had no colleague, and I might not go. When the regiment charges, one must go with it, especially if he be the colonel, even though the dying lie at his feet, and then afterwards he may return and give aid. Through the prayers and through the sermon the message from the death-chamber ran like an undertone; and through my speaking there was the subconsciousness of another place than the church, with its many faces. Within five minutes of the close of the service I was on my way to the house. When I reached it, I looked up, as one does from an instinct in such circumstances, to learn from the face of the house whether he has come too late. As it was night, the blinds were all down, and the house told no tale; but the light in two of the upper windows suggested the sick-room and life. And one felt thankful to believe that in a conflict of duty, between the many gathered for the public worship of God, and the one seeking help in the lonely journey through the valley of the shadow, the minister had done what was right, and had failed neither.

Ministers are quick in reading faces,—not through our natural insight, but through long practice in sensitive circumstances,—and before the servant spoke, I was certain that death had not yet entered, although across her face was flung the shadow of his coming. God's dark angel was plainly near, but I was first, bringing the evangel to a human soul, whoever he might be, or in whatsoever need. A minister trembles in his heart every time he mounts the pulpit steps, for indeed it is a solemn thing to preach the gospel to a crowd of people, who hear it each with his own state of mind and his own need, and who will never hear it again with exactly the same ears; but it is an awful thing to carry the word of God to the man who is making his last journey. Nothing then must be said that is not sure, and nothing that is not needful; and everything must be said with the clearness of light and the compassion of love. Under the power of the world to come, theories of the study and consciousness of one's self are consumed, and as near as may be one naked soul is in contact with another. If a man can do his part here, he hath done it in the highest. If he has nothing to say now, what salvation can there be in his public speech.

The people of the house were only

slightly known to me, and its head came downstairs to tell me the situation, and he came as one who made haste. He explained with a few rapid strokes of detail, as when one uses an etcher's tools, "that it is his wife's father—had come to pay them a visit. Not young, but a healthy, strong man, suddenly stricken down, and no hope; might live till midnight or die any moment—could not, at any rate, see morning; was a good man, if ever there was one—if any one was prepared to die, he was; but in great trouble about something—no one could help him—and his daughter, heart-broken to see her father dying in such a state, had sent for me, because they had met me, and I was near at hand—hoped I would excuse the liberty they had taken, and—" But it was no time for social courtesies, and already, with one consent, we were moving to the stairs.

As we went up, my mind was working and trying to get the atmosphere. The householder himself, I concluded, from what he had said and what I knew of him, which was not much, was a kind-hearted and good fellow, but not religious, and would not be able to appreciate any great affair of the soul. Very likely this man who had received so sharp a summons was of another kind and was sounding his way through some mystery of the spiritual life. When one enters the presence of the dead, he walks softly; and it is still more becoming that he should take the shoes from off his feet when he stands before the dying, for there is nothing in human life so solemn as the sight of a person passing from this world to the next.

A nurse had been hastily summoned, and came occasionally from the back-ground to render some service; but the daughter claimed the charge of her father, and waited on him with her own hands. He had been raised in bed, and was sitting backed up by pillows, with the shaded light falling on his face; and ere he saw me, or knew that I was in the room, for one moment I studied him. Before a man has come to seventy years of age, and I judged that he was more than that, the face had been largely dominated by the soul and the inner character carved thereon, and I made no doubt that this man who was about to make his departure had not only been honorable and well living, the kind of man who is faithful at home and abroad, but that he had been something more, and had reached the highest rank in the order of religious life—not only moral, but also spiritual; and at this time, when the light behind was illuminating the thin veil of humanity, there shone out the likeness of Jesus Christ; and before I spoke to him, I knew by signs which make the freemasonry of heaven that this was a Christian man. There was something else I also saw, but understood more dimly—that he was mourning an absent Lord. There was the wistful look as of a dumb animal, true and faithful, who had been shut out and could not get to his master. But why, I knew not.

When I stood by his bed, he welcomed my coming; but there was no joy in the look, only courteous gratitude and very faint hope. It was a brotherly act of one disciple to another that I should answer the message, and it might be that I had some word for him, but— If his Lord had shut the door, could any fellow-disciple open it? It

was no time for ceremonial talk; there was no need to ask if he were of Christ. The only question was this: What ailed him, that in the hour when most he needed the Master's presence, and the Master had promised most surely to be with his disciples, he was alone and helpless, stretching out poor, empty hands for an absent Lord?

"What is it?" I asked, and as I looked on his gray hair and saw on him the marks of the Lord Jesus, I added "my father." And then he told me, with faint but clear voice, the darkness that had fallen on him.

"For fifty years I have been a believing Christian by the grace of God, and have followed the Lord so far as a poor man could. I have had times of fellowship with the Lord when he spoke to me and I spoke to him, and trysting-places at the Lord's table and in many of the Scriptures. I have known days of tribulation, and he was with me, and I trusted he would have been near me at the end; but now I am dying quickly, and alone, alone, with no Lord." And as his voice wailed into silence, he searched my face anxiously to see, not whether I could help him—for what was I?—but whether the Lord he missed had remembered him and sent some message of good cheer by my lips.

"But how do you know he has forsaken you?" I asked my second question. "It has not been his way, and his word standeth: 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'"

"I know the Scriptures," he said hopelessly; "but they have been taken from me; they have gone with the Lord to whom they belong." He was silent for a moment, and then began to explain—

"Once I had joy and peace; and I knew, when they came to my heart, that the Lord had also come. Even in sorrow and in pain, joy and peace. They were the fragments of the ointment on the Lord, and I knew that he abode with me; but now no joy, no peace, no feeling." He repeated again: "No feeling—cold, insensible, comfortless. I will trust to the end, but I am forsaken." And then he repeated to himself, forgetful of our presence, the saddest words in all religious poetry; and it was curious to notice how they came to his memory with such distinctness, for it was only now he had made them his own—

"No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone,
We perish'd, each alone,
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he."

It were terrible if this good man should die in despair like poor Comper; for despair had come late to him, and he had travelled by a more sunny road than the poet of Gethsemane.

"My heart is as a stone," and he returned to his former words: "I feel nothing."

As he repeated "feel," my message came to me, as when light cleaves darkness with a sword; and he himself prepared my way by saying, "Have you no word for me?"

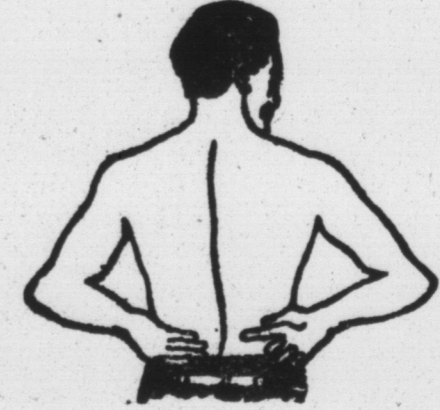
"Yes," I said with firm assurance, "I am sent with this word to you from the Master: 'He that feeleth hath everlasting life.'" And I said it once again: "'He that feeleth hath everlasting life.' You remember," I added, "it came from his own lips."

There was silence in the room so that we could hear his quick breathing, and the swish of the nurse's dress as she slightly moved and took some cordial

ALLEN'S LUNG BALSAM

will positively cure deep-seated
**COUGHS,
COLDS,
CROUP.**

A 25c. Bottle for a Simple Cold.
A 50c. Bottle for a Heavy Cold.
A \$1.00 Bottle for a Deep-seated Cough.
Sold by all Druggists.



THAT'S THE SPOT!

Right in the small of the back.
Do you ever get a pain there?
If so, do you know what it means?
It is a Backache.

A sure sign of Kidney Trouble.
Don't neglect it. Stop it in time.
If you don't, serious Kidney Troubles
are sure to follow.

DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS

cure Backache, Lame Back, Diabetes,
Dropsy and all Kidney and Bladder
Troubles.

Price 50c. a box or 3 for \$1.25, all dealers.
DOAN KIDNEY PILL CO.,
Toronto, Ont.

into her hand. Then I saw a wonderful thing, and a mystery of the spiritual world. The shadow passed from his face as when the sun chases a fleeting cloud till it disappears on an early summer day. He was no longer shut out, he was within the door; he was no longer forsaken, the Master was beside him; he was no longer in despair, but hope was shining in his eyes.

"Not 'He that feeleth,'—he never said that, else woe to us as it has been in truth woe to me. 'He that believeth,'—that is what he said. Blessed be his name, 'He that believeth.' I believe," he went on, clasping his hands, "I believe. Lord, thou knowest that I believe. Help thou mine unbelief. My soul is delivered from the snare of the fowler."

We knelt and committed him into the hands of the Lord, in whom he trusted, praying that he might have all joy and peace in believing, and an abundant

"The D.D." Emulsion

Trade-mark.

Extensively used in Hospitals
The most palatable Emulsion
made

Very easy to digest
Gives strength to the body
Increases the weight largely
The best Remedy for
General Debility,

La Grippe, Anaemia,
Consumption.