

From Thankgodbury To Ruinette.

A LIFE SKETCH.

Born in a wretched hovel, cradled in penury, denied all the joys and amusements of childhood, going in rags and writhing under the lash of a severe and unreasoning parent, varied by the cruel, selfish and capricious treatment of strangers and task masters, was my experience up to 15 years of age. After that, or up to 19, at the time I lost my arm, kept at grinding, unremunerative and uncongenial toil—denied the privileges of other boys—afraid to call my soul my own and with no chance for education or self-improvement; forced to associate with coarse and ignorant companions, who did not understand me or sympathize with my aspirations, although often cast down and depressed, and sometimes desperate to the point of attempted suicide, I still thanked God for a kind and loving mother; for God's sunshine, flowers and trees, the rippling stream that ran past our door, the newspapers I took and the few books and friends with which I had something in common.

Practically driven from my home by my misfortune, as the company in whose employ it happened refused me help, and I must try some way of earning my living, I found enjoyment in new scenes and acquaintances and partial compensation in the sympathy of kind hearts freely bestowed, but often also the cold frown, the cruel sneer and the taunting jibe—still—I thanked God, for, there still seemed something for me to live for—I was young and energetic, and although poor and of no account, yet who knew what might happen; my star might rise, and it did, but never very high.

I made a home, I had enough to live on and the supreme pleasure of providing for my good mother in her last days, who otherwise would have been without a home, and it is a satisfaction that she never complained, although to come with me she had to separate from my father, never to see him again.

When she died, I was inconsolable; as she was then the only being on earth who loved me, but I would not repine when friends told me that "God had taken her to Himself," as she had been spared to me for a long time and had reached a good age, and although sad and heart rending beyond expression, it did not seem dreadful or unjust. After calm deliberation I thanked God that He had given her rest, so well earned after a weary and toilsome life.

After that Love was but a memory of her, and I had a sad happiness in kneeling by her grave and recalling the many acts of kindness and tenderness she had shown me in life which unfortunately were not always appreciated at their true value until the dear lips could no longer frame an endearing word, and the loving hands had ceased forever their kind ministrations.

With the birth of my boy Love became resurrected and enlarged tenfold. My only and own child, and all I could expect to have. Who would have thought that the tears of joy at his birth would be succeeded in a little over eight short years by burning tears of sorrow over his untimely end? Here, thought I, is some compensation. God, had after

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all some object in allowing me to live, and my life had not been altogether in vain. Though He had deprived me of one arm He had given me two others in its place, and though I still carried the ball and chain of poverty I had something with which to sweeten it—something for which self-sacrifice and even suffering would be a pleasure.

So sure was I that God had given me him as a compensation for the hard lot inflicted on me, that I could never allow the thought to enter my mind that he would ever be taken from me. I only cared for life myself, so as I might be enabled to provide for him. He was my only hope and joy for the present and future. Often when at death's door (as he was never very robust), when the possibility of losing him was mentioned to me I would passionately exclaim, "Surely, God, if He is the loving Father they say He is, will not rob me of the only happiness He has ever given me in a life of hardship and misfortune." I trusted Him implicitly that He would not—my trust was without avail.

When the dreaded hour came I could not be reconciled and I can never be, and I cannot be thankful for life or anything it may bring without him to share it with me. Ruin, henceforth is the only word for me to conjure with and Death, the shunned and abhorred before, is now my friend and brother.

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