

A STORY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Farmer Owen's son had been found asleep when doing sentry duty, and he was sentenced to be shot. A telegram had been received by his father saying that the sentence would be carried out in twenty-four hours. Mr. Allen, the minister, called to do what he could to comfort the sorowing family. During his visit a letter arrived; Blossom, the farmer's little daughter, opened the door and received it. "It is from him," was all she said.

It was like a message from the dead. Mr. Owen took the letter, but could not break the envelope, on account of his trembling fingers, and held it towards Mr. Allan, with the helplessness of a child.

The minister opened it, and read as follows: "Dear Father—When this reaches you—I—shall—be—in—eternity. At first it seemed awful to me; but I have thought about it so much now, that it has no terror. They say they will not bind me nor blind me, but that I may meet my death like a man. I thought, father, that it might have been on the battlefield for my country, and that when I fell, it would be fighting gloriously; but to be shot down like a dog for nearly betraying it—to die for neglect of duty—O, father, I wonder the very thought does not kill me! But I shall not disgrace you. I am going to write you all about it, and, when I am gone, you may tell my comrades. You know I promised Jimmie Carr's mother I would look after her boy; and when he fell sick I did all I could for him. He was not strong when ordered back into the ranks, and the day before that night I carried all his luggage, besides my own, on our march. Toward night we went in on double quick, and though the luggage began to feel very heavy, everybody else was tired too. And as for Jimmie, if I had not lent him an arm now and then, he would have dropped by the way. I was all tired out when we went into the camp, and then it was Jimmie's turn to be sentry, and I would take his place; but I was too tired, father. I could not have kept awake though a gun had been pointed at my head; but I did not know it until—well until it was too late."

"God be thanked!" said Mr. Owen. "I knew Bennie was not the boy to sleep carelessly at his post."

"They tell me, today, that I have a short reprieve—'time to write to you,' our good colonel says. Forgive him, father, he only does his duty; he would gladly save me if he could. And do not lay my death against Jimmie. The poor boy is broken-hearted and does nothing but beg and entreat them to let him die in my stead."

"I can't bear to think of mother and Blossom. Comfort them, father. Tell them I die as a brave boy should, and that, when the war is over they will not be ashamed of me, as they must be now. God help me; it is very hard to bear. Good-bye, father. God seems near and dear to me, as if He felt sorry for His poor, broken-hearted child, and would take me to be with Him—in a better, beter life."

"Tonight I shall see the cows coming home from pasture, and precious little Blossom standing on the stoop, waiting for me; but—I—shall—never—never—come. God bless you all. Forgive your poor Bennie."

Late that night a little figure glided down the footpath toward the railway station. The guard, as he reached down to lift her into the carriage, wondered at the tear-stained face that was upturned toward the dim lantern he held in his hand.

A few questions and ready answers told him all, and no father could have cared more tenderly for his only child than he for our little Blossom. She was on her way to Washington, to ask President Lincoln for her brother's life. She had brought Bennie's letter with her; no good, kind heart, like the President's, could refuse to be melted by it.

The next morning they reached New York, and the guard hurried her on to Washington. Every minute now might be the means of saving her brother's life. The President had just seated himself to his morning's task, when the door opened, and Blossom, with downcast eyes and folded hands, stood before him.

"Well, my child," he said, in his pleasant, cheerful tones, "what do you want?"

"Bennie's life, please sir," faltered Blossom. "Bennie! Who is Bennie?"

"My brother, sir. They are going to shoot him for sleeping at his post."

"Oh yes; I remember. It was a fatal sleep. You see, child, it was a time of special danger. Thousands of lives might have been lost by his negligence."

"So my father said," replied Blossom, gravely, "But poor Bennie was so tired, sir, and Jimmie so weak. He did the work of two, sir, and it was Jimmie's night, not his; but Jimmie was too tired, and Bennie never thought about himself, that he was tired, too."

"What is that you say, child? Come here, I do not understand." And the kind man, as ever, caught eagerly at what seemed to be a justification of an offence.

Blossom went to him. He put his hand tenderly on her shoulder, and turned up the pale, anxious face towards his. How tall he seemed. And he was President of the United States, too. A dim thought of this kind passed for a moment through little Blossom's mind; but she told her simple, straightforward story, and handed Bennie's letter to Mr. Lincoln to read.

He read it carefully; then taking up pen, write a few hasty lines and rang his bell. "Send this dispatch at once."

The President then turned to the girl, and said, "Go home, my child, and tell that father of yours who could approve his country's sentence, even when it took the life of a child like that, Abraham Lincoln thinks the life far too precious to be lost. Go back, or—wait until tomorrow; Bennie will need a change after he has so bravely faced death; he shall go with you."

"God bless you, sir," said Blossom.

Two days after this interview, the young soldier came to the White House with his little sister. He was called into the President's private room, and a strap was fastened on his shoulder. Mr. Lincoln then said: "The soldier that would carry a sick comrade's baggage, and die for the act so uncomplainingly, deserves well of his country."

Then Bennie and Blossom took their way to their green mountain home. A crowd gathered at the railway station to welcome them back; and, as Farmer Owen's hand grasped that of his boy, tears flowed down his cheeks, and he was heard to say, fervently, "The Lord be praised."—Sel. J. C. B.

THE MESSAGE OF THE TOMB

"He is not there; for He is risen, as He said, Come, see the place where the Lord lay."—Matt. 28:6. "The Message of an Empty Tomb." Its silence is eloquent; its emptiness is replete.

Doubts are dissolved, fears are assuaged, hopes are confirmed, and the bondage of our spirit is broken.

1. *This Message Bears Testimony to a Super-human Christ.*

Who is it that confuses the Roman soldiery, breaks the seal of a mighty Empire, and snaps the fetters of the tomb as Samson breaks his binding withes? Men marvelled at His unique manhood, His amazing miracles, and unparalleled teachings, and said: "We never saw it in this fashion before," but here He enters the dominions of death, leads captivity captive, and snatches the sceptre from an ancient foe no man could ever resist. Surely we say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

II. *This Message is in Fulfilment of an Age-long Prophecy, Type and Symbol.*

"It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Jonah and Jesus meet in the hallowed consummation of a long-predicted plan. "Now he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

His resurrection bears the attestation and seal of heaven. It is the indisputable testimony of His Saviourhood. The last lingering doubt is removed. The veil is rent, His offering accepted, His priesthood revealed. His earthly mission attested, by this, the supreme and ratifying miracle of all the ages.

III. *This Message is an Answer to the Longings of the Soul.*

The universal beliefs of man, the speculations of the philosopher, the dreams of the poet, and the hopes of all the years have been centered on a future, but is it all as the desert mirage? Does the butterfly cast aside his winding sheet and we remain enshrouded in the folds of death forever? "If a man die, shall he live again?"

Is there forgiveness for the sinner and redemption for the lost? Are these exalted and deathless aspirations to be realized? Will our best dreams come true? Is pure love to be requited? Shall we finish what we nobly have begun? Now, Judas gets his silver, Jesus gets His cross, right goes to the scaffold and wrong goes to the throne. Is there a day of adjudication? Will truth and justice finally prevail? Can broken bonds be again united, that we may clasp to our heart "those whom we have loved, long since, and lost awhile?" To all these deep, plaintive, universal and persistent questions the empty tomb comes with affirmative answer! "Because He lives we shall live also." "He has become the first fruits of them that slept." "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory?"—John Humphrey.

NATIVE FAITH IN IMMORTALITY

I have spoken to you of the natives' inherent belief in the being of God. Well, flaming like another fire is their belief in the immortality of the soul. Listen: These are some of the native African idioms translated into English:

"The dead do not really die."

"The body is the cottage of the soul."

The natives never spoke of Livingstone as dead, although they might have done so, for their very "to die" is far more pictorial than ours. But they would not say that Livingstone was dead. They said, "he sleepeth."

Now, listen! In this they are far ahead of London, New York or Toronto, the native in the interior of Africa never tells you that his dead brother has departed. He always says "he has arrived."—Dan Crawford.