

Conf Pam 12mo #687

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THE DYING OFFICER IN BARRACKS — CHRIST IN THE DARK VALLEY.

MY DEAR COUSIN :

To you who knew so well the character of our beloved and lamented brother, the kind affection with which he ever anticipated our wishes, and all those sweet and tender ties by which our souls were united to him, I need not endeavor to say how great is our loss; the attempt would be as vain as it would be superfluous. But though the words which fell from his dear lips during the time we were with him can never be erased from memory, still it would be a gratification could I record them in order, and I know no one who could receive such an account with more satisfaction than yourself.

Never, I think, was the power of religion more strikingly exemplified, nor the grace, mercy, and truth of our Almighty Redeemer more evidently shown than in my dearest brother. That blessed Holy Spirit which the God of all grace has promised to all who ask it had taught him to feel how vain and hopeless a thing it is for man (a poor, guilty, ignorant creature) to look for justification in the sight of a pure and holy God, in any way but through Him who gave himself a

ransom for us, that he might be made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. To him he was enabled by that Spirit to apply, and from him he found that solid hope and comfort which the self-righteous or the worldling looks for in vain. In the time of health he used to observe that which he derived most comfort from was reading the Scriptures on his knees, and praying over every verse. I have frequently known him rise before daylight that he might do so, and the state of his mind when on his death-bed sufficiently proved that those who *seek*, shall indeed *find*.

We had been in —— a week before we were permitted to see him, as the nature of his complaint was such that the medical gentleman who attended him, with all the kindness of a brother, and who, as well as his other attendants, did all in the power of man for his relief, thought the least agitation would be fatal. My mother only was at first admitted, and her grief at seeing him in such a state was much alleviated by finding him in such a happy frame of mind. The first words he uttered were, "My dearest mother, I never thought to see you again, but do not be unhappy on my account; whether I live or die, I am safe in the arms of Jesus Christ," with much of the same nature which I do not at this moment recollect. He then inquired for us with his usual kindness, was anxious to know whether we were happy at ——, if we had comfortable lodgings, etc., and appeared much gratified when she answered in the affirmative. In truth, it was evident, not only then, but all through his illness, that all his concern was about us.

On the following day Sarah also went. As soon as he saw her, he said, "Oh, Sally, *health* is the time to seek the Lord. Do you know since I have been ill I have been two days without being able to pray."

The day after, Mary and I accompanied them. It was thought better that he should not be apprised of our arrival, so that he did not expect to see us all, and never can I forget the lively joy that beamed in his dear face when we entered the room together; but what a sight for us! that brother, dear to us as our own souls, who only a few weeks before had left us in perfect health, apparently now lying with death in his very countenance.

How did I feel at that moment the vanity of every created good, and the happiness of placing our affections on things above. He begged us to come near him, and taking our hands and kissing us most affectionately, said, "What, ALL here! Oh, what a mercy! what a mercy! Oh, that we could praise him!" His agitation overcame him, and he nearly fainted, so that he appeared to be dying; when he opened his eyes, he said, "I trust I have had a foretaste of the joys of heaven." And, again, taking our hands, and raising his eyes to heaven, as if engaged in fervent prayer, he asked, "Are you all safe in Christ?" "My dearest Pemmy (the name he always called me), it is *hard* to be separated, but it is the Lord's will." My mother offered him a piece of orange, thinking it might revive him; he said, "No, mother, I trust I have done with this poor, perishing world." Then, looking at each of us, "Seek the Lord Jesus Christ." Then turning to my mother, "Give Mr. H. a hearty shake of the hand for me. I should like him to bury me." He afterward seemed disposed to sleep, and we left him for a few moments. As we were about to leave the room, he took hold of my hand, and again said, "It is indeed hard to part, but I can leave you all with Christ, it will not be *for ever*." He had long wished to take the sacrament, but, from his

extreme weakness, was unable to do so, and it was not till that morning that the doctor thought it would be proper. He wished particularly that the Rev. Mr. S —, from whose sermons he used to derive great comfort, should administer it, and his wishes were complied with. Mr. A., to whom he was particularly attached, and his servant, a faithful creature, who waited on him with the greatest care and attention throughout his illness, partook it with him. When Mr. S. said "the body of our Lord Jesus Christ" (in giving the bread to my brother), he raised his hands and eyes, and evidently prayed most earnestly that it might indeed be the case; in short, through the whole service, I never witnessed such fervent devotion. He afterward observed to my mother: "What a mercy it is that I am able to feel that He is my Saviour."

Soon after, we were obliged to leave the hospital, as he would not allow us to be out of his room while he knew we were there, and his medical friends thought it highly improper that we should remain any longer with him at that time. But early next morning we returned, and from that time, through their kindness, were enabled to remain with him, and have the unspeakable satisfaction of attending to him ourselves. Sometimes his mind wandered, as the effect of his disease, but he was sufficiently collected to know us all well, and to understand everything that was said. The delight he expressed at having us with him was a cordial to our hearts; and when his weakness prevented him speaking, his countenance sufficiently showed the pleasure it gave him. In all his wanderings, the love of Christ was his constant theme.

When Mr. A. came in, and asked him how he did, he replied: "I am very well, only it has pleased the

Lord to lay me rather low. I am low at the foot of the Cross, but there (looking up and smiling) you know I cannot be too low."

I often, as I sat by his bedside, and heard him talk in this way, used to think of those lines of Newton's:

"Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

I am sure this was my dear Anthony's theme as long as he could speak, and when he could not, if it was mentioned his countenance showed the delight it gave him.

On one occasion he offered up the following prayer, which I took down at the moment: "Grant, O Heavenly Father, thy blessing to this family, sanctify all thy dealings with us, and grant that we may be more sensible of thy mercies to us, and in the time of health may strive to do all the little good we can. Leave us not to ourselves, nor to the crafty snares and devices of the Devil, but grant that we may be for ever thine, through our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen."

At another time, clasping his dear hands together (how I wish you could have seen him), he said in the most solemn manner: "O Lord, thou hast promised to hear all those who call upon thee. *I* desire to *call* upon thee. O Lord, hear me, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, keep us as the apple of thine eye. Grant that we may hate sin, and strive to do good by visiting cottages, distributing tracts," etc.

On another occasion he prayed in such a way that I never knew him in perfect health repeat a prayer more fervently.

He frequently inquired if we were comfortable, and how he could make us more so, and often appeared fear-

ful of our leaving him ; but when told we were living with him and had everything comfortable, he seemed quite easy. When sensible he would watch every turn of our countenances, and, when he observed anything like grief, his agitation was extreme, so that we durst not approach him but with smiles. When his senses wandered, we did not think such caution necessary, but even then we found out he was alive to everything which gave us pain. It was seldom that he did not know Mr. A., from whose conversation he seemed to derive peculiar satisfaction. Once when he said to him, "Anthony, do you know me?" he seemed surprised at the question, and replied : "Know you, A —— ! I ought to know you, you have been so good to me ;" and again, when asked the same question, said : "To be sure I do ; A ——, you are my best friend." On the Sunday before his death it pleased his Heavenly Father to revive him a little. He had nearly fainted, and was just recovering, when Mr. A. entered the room, and said : "Anthony, do you find Christ precious now?" He answered, most earnestly, though hardly able to articulate : *Very, very, very !* "Don't you feel that He is with you now, that you are passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death ? and that he puts about you his everlasting arms of mercy?" "O yes, yes!" "Would you exchange situations with the king of the proudest empire?" "Oh, no, indeed, I would not." "You used to have doubts and fears, Anthony, where are they now? Have you none?" "How can I," he answered, "when the Lord is so gracious?" "Don't you feel that Christ has robbed death of its sting, the grave of its victory?" I never shall forget the manner in which he replied, "*Completely, completely.*" Then looking up, as if he had just observed us : "What, my mother and sisters,

ALL here ; what mercy, mercy, mercy, let all the people shout and praise him." Then taking our hands, and evidently afraid he must be mistaken, he said : " Four of you : my Mother, Sally, Polly ;" then raising himself a little, he clasped his dear trembling arms around my neck, and kissing me with all the fervor imaginable, he said : " And this is my dear Pemmy. Oh, my dear Pemmy, seek the Lord Jesus Christ. Then again turning round, he said : " My *dear* Mother, Sally, Mary," and, taking the hand of the latter, " I am satisfied. My dear Pemmy, trust the Lord Jesus Christ. I know you are sometimes doubting and fearing, and that makes me cry. Trust the Lord Jesus Christ."

He then expressed himself as most uneasy on account of what we should suffer for his loss. Mr. A. said : " It is, indeed, hard for your mother and sisters to part with you, but remember there is one who sticketh closer than a brother—can you not leave them with Christ?" " Oh, yes, yes," he answered with earnestness, " I can, I can." He then spoke of a brother officer (whom I had before heard him speak of as a sceptic). " Poor, unhappy man, he is building on a straw ; he used to think we were dreaming!" " Yes" (replied Mr. A.), but you find this is no delusion ; you find the Scriptures a blessed reality." He gave a most heavenly smile, as if to express how sweetly he had found them so, and said : " He cannot see it ; oh, how blind he is."

This was said in a way which showed how much the dreadful state of this young man grieved him. I observed, " He is blind now, dear Anthony, but you know nothing is too hard for the Lord, and he may one day have mercy on him, and enable him to see his real state." He raised his hands and eyes to heaven, and said : " I hope so. Oh, that this visitation might be

of use in the barracks. Oh, what a mercy (putting his hands together), what a mercy; why did He call me; why was it I?"

Mr. A. "This was the Lord's doing, Anthony." He replied, "Yes, it is marvellous in our eyes." Mr. A. "Yes, it is indeed marvellous. You were by nature like others, a vile, guilty sinner in the sight of God, but you feel that the blood of Christ has cleansed you." He replied, smiling, "indeed it has." He then desired his love to Mr. —, and said several other things, but became so exhausted that we were unable to understand him. Afterward, turning to his servant, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; exhort the soldiers to seek the Lord Jesus Christ, and warn them not to frequent the drinking houses."

On Monday he was sensible only for a short time, when, looking up, he said, "Pray for W.; be sure you don't forget to pray for W."

On Tuesday there was a sensible alteration. He got gradually lower, and at half-past seven in the evening was taken to the arms of that Saviour in whose merits alone he had been enabled to trust for salvation.

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