

Christianity can bestow. You are either above man or below him, to bestow no religion. If you are above man, you are an angel. If you are below man, you are a brute."

The man looked at me with a fixed and displeased gaze. He advanced to step into the room.

"This is strong language, parson, to put to a man," said he, with an air intended to intimidate.

"You acknowledge, then, that you are a man," I answered, meeting steadily his sparkling gray eyes. "God commands all men everywhere to repent. The strong language I made use of is the voice of the Word of God, which says that men without God and religion are as the brutes that perish."

The man had closed his hand into a fist, and seemed irresolute for the moment, whether to vent his displeasure in a blow or not.

"James," said his wife, warningly—"James, do not strike."

"No, no—don't fear. I'll not knock a man down for quoting the Scripture; but people ought to be a little delicate, Mag, how they throw such bricks at a man's hat. It ain't pleasant to be called a brute!"

"Pardon me, sir," I answered; "I did not call you a brute. This inference you have yourself drawn. I simply said that man needs the Christian religion—only brutes and angels may do without it."

The boatman made no reply. He turned away, and walked to and fro along the broken floor of the gallery. Evidently he was thinking upon what had been said to him—not angrily, but thoughtfully. I saw his wife's eyes follow him, and with a look of gratitude, she said—

"God bless you, sir, for speaking so plainly to him. He has been a good husband; but for—for—intemperance and bad company. He has had but this fault and the want of religion. O, sir, when I am gone, think of him—pray for him, call and see him, and talk with him!—He has a soul to save. Christ died for him. He is not too great a sinner to be saved by that atoning sacrifice made for sinners. Once, sir, he was gentle—but—the cup—the cup, sir—it has changed him! He is not—looks not at all the man he was when we were married."

"I promise not to forget his claims upon me, as a Christian minister," I answered.

"Thanks, sir, thanks! I—"

Here her emotion prevented her from expressing herself further in what she was about to say. I could perceive that death was flinging his shadow over her pale features, which my presence had kindled into momentary life. I knelt down by her pillow and offered up a prayer, committing her departing soul to the arms of her Redeemer. At the close of my prayer, she opened her eyes, and smiling with ineffable sweetness, while her large, glorious eyes beamed with a glory borrowed from heaven, she said in a voice touching, from its fulness of hope and love:

"I know that my Redeemer liveth! and though worms destroy this body, yet shall I see God.—James, husband, come near me. I am going away from you. Let me say farewell!"

The boatman who had paused in his walk up and down the gallery, to look in at the door while I was praying, now came in, and approached the bed of his expiring wife. He stood gazing down upon the floor, with his arms folded, and a look of affected indifference.

"James, come near. Look upon me. Let me take your hand."

He gave his hard heavy hand into her fragile clasp, but with ill-grace. Yet I could see that he was moved; that the dying face of his wife had touched

a chord in his wicked heart—that he was not a dog, but a man—a man, in whom not sin or intemperance had utterly destroyed the Divine lineaments; for only in hell is the stamp of God's image wholly effaced; this side of the grave there is hope for the veriest wretch that has ever trampled under foot the blood of Christ.

"While life's lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

He did not reply, but stood and gazed upon her. There was a holy splendour in her returning gaze, as she looked up into his blotted face, and said—

"James, farewell! I die. I am now going to that heaven, the hope of which has so long cheered me in this vale of tears. I am going to see the face of the dear Jesus whom I have loved, and who died to purchase for me a title in heaven. I am going where there is no more sin—no more tears—no more pain—and no more death! The happiness of that blessed world will be eternal, and the life there without end! And here, my husband, let me bear testimony, that in dying, I am sustained only by the hopes of the gospel, which you have so often been angry with me for reading. But, forgive me. I meant no reproach. Kiss me, husband!"

To my surprise he bent over her pillow, to do which he dropped himself on one knee, for there was no chair, and kissed her forehead.—She smiled, and laying her hand upon his forehead, prayed—

"Father, glorify Thy grace in making my husband a Christian man. Nothing is impossible with Thee."

The rough boatman's face betrayed no emotion. He seemed to guard every muscle of his features, lest they should betray any feeling.—By their very rigidity, however, the outer man betrayed the secret of the inner man. He still held her hand—still remained on one knee by her side. He seemed to be bound there by fascination, and unable to resist the spell. Each moment she was sinking. The glory in her eyes faded perceptibly.

"Sir," she said to me, raising them heavily to my face; "Sir, farewell. May we meet in heaven. I thank you for your teachings and your consolations in the pulpit, and for your presence here."

Here she pressed my hand with her cold fingers.

"Good-bye, dear James! I cannot return to you, but you can come to me. O, my husband, in that day when we all must appear about the judgment seat of Christ, may I behold you among those who shall stand on the right hand. Farewell—O, let it not be forever!"

As she ceased to speak, I could see his chest heave, and his lips were set like a vise, to keep down the earthquake throeing within his stirred soul. But all in vain his efforts. With a sudden outburst of his deep voice, in loud groans of anguish, he broke into a passion of sobs and tears. The fountains of his heart were upriven, and he leaned his forehead upon her pillow, and sobbed aloud like a child.

It would take an angel's reed to describe truly the expression of the face of her who was dying. It wore not a smile—but was a smile full of holy light and joy. If in heaven the redeemed wear such faces, they are indeed happy. She gently drew his forehead nearer and kissed him.

"James, these tears are my joy! They show me that you love me. O, that God may give you grace to come where I am going! Will you promise to try and come to heaven?"

"Margie, I promise—so help me God!" he answered, in a voice firm as a rock, yet tremulous with his tears.

"Then I die in peace! Saviour, into Thy hands