

Selections.

THE AWAKENING.

Wife. Thou hast slept well?

Husband. As never before. Not even in childhood did I experience such a deep, soft, refreshing slumber. My old father—thou rememberest him well—when he stepped into the room in the morning, where we were waiting for him, used to say in answer to our inquiry how he had slept, "Like the blessed." Like the blessed, I might say, have I slept; or rather like the blessed have I awakened. I myself am now quickened; as if all weariness, and all neglect of sleep were gone forever. Such vigor is in my limbs, such elasticity in my movements, that I believe I could fly, if I would.

W. And you are pleased with this place?

H. Indeed, I must say, we have been in many a beautiful place together; but this is beautiful and wonderful beyond description. What trees! actually heaven high! They bear blossoms and fruit together.—Their branches swaying to the morning wind cause the tree tops to give forth a melody, as if a host of feathered singers dwelt in them. Behind the trees the mountains tower up. Their majestic forms rigidly defined in the pure air, and here and there clouds, glowing with all the hues of sunrise and sunset, stretch along their sides, or float over their summits. Upon the highest peak, out of a milk-white, translucent, shimmering mist, there spring, as it were, the gates and towers, and palaces of a splendid city. From this peak nearest us, there seems to gush a mighty water, which I may call a sea rather than a stream, and which nevertheless leaps down the numerous terraces of the mountain, not with a fearful roaring, but with a melodious sound. Wide above us are sprinkled the drops which water the trees and flowers, and impart a delicious coolness to the air, making it ecstasy to breathe here. Look, too, at this bank, whereon we stand!—How luxuriant and how thickly strewn with wonderful flowers! We wander over it, and yet the spires of grass are not broken, nor are the flowers crushed by our footsteps. It is a solitary place; yet on all sides, vistas open to us, and the horizon tempts us even further and further on.

W. Hast thou seen all this often before, or dost thou see it to-day for the first time?

H. Notwithstanding all is so homelike to me here, and though everything greets me as something long beloved, yet when I think of it, I must say, No, I have never been here before.

W. And dost thou not wonder to see me again at thy side?

H. Indeed, and hast thou not somehow, always been near me?

W. In a certain sense, I have; but in another not so. It is long since thine eyes have seen me. I disappeared from them once.

H. Ah! now there sweeps over my memory as it were a dark cloud—days of anxiety, and nights spent in weeping—only the painful thoughts and emotions which so recently absorbed me. Now they elude my grasp, I cannot distinctly comprehend them, they appear to me something mysterious.

W. Think on the fourteenth of February.

H. How, now it is all clear to me. It was clear noon. Four days hadst thou been sick. We had feared much for thee, but still had hope. Suddenly a faintness came over thee; thou didst lean thy head upon my breast; didst sink back with a deep sigh; thou didst—yes, it is all over, thou art dead.

W. I am dead; yet see, I live.

H. If thou art dead; and if I see thee, then do I really dream?

W. Thou dreamest not, for thou art awake.

H. Or, art thou sent down from heaven to earth, that I should see thee again for a short time, and then anew through long years lament thy disappearance?

W. No, henceforth we shall never separate. I am indeed sent to thee, but not down upon the earth.—Look around thee here: where upon earth hast thou seen such trees, such waters? Look at thyself; thou didst go about yonder, bowed beneath the weight of years. Now thou art young again. Thou dost not walk, thou flourest; thine eyes not only see, but see immeasurably far. Look inward upon thyself; has it always been with thy heart as now?

H. Within me is a deep unfathomable, ever-swelling, and yet utterly still and peaceful sea. Yes, when I look about me here, or when I feel thy hand in mine—then I must say I am blessed, I am in heaven.

W. Thou art.

H. And then I must be actually dead?

W. Thou art. Hast thou not lain sick in that very chamber where I died, and whither thou didst long to

be brought. Hast not thy son, day and night, without leaving thy side, sincerely and tenderly nursed thee? Hast thou not by day and night found open the blue eyes of thy daughter, in which she vainly strove to hold back the forth-welling tears? Was there not then a deep mist, and utter darkness spread over the faces of thy children, and over every thing around thee?

H. I AM DEAD! Lord of life and death, upon my knees I thank thee that thou hast fulfilled these so great things in me—that thou hast led me to such high happiness—to such great honor; dead, and happy to be dead! Thou knowest, O Lord, how often that moment stood before me; how often I have prayed that thou thyself, since I was not able to do it, wouldst prepare me for that hour; that thou wouldst send me a soft, blessed death. Now, O Lord, thou hast heard this, as all my other prayers, thou hast in this, as in all things, eternally shown Thyself gracious and pitiful. What stood before me is now over. Truly, tho' dead, I have not yet learned exactly what death is;—but this much I know, death is sweet. As one bears a sleeping child out of a dark chamber into a bright spring garden, so hast thou borne me from earth to heaven. But now, loved one, hold me no longer back.

W. Whither wouldst thou go?

H. Canst thou ask? To whom else but to Him?—All is beautiful and lovely here; these trees, these flowers, this down-streaming water, this coolness which breathes over flowers and trees and deep into my heart; thyself, thy presence which after so long a separation, after so many tears, I enjoy again; but not even all this satisfies me. HIMSELF I must see. Let Him adorn his heaven as beautiful as he may, that cannot compensate for the loss of his presence. What was impossible He has made possible; so long, so unweariedly, so faithful has He worked in me, that I might be capable of bliss! Even before I was born, He chose me. Where is the little earth? Yonder it spins, how far from here. In what darkness it is veiled. I would not again return to it. He has condescended to go down thither, has trod its dust with his sacred feet, has endured hunger and thirst, has died.—Ah! He will quicken my vision that I may pierce deeper than heretofore the abyss of his death pains.—There He won me for his own; and, that I, his dearly purchased one, should not again be lost to him, He has from my earliest years given me his ceaseless love.—Much that He has done for me have I already learned upon earth, now I know more; and I shall know still more in future, when together we recount the whole. But now I have no time for this. Emotion within me is too strong; my heart will burst; I must away to him, see him, thank him—if I am capable of thanking him—if in this overpowering bliss unforgetting be not swallowed up.

W. Thou wilt see Him, but not until he comes to thee. Until then be patient. I am sent to thee, to tell thee that such is His will.

H. Now I know for a certainty, that I am in heaven, for my will yields itself implicitly to his without a struggle. I had thought it wholly insupportable not to see Him here. Yet I not only bear it, but bear it cheerfully. He will, tho, I will it also. Other than this seems now impossible to me. So readily could we not submit below. But if thou art sent to me from Him, then must He have spoken with thee. He has already spoken many words with thee?

W. Already many.

H. O thou truly blessed one? Canst thou tell how it was with thee, when He for the first time spake with thee?

W. As it has been in my heart each following time. I am using an earthly language with thee, in which these things cannot be described.

H. As thou sawest Him for the first time, didst thou instantly recognize Him?

W. Instantly.

H. How?—By that particular glory in which He outshines all angels?

W. He has no need to clothe Himself in splendor; we know Him without that.

H. Dost thou mean that I will immediately recognize Him, without any one saying to me, That is He?

W. Thine own heart will tell thee.

H. How will He really seem to me, severe or gentle? Below, when I cried to Him out of the darkness of my earth life, he often answered me with sternness.

W. There below He is constrained to do this with his best beloved. Here, it is no longer necessary;—here there is no need that he should do violence to his own heart. He can give free expression to his love. This love is infinite; on earth we could not fathom it, as little can we do so here.

H. Do there exist among you here differences in glory and blessedness?

W. In needless degrees; but then the highest are even as the most lowly; so they stoop down to the humblest. And this does he require of them; for He who ranks above the highest, is Himself the humblest of all. So, then, these diversities become swallowed up, and we are all one in Him.

H. Lo, I have often thought me, if I only reach heaven, only dwell not with the enemies of the Lord, I shall be content to be the very least of all there.—Thou, methought, wouldst scar in a much higher circle, and our children also when they left the earth.—But then if only once in a thousand years, I might be counted worthy to see the Lord, still methought it would be enough for me.

W. Be trustful. Whom He receives, He receives to glory. Knowest thou not by what wonderful way He has called us in His word?

H. Well do I know all that, and I see with what glory and honor He has crowned thee. Between thine image in thy last sickness, and that which now stands revealed to me; between that perishable flower, and the heavenly blossom—what a difference! No, this bloom upon thy cheek can never fade; this light in thine eyes can never be dimmed; thy form shall never bear the impress of age. Thus ever wilt thou wander about with me here, thou wilt show me the glory of these heavenly mansions, and also wilt lead me to those other blessed ones who are dear to me.

W. Thou wilt see them as soon as thou hast seen the Lord.

H. How delightful was it of old when we sought our aged father in his cot. Our carriage rolled up; all came running out before the house, and among the whole troop we sought first his dear honored countenance. How much more delightful to see him here!—He whom the smallest favor filled with thanks to the Giver, who could find beauty in a single spire of grass, who smiled at a brighter sun-beam, who went forth so joyfully under the starry heavens, and adored the Creator of these worlds—what must he experience here, where the wonders of Omnipotence lie all open and unveiled before him! He who in the silent joy of his heart thanked the Lord for his beneficence, and for the least refreshing which was granted him on his weary earth way—what thanks will he now pour forth to his Redeemer. "We shall meet again," he said to me in his last sickness, as he pressed my hand with all his remaining strength, "We shall meet again, and together thank God for his grace."

W. Thou wilt soon see him and thy mother, also.

H. My mother who loved me with such unspeakable tenderness, and whom I have never known! I was but three years old when I lost her. As she lay upon her death bed, and I was playing in the garden before the house. "What will become of my poor child?" she cried. Good mother! all that a man can be, thy son has become—an inhabitant of heaven. Through the grace of God has this been effected, and also by the help of thy prayers. Is it not so?

W. It is even so. I have often spoken of thee with thy father and mother.

H. Is X^o here?

W. Yes.

H. I had not expected it. That, however, was wrong; why am I here? But the dear souls whom I left behind me on earth, I would have some tidings of them; or is the perception of them lost to us until the moment of re-union?

W. This question thou mayest speedily answer for thyself. Look thither.

H. I do so; but see nothing.

W. Look longer in this direction—and you will surely see. Dost thou see now?

H. Perfectly. The place is familiar to me. It is the church-yard, where I placed thy mortal part, which was given back to the earth. The place became dear to me; I often sought it, and kneeling upon the grave, raised my eyes hitherward to heaven, where we both are now. Among beautiful trees and flowers, I thought, may she be wandering there, among trees and flowers shall her body rest here. So a flower garden, and a wilderness of blossoms sprung up, and every beautiful thing which the anniversary brought with it adorned thy grave.

W. I knew it well. Look thitherward now. What seest thou?

H. Near thy grave another is open. The church-yard gate stands open, a corpse is borne forward; our children follow. Do ye weep loved hearts, weep so bitterly? Could ye see us as we see you, ye would not weep, or at the most only for longing. The body—my body—is lowered: now they cast a handful of