

Peter sleeps. Twice has the watch been changed. Now it is the chill before the dawning of that April day—between the night and the morning, when profoundest slumber seizes those whose rest has been broken. He lies so chained to the soldiers that he cannot turn without waking them—and outside the cell can be heard the heavy breathing of two other soldiers. As he slept, did Peter dream of the morrow when he would hear the voice of the tyrant sealing his doom? Suddenly there is a touch on his side and a word in his ear;

“His dream is changed—the tyrant’s voice
Calls to the last of glorious deeds;
But as he rises to rejoice,
Not Herod, but an angel leads.”

The fetters drop from his wrists, ere ever he is aware he is free. His actions are those of a man only half awake. Mechanically he does what he is told. All the while the composure of the angel is divine. There is no hurry or bustle or excitement, but the quiet perception of all that is needed. Peter’s tunic is loose, he is told to bind it. His sandals are off, he is told to put them on. His heavy cloak, needful in the sharp spring air, is lying in a corner of the cell, he is told to wrap it round him. All is ready. The bright presence quietly preceding, led away through the door of the cell, past the slumbering guards, through the castle corridors, through the ponderous iron outer gate, out into the open street; then, having guided Peter through one street, silently and suddenly vanished.

Now Peter is convinced it is no dream. A moment’s thought made his course plain. He must inform his friends and escape to a place of safety. No time is to be lost for soon the

sun will rise. Hurrying along the silent and deserted streets he made for the house of Mary—and knocked at the gate. How strange and startling must that untimely knock have sounded in the ears of the praying brethren in that quiet house. Was it another summons from Herod? Rhoda runs to the gate, and almost as quickly runs back with the joyful cry “It’s Peter.” “You are mad” they answered, but she persisted; and then they said “It is his angel.” But that knocking—getting louder and louder every moment as if he would break open the door, was very like impetuous Peter, and very unlike the way an angel would seek admittance; so they opened the door, and when they saw him, gave vent to their astonishment and gladness by such a noisy demonstration that the voice of Peter could not be heard, and he had to wave his hand to make them hold their peace. Silence being restored, he told his story of the Lord’s deliverance, he sent a message to James the chief pastor of the church, he bade them good-bye and went to a place of safety. He went away, and lo the morning of the Lord’s day is already dawning; the glorious anniversary of his resurrection has come—what a morn of joy after such a night of weeping.

ADDED POINTS.

1. Onward! to the ends of the earth! is the command of Christ, and the cry of every faithful disciple.
2. In prosecuting her work the church can always reckon on the help of the Lord Jesus.
3. God buries the workmen but carries on the work.
4. Prayer is power.

BLACKBOARD REVIEW.

“The gates of brass before Him burst the iron fetters yield.”

HATRED
OF
HEROD.

POWER
OF
PRAYER.

DIVINE
DELIVERANCE.

“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee.”

—Ps. 50: 15.