

The son, stricken with grief, knelt down and kissed his father's hand, as with tears the dying man commended his only boy to Him who could save him from the temptations incident to his profession, and make him truly happy and holy.

Some weeks after the funeral, Alfred Thornton, with a saddened spirit, betook himself to his military duties. His special danger resulted from a sceptical turn of mind, and the books and society in which he took the greatest delight were of an infidel character. There was a kind of club formed, in which the wildest opinions were current; and it was with grief that many pious officers saw the mischief these young men were doing in the regiment. Alfred Thornton was one of the boldest "freethinkers" among them, and by common consent he was regarded as their leader.

His regiment had been ordered abroad for three years, at the end of which time it was arranged that he should return to England for his marriage with Frances Arnold, a young lady of considerable personal attractions, but as devoid of piety as himself. During his absence—the last year of it—a great change had taken place in her. She, who had been the delight and pride of fashionable parties, under the influence of a faithful minister's sermon, who happened one Sunday to preach in the church she attended, became convinced of her need of salvation. She felt that there was something higher and better in life than the mere

butterfly splendours of fashion and the world. These convictions deepened in intensity as she lay on a sick-bed, from which, alas, she was destined never to rise. She sought and obtained mercy through the merits of Christ, and while Alfred was speeding back to England to claim his affianced bride, she was calmly desiring to depart to be with Christ.

The last solemn event which the young officer had witnessed upon leaving England was the death of his father; and now the first thing that met him on his return was the fading away of one whom in a few weeks he had expected would have been his wife.

After a few days, Frances said to him quietly, "Do not be angry, Alfred, but I could not have married you, even if I had remained as blithe and

well as when we first plighted our troth to each other."

"Why not?" he asked, in the greatest surprise.

"My mind has undergone a great change—the great change, thank God!" she added emphatically.

"What do you mean, Frances?"

"I have a faith in Christ which you would think it weakness to exercise; I have a hope of a heaven in which you cannot believe. Our tastes, aims, and aspirations would be utterly different; we should never be happy; besides it would be *wrong* of me."

Alfred Thornton's astonishment at these words can be more readily imagined than described; but, out of pity to the dying girl, he kept his sceptical opinions

secret and made no reply.

Not many days had he to watch the dying couch. Calmly as dies a wave upon the shore, the soul of Frances Arnold passed away. On her last day upon earth she faintly whispered, "Dear Alfred, there is very sad news in store; I have begged them to keep it secret from you till I am gone. Will you grant me a last request?"

"Yes!" Poor fellow! her request should at once be granted.

"In this book," she said, taking her own Bible from beneath her pillow, "I have found the greatest comfort. Accept it, keep it for my sake; read it for your own!" In the evening of the day on which these words were uttered, her spirit was amongst the redeemed in glory, who had washed their robes and made

them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The sad news to which the dying girl had referred proved disastrous enough, although it did not affect him so deeply as her death. Through the failure of a bank in which by far the greatest amount of his property had been invested, he was, comparatively speaking, a poor man. He had come home to enjoy a handsome fortune, hoping with it to enter upon a course of perfect happiness. Now both were lost. He got what he could out of the wreck, and then immediately took his departure for India. He read the book which had been placed in his hands under such solemn circumstances with new eyes and with a softened heart; and it proved a journey from death unto life. He joined his regiment an altered man, and boldly

