

"O'Connel, I cannot pray, the words I would utter seem to choke me—God will not hear the prayer of a traitor."

"But He will hear the prayer of a penitent sinner," said O'Connel firmly; "His own blessed Son," he added, devoutly crossing himself, "has promised that he will."

The figure of the young man, as he uttered this, was most interesting, as he leaned upon his musket and looked down on the prostrate man, his handsome features softened into an expression of the deepest pity for his fallen comrade. Harper shook his head.

"O'Connel, you are a kind fellow," he replied, "and had I taken the advice you have more than once given me, I should not have been the wretch I am—but I was deluded by false promises, and bribes held out to me, that I should be a rich man if I went over to the States—and what was my reward? I was sneered at, scorned, and treated with every contempt, till I could bear it no longer, when I determined to return, and give myself up at head quarters—but without money and without friends, what could I do? For nights I slept in the woods, exposed to wet and cold, glad even if I found a raw turnip to relieve the pangs of hunger; and what was worse, the burning thirst—I felt my strength daily sinking, till it failed me altogether, and but for the humanity of a stranger, who I fortunately met yesterday, I never should have reached this place alive.

This sad account was given with much difficulty, and at intervals, being constantly interrupted by a short hard cough, which seemed to exhaust what little strength remained.

At this moment footsteps were heard, and the relief came up. The surprise of the non-commissioned officer was great, on beholding Harper. He spoke to him harshly, and ordered him to rise and follow him to the guard room.

"The poor fellow is ill," said O'Connel, as he assisted the unfortunate man, and supported him with the utmost tenderness.

On reaching the guard room, he fainted; much humanity was shown him, and by order of the officer he was conveyed to the hospital. There he received every necessary attention, and was placed in bed. When the surgeon in attendance, after due examination of his case, pronounced him to be in a rapid decline. The morning which succeeded this eventful night, rose bright and beautiful—all Nature seemed rejoicing in the rays of the glorious sun; but there was one darkened chamber, and one mourning heart, and that was Harper's. He had passed a restless night, repeatedly enquiring for Serjeant Macintosh, who, the moment his duty allowed him, hastened to the sufferer, and sitting down by his bed side, spoke to him in accents of pity, of kindness, and of hope. He reminded him

of all that he had particularly warned him against, and of the misery which one sinful action had led to, in thus bringing him, in the flower of his youth, to the brink of the grave.

"I have no doubt, my lad," continued the Serjeant, "that when you found yourself amongst those who were enemies to all you had been taught to respect, and honour, you ceased to be happy."

"Happy," repeated Harper; "I was miserable when I thought of my comrades, of the many scenes we had encountered together, of their return to old England, while I should be left a disgraced outlaw in a foreign land, without one to care whether I lived or died. When I thought of my old mother."

Here he paused, quite overcome, as he covered his face with his emaciated hands, through which tears were seen trickling down copiously.

At this moment, the bands of the several regiments struck up—while the troops, marching out in review order, passed through the town, the quick tramp of horse and the firm tread of soldiers were heard immediately under the windows. Harper's pale face became lighted up by a momentary enthusiasm, but it faded away, as in a mournful tone he said:

"I shall never go out with them again."

"All that is indeed over, my lad," replied the Serjeant; "but thanks to our gracious Lord, he has preserved you for repentance, and to prepare to meet Him in a better world.

Harper became much agitated. "What hope can a sinner like me have," he faintly said.

"Has not our blessed Saviour died to save sinners," returned the Serjeant; "and by the shedding of His blood, has He not paid the debt to justice. And will not all those who sincerely repent, and trust in him alone for salvation, be forgiven?"

"But I have done nothing to deserve God's mercy."

"No, my lad, and if you lived a thousand years you never could. He accepts your sorrow for the past, if you have faith to believe in Christ. And this living faith would lead you, (were you to recover,) to forsake the paths of sin, and to abhor all the ways of wickedness. Those who continue in sin may believe Him in their words, but they deny Him in their works; they cannot hope to be saved. The promise is to those alone who lament and forsake their sins."

A long pause followed, during which Harper appeared reflecting. Gradually his countenance became more calm. The Serjeant at that time spoke no more, but was rejoiced to see him yield at length to an overpowering weariness, and sink into a gentle slumber.

From this period, Serjeant Macintosh spent as much of his time as he could spare with the poor invalid. He read portions of the Bible to him, particularly from the Gospel and Epistle of St. John.