

* * The Story Page. * *

A Changed Man.

"It's nothing, Mrs. Redmond—nothing to be alarmed about," said the doctor.

"But isn't it his heart?" anxiously asked the little woman, to whose white face her own heart seemed to have forgotten to send any color.

"Oh, no. Oh, rather, the heart involved a little, but only by way of sympathy. The real trouble is in his stomach, where else," and he could not bring himself to say "stomach." "What did he eat for dinner?"

"Some roast pork and veal; and I don't think it agreed with him."

"Yes. It's nothing at all alarming."

"Oh, I'm so glad!"

Grasping James Redmond, lying prone on the spotless counterpane, heard every word the doctor said. The doctor intended he should. The groaning decreased.

"James, dear," said his wife smoothing his pillow, "the doctor says you will soon be better. It isn't your heart at all."

"It feels like it," was the feeble response. But the groaning quite stopped. "It feels as if it was the valve of my heart. Sometimes it just flutters, and then it seems to stop altogether."

"The heart has several valves," said the doctor drily, and every one of yours is sound. Here, swallow this. I think it will help you. You may have a few more twinges—nothing serious. If you could get an hour's sleep, you would feel better."

Ten minutes afterward James Redmond was sound asleep, just as the doctor prognosticated, and then happened something that the doctor had not prognosticated at all. A second attack of that dreadful palpitation came on. He could not catch his breath. He saw his gentle little wife sitting there so calmly by the window with her sewing; but he could not cry out, and cold drops gathered on his brow. His heart gave one bound, then all was still. Was this death?

But not for a moment did he lose consciousness—that was the singular part of it. His mental powers seemed keener than ever, even when his heart stopped beating and his useless struggle for breath was at an end.

He felt darkness slowly dropping down over him. The form of his wife grew dim, and then was swallowed up altogether in it. But as it disappeared, other forms grew slowly up. One, two, three, four, five—there they stood, one at each corner of the bed and one bending over him. They shone in their own light, mistily at first, then with sharp clearness.

"Angels, of course," thought James, and through his mind there floated a line or two of an old song:

"There are angels hovering round,
To carry my spirit home!"

Somehow, he did not greet them with quite the gush of enthusiasm and joy that he had thought would fill his soul when the "angels gathered round." He gazed at them curiously, and noticed almost with terror that the one at the side had his hand on his heart. Was his heart diseased—for he knew now that it was heart disease that had killed him, inquired the doctor—was it going to follow him into heaven?

Suddenly this angel withdrew his hand, saying to the others:

"It's over now, take him to the examining room."

The four angels at the corner of the bed laid hold of the prostrate man, swept him instantly off the bed and away. The one at the side flew before the party. James Redmond could see nothing but the luminous figures around him, but he felt himself going through limitless distances, away and up. His head uttered no word, and their gleaming white wings, as swift as they swept along through utter, awful stillness.

They came at last to a large room, whose walls, furniture everything, gleamed with the same soft, penetrating light. They laid him down on a long narrow table, and all gathered about it. Five of them—no six, for James Redmond himself stood there. How it was he did not know, but there he lay on the table, and yet there he stood by the side of the table, waiting with eager interest to see what was next. What could be the matter with James Redmond on the table, that they all gazed so intently toward his heart?

Suddenly, with a dart movement, the fifth angel took the heart quite out of the body, and laid it before him on the table. It did not hurt—it was hardly a surprise to the James Redmond looking on. The angel held a pearly rod in his hand, and with it now gently lifted one of the little white valves.

"What does it all mean?" he whispered to his neighbor, an angel whose benevolent countenance seemed to invite the question.

"We are commissioned by the King to try the hearts of those who apply for admission into the city," was the soft response. "Hush!"

"This praying valve works pretty well," said the examining angel, moving it up and down. "Ah, here's a little hitch. What's the matter?"

"Can't be anything serious, the matter," John Redmond spoke right out. "I always have family prayers, and as for the prayer-meetings, I used to go whenever I—ouch!"

For the examiner pushed a little harder, and James Redmond felt a sharp twitch of pain in the place where his heart used to be.

"It's connected with something wrong," said the angel. "Ah, there it goes. It has finally yielded. There, that works all right. I think that will pass."

The examiner now selected some instruments of the clearest crystal, and turning the heart a little to one side, began a careful search for something.

"We always examine the loving valve next," whispered the neighboring angel, and all relapsed into an anxious silence.

"Oh, I hope there won't be any trouble here," exclaimed one involuntarily, "for he that loveth not, knoweth not God."

"Atrophied! Dried up for lack of use, I fear," said the examiner.

James Redmond's blood ran cold in his veins—at least, he felt as if it did. He leaned forward, and his eyes almost started from their sockets in his frenzied gaze.

"Surely he loved a little—his wife, his child!" said another. "And all love is of God."

The examiner took a large microscope from the case, and another five minutes' search discovered the missing valve.

"Ah, here it is," said he.

And they drew a great breath of relief.

"It works easily—what there is of it," said he, moving it most delicately with a crystal rod.

Every time it worked back and forth James experienced a most delightful thrill in the cardiac region. It was the same sensation that he had felt years ago on earth when he was first converted. It all came back to him now—how his affections had gone out to everybody, even the far away heathen; and how he had sung:

"Oh, that the world might taste and see
The wonders of his grace!
The arms of love that compass me
Would all mankind embrace."

"I wish it were larger," said he, half smiling, half mournful, to his neighbor.

"Ah! that's what makes heaven," was the soft answer. "That and seeing Jesus."

The examiner now carefully selected some rods and pincers of burnished gold.

"For the giving valve," whispered the neighbor into James's ear.

James fairly felt the pallor creeping up to his lips, and the sickness of deadly apprehension came over him.

The angel found the valve without any trouble. Small it was and oh, so tightly closed. It required all the force he could exert with those strong little pincers to force it open for the first time, and as he did so a cry of absolute agony burst from the lips of the pale mortal at his side. The pain was something terrible. The angels did not seem to hear him. They looked at each other with significant nods.

"The root of all trouble," exclaimed one.

"Yes, for you know the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil," replied another.

"And that was the reason of the hitch in the praying valve."

"And the smallness of the loving valve."

"What shall we do with him? He can't go in to see the King."

"No, never!"

And the very silence seemed to echo it—"Never, never, never!"

"Oh, hear me, hear me!" cried James Redmond, in agony. "Do let me speak for myself. I did give some."

The angels all turned and looked at him. Oh, such a sad look, worse than sternness!

"What did you give?" said the examiner, slowly.

"I gave two guineas every year to the chapel fund."

"And what else?"

"I went to the tea-meetings and took my wife. They always cost me something."

"And what to foreign missions?"

James Redmond was silent. He had given nothing.

"And what to home missions?"

Silence, still.

"And all these years your income has been so large."

"Why, James, James! What's the matter? Are you worse?"

It was his wife calling him. The angels were gone, and there he lay on his own bed at home—a changed man from that hour.

His boy Charles, thinks father must believe in Christianity, he works so hard and gives so much to spread it. Charles has begun to go to church again. James Redmond supports the church work at home and the missions abroad liberally, and always makes a special offering on the anniversary of the day which he speaks of as the day he went to judgment.—Christian Globe.

An Aftermath of Joy.

BY CORA S. DAY

"What is it, William?"

The white-haired old man raised his head and tried to smile bravely into the questioning eyes of his wife, in whose face he saw reflected the trouble from his own.

"A trifle—a foolish little thing over which I am weak enough to be disturbed. And yet"—his voice faltered a little—"it is not quite pleasant to feel that I have outlived my usefulness."

"Why should you feel so? Tell me about it." And his wife crossed the little study and stood close beside his chair. Many times she had helped him through trial and trouble and discouragement with her brave cheerfulness and steady faith.

"I have served the Lord in this place for forty-five years," he began slowly, "and he has blessed me. But it has come to me over and over, of late, that I should make way for a younger man in my pulpit. Perhaps the people feel this, too. I do not know; they are very kind to me always. My lot among them has, indeed, been a pleasant one. But it is only natural that they should desire a younger pastor," and he paused thoughtfully.

"Something has been said"—began his wife.

"Not to me. They are too considerate for that. It was only a chance remark on the street the other day, by a young girl to a companion; something about the desirability of having a progressive young minister at the head of the church. She did not know I overheard. And it was, after all, but the voicing of my own feeling."

There was a little flush of indignation in the usually placid face before him.

"A foolish school-girl! What does she know of the needs of the church. And after your lifetime of work for this church and this place."

"Never mind that," he answered gently. "Must we not evade the question, Margaret. It is simply this—have I ceased to satisfy the wants of my people, and do they wish for a younger, more active pastor? I must think over it and pray over it, and seek to find the truth. I know the Lord will help me to do his will for the good of his people."

There was nothing further to be said in answer to that reasoning, and his wife left him alone with his problem. As the days passed she could see that he was deeply troubled over the matter, yet patient and willing to do whatever was best. It was not an unusual case after all—a minister grown old in his charge, a young progressive element in the church, and a desire, entirely natural, for a minister more in sympathy with new ideas and methods.

At last the decision was reached. Kneeling beside the old chair in the study where he had penned so many messages of hope and love and invitation to those people, the old minister laid his life-work down at the feet of his Master, and said tenderly, "If it is thy will, oh Lord, let it be done."

The next Sabbath he read to his congregation the resignation on which he had spent so many days of thought and almost heart-broken sorrow.

It came as a complete surprise to all, but was received by different ones in widely different ways. To the older members, after the first shock of astonishment, came a feeling of sorrow almost as deep as that of the pastor at the step which he considered it his duty to take. Most of the younger members shared this feeling; but a few thoughtless ones felt that it was the opportunity they desired to secure a new, brisk, active young worker.

There was an unwonted hum of undertoned discussion at the close of the service, and it was not long before the pastor was surrounded by the officers of the church with requests for the reasons of this unexpected step. He gave them simply and briefly, and there was a little silence when the explanation was ended. Then they vied with each other in assuring him that his feeling was utterly unfounded.

"Think it over," he answered them all, shaking his head, but smiling a little more cheerfully at their earnest, sincere words. "I have thought it over for a long time. It is but just that you should have time to consider it carefully." And so the matter was left.

One of the officers of the church had said rather less than the others, but it was evident that he had been thinking rapidly.

"I should like to have a word with you after the congregation goes," he managed to whisper here and there to officers, leading members and young people active in the church work. So they lingered until the pastor was gone; and then the one who had asked them to stay stood up and said:

"I hope I may never again feel so conscience-stricken as I do at this minute. And not for anything I have done, but for something which I—which all of us, it seems; have left undone. Here is our pastor—the man who has spent his life in this quiet little place for love of us, when we knew well that he had opportunities offered him over and over again, in his younger years, to go forth to other work—work better fitted to his splendid abilities, and work that would have brought him larger financial compensation; our dear