

## The Lights of Home

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Father Tom was almost in despair. Unpiloted a barque was slipping out into the dark. A soul was about to face its Maker, unshriven. And to his young heart, still burning with the sacramental grace of ordination, it seemed astoundingly terrible. The awful horror of it haunted him. He shivered at the thought, as when we touch a dead face in the dark. During the few short years since he had assumed the priestly office he had seen many pass through the portals of death, and although it was still awe-inspiring, familiarity had robbed it of many of its terrors. But this death was different from the rest. Never before had anyone refused his ministrations. On the contrary, they had sought them with eagerness. Eyes that had grown weary of the world shone brighter for the sight of him. Hands, empty of all else, sought the holy anointing. Aching heads bent low for the absolution. They had gone out across the bar unfearing, because there was a Hand at the helm that could keep the course. And he felt that even as he prayed for them they were in safe keeping. Such deaths were full of hope and consolation, whereas this death was horrible.

What more could he do for this soul that had defied him? How he prayed for this poor sinner, hoping against hope that grace would, even at the last moment, touch his heart. He had wearied heaven with his importunities, and yet there was no sign. The good Sisters had united their prayers with his. The little children had murmured their Aves for his "special intention." But the sick man only turned his face to the wall, and mocked them for their pains.

"You are dying," he had said to him. "You are going before God like this?"

"I am prepared to take the risk," was the invariable answer.

To-night, as he prayed here in the little hospital oratory it seemed as though he could do no more. But how could