

seemed to him he could not wait. He called his wife, and told her, with a manner which he tried hard to make calm, that he was going out of town the next morning on a little business. She wondered that he was so uncommunicative—it was not like him—but she would not trouble him with any questions. She should understand it all some time, she knew, still she thought there was something strange in his way of speaking.

The minister strove hard for the mastery of his own spirit, as the cars whirled him along the next morning towards the tribunal at which he was to receive his sentence. He tried to think of something else, but found the effort vain; so he said, over and over, as simply as a child, one form of words:

“Father, whichever way it turns, O give me strength to bear it.”

Holding fast to his prayer, as to an anchor, he got out of the cars and went into the streets. What a curious mist seemed to surround all things! The houses looked like a spectral through it; the very people he met seemed like ghosts. He had not realized his defective vision so much at home, where it had come on him gradually; and all objects were so familiar. Still, with an effort, he could see the signs on the street corners, and find his way.

He reached, at last, the residence of the distinguished oculist, for whose verdict he had come. He found the parlor half filled with people, waiting like himself. He was asked his name, and sent in a card on which was written, “Rev. William Spencer, Montclair.” Then he waited his turn. He dared not think how long the time was, or what suspense he was in. He just kept his simple child’s prayer in his heart, and steadied himself with it.

The time came for him at last, and he followed the boy, who summoned him into a little room shaded with green, with green furniture, and on the table a vase of flowers. The stillness and the cool, scented air refreshed him. He saw dimly, as he saw everything that morning,—a tall, slight man, with kind face, and quiet manners, who addressed him by name, invited him to sit down, and then inquired into his symptoms with such tact and sympathy that he felt as if he were talking with a friend. At last, the doctor asked him to take a seat by the window, and have his eyes examined. His heart beat chokingly, and he whispered, under his breath:—

“Thy will, O God, be done; only give me strength.”

Dr. Gordon was silent for a moment or two—it seemed ages to Mr. Spencer. Then he said, with the tenderest and saddest voice, as if he felt to the utmost all the pain he was inflicting:—

“I cannot give you any hope. The malady is incurable. You will not lose your sight entirely just yet, but it must come soon.”

The minister tried to ask how long it would be before he should be blind, but his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and he could only gasp.

Dr. Gordon understood, and answered very kindly, that it might be a month, possibly, two.

He stood up then to go. He knew all hope was over. He paid his fee, and went out of the room and out of the house. It seemed to him things had grown darker since he went in. He hardly knew how he found his way to the cars. It was two hours past his dinner time, and he was faint for lack of food, but he did not know it. He got to the station somehow, and waited for the train to start for Montclair.