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Foregleams of Heaven

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TO that valiant soldier of Christ, Dwight L. Moody, was accorded not only the privilege of leading thousands of souls heavenward, but also a brief glimpse of the heavenly world itself! A few hours before his death he awoke from sleep and said to his son, "I have had a vision. God has let me look into another world." When his son suggested that he had been dreaming, he calmly replied, "I know what I am talking about; God has let me look into another world." He then mentioned the names of two dear friends whom he had seen there; his last audible words were: "Heaven's opening!" All those who knew our beloved brother Moody knew that he was never given to mystical fantasies of any sort; he was especially distinguished for his sturdy, practical common sense. He uttered, that day, only the words of truth and soberness.

Hardly any scene in the religious biography of America is more familiar to Christian readers than the account of the last hours of the celebrated Dr. Edward Payson, of Portland. "The Celestial City is full in view," was one of his many ecstatic exclamations. "Its glories beam upon me, its music strikes upon my ear, and its spirit breathes into my heart." Very similar to these utterances were the dying words of the devoted missionary Adair in West Africa. He was by temperament a most unimaginative man, and his brain was not disturbed by fever. After a period of silent prayer, he exclaimed, "I see glorious sights! I see heaven! Let me go! I want no more of earth; let me go!" In this same strain he continued to pour forth his rapturous expressions until his breath departed. There is not the slightest evidence that either of these cases were devout illusions, or the wanderings of a fevered brain.

It may be said that such beatific visions of the celestial world are very rare. That is very true. Among the myriads of Christ's earthly followers very few have ever caught a veritable view, or even a glimpse of the abode of glorified spirits. And yet there is a profoundly true and indubitable sense in which every faithful, devoted, and spiritually minded Christian may have *foregleams of heaven*. While his Bible tells him more about heaven to sharpen his appetite and kindle his expectation than it does to satisfy his curiosity, yet it presents heaven as the most solid of realities. He accepts that divine revelation and builds his eternal allusion it. The eye of his faith sees what to the eye of sense is invisible. Like the great apostle he looks straight at the things which are not visible to the outward senses, and he knows that these "unseen things are eternal."

For example, he takes the Word of God as his spiritual spyglass, and through it he gets wonderful visions of his future home. He discovers that the word "heaven" is not employed to describe a condition of God's people, but a positive locality; it is a city which hath foundations, and whose builder is Jehovah. There are "many mansions" into which the redeemed shall enter from all the regions of the globe, and from every denomination of true believers. All shall come in through Christ Jesus, yet by many gateways. Having no gross bodies to be fed, we shall hunger and thirst no more; having no bodies to suffer, no one shall say, "I am sick;" neither shall there be any more pain. Identity will be preserved and we shall recognize each other there, even when the "natural body" shall have become a "spiritual body." Heaven will be a blessed home; its occupants one vast loving household. The aspirations of every soul will be for increasing knowledge and likeness to our Lord—forever "reaching forth unto the things that are before." The distinct declaration, that His "servants shall serve Him" there, proves that there will be active employment; but all our powers and faculties shall work in such perfect harmony that this ceaseless and holy activity is described as a perfect "rest!"

That there are sublime mysteries overhanging that celestial world none will deny; we see now as through a glass dimly; it doeth not yet appear fully what we shall be. But nevertheless there are glorious *foregleams* breaking through the clouds of mystery that are enough to thrill every Christian who opens the eye of faith to gaze at them. Even a glimpse of them is an ecstasy. John Bunyan tells us that his Pilgrim had certain golden hours in which his annoyances were vanquished and his troubles were forgotten.

One of these times of joyous uplift was "when his thoughts waxed warm about the place whither he was going." In like manner the great old Richard Baxter exclaimed: "When, oh my soul, hast thou been warmest? Is it not when thou hast got above—closest to Jesus Christ, and viewed the mansions of glory, and filled thyself with sweet foretastes, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world?"

Baxter was no visionary mystic. When he came to Kidderminster, it was overrun with profanity, drunkenness, and Sabbath desecration. His thorough, untiring, practical labors revolutionized the town, until it became one of the godliest places in England. Our own beloved Moody was no dreamer. He seldom delivered any series of sermons in which he did not have at least one on "Heaven." The foregleam of that celestial glory so fired his heart that he ceased not day or night to warn his fellow men from hell, and to win them to that city of God, which was as real to him as his own native Northfield. I have no faith in the pretended "heavenly-mindedness" of any man or woman who never carries a loaf to a starving family, and never lifts a finger to relieve an overloaded sufferer, or to lead a perishing soul to Jesus. Whoever takes a road towards heaven that is only wide enough for one, is not likely, when he gets there, of finding anyone whom he helped to bring there.

It is not to be wondered at that some professed Christians do not catch more distinct foregleams of the Celestial City. Their spiritual vision is obscured. As a small object when held close to the eye would hide the view of Niagara or Mount Blanc, so a Christian may hold a dollar so close to the eye of his soul as to shut out the view of heaven. The seen things hide the "unseen and eternal things." Fishes down in the Mammoth Cave become eyeless at last; and so will any of us lose even the faculty of spiritual sight, if we lock ourselves down in a cavern of selfishness or unbelief. To any of my readers who complains that he can never get any cheering foregleam of the "Father's House," I would say—probably you are in the wrong place to see it. You are down in the marshy grounds and the quagmires where the fogs are too thick to see a rod before you. When a Christian leaves the King's highway of holiness, and cares more for his ledger than for his Bible, he has strayed into the enemy's country. Heaven is not visible to backsliders. Never until your feet are treading again the straight path of obedience to your Saviour, and your eyes have been washed with the tears of penitence, will you catch any gladdening glimpse of that rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Happy is that servant of Jesus who often mounts to the top of the "Hill Clear," and through the spy-glass of faith catches bright foregleams of heaven! Happy is he who amid the busiest service of his Lord and of his fellow creatures is always ready for the invitation to "come up hither!" The only life worth living down here in our earthly tent is that which fits us for that life in the eternal mansions. Brethren and fellow pilgrims! the miles to heaven are few and short; they are growing fewer every day. Let us take for our marching song the sweet lines that brave old Baxter left to us:

Lord, it belongs not to our care
Whether we die or live;

To love and serve Thee is our share
And this Thy grace must give.

Come, Lord, when grace hath made us meet
Thy blessed face to see;

For if Thy work on earth be sweet,
What will Thy glory be?

A Decaying Church.

An artist was once asked to paint a picture representing a decaying church. To the astonishment of many, instead of putting on the canvas an old tottering ruin, the artist painted a stately edifice of modern grandeur. Through the open portals could be seen the richly carved pulpit, the magnificent organ, and the beautiful stained glass windows. Just within the grand entrance, guarded on either side by a "pillar of the church," in spotless apparel and glittering jewellery, was an offering plate of goodly workmanship, for the "offerings" of fashionable worshippers.

But—and here the artist's conception of a decaying church was made known—right above the offering plate, suspended from a nail in the wall, there hung a square box, very simply painted, and bearing the legend, "Collection for Missions," but right over the slot, through which certain contributions ought to have gone, he had painted a huge cobweb! He was right in thinking that it is a sure sign of decay when Christians cease to work for the spread of the Gospel.

Cheerful Music.

The poet Carpani once asked his friend Haydn, the musician: "How does it happen that your church music is almost always of an animated, cheerful, and even gay description?"

"I cannot make it otherwise," answered Haydn. "I write according to the thought which I feel. When I think upon God my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be easily forgiven me that I serve him with a cheerful spirit."

Our Eurdaps.

The little fellow was tired and needed help in getting along. "Aunt Mary" offered kindly.

"Well, Tommy, shall I carry your hat and cricket-stumps for you?"

"No, auntie, t'anks," was the answer. "Me tarry bat and 'tumps; 'ou tarry me."

So God let us keep our burdens, but he takes us in his arms. He lets dangers lurk by the wayside, but he delivers us from them. He sends us on long hard journeys, just as he did Ezra, but he prospers us in them. When they are over we can look back and see "the good hand of our God" upon us all the way.

Not Hurt, But Mad.

The way in which native logic triumphs over uncultured dogmas is neatly illustrated by a true story I have heard. A little child, between three and four years of age, whose parents were firm believers in Christian Science, had become a good deal imbued with the doctrine of that sect. One day she was left with her aunt, a non-believer. Meeting with a fall and evidently a good deal hurt, she cried bitterly. Her aunt, having in mind her training, said to her: "Are you hurt?" "No, I am not hurt," she replied, somewhat pettishly. "I am crying because I am mad." "What are you mad at?" "I am mad because I can't feel that I ain't hurt!"—*Boston Transcript*.

Christianity imparts a new and wondrous worth to life, by giving to man a true conception of two things, God and himself, and their relations to each other.

Ignorance is the mother of prejudice, and prejudice is the infant prodigy that soon rules the whole house and makes all the neighbors uncomfortable.

What a man believes determines whom he believes.