

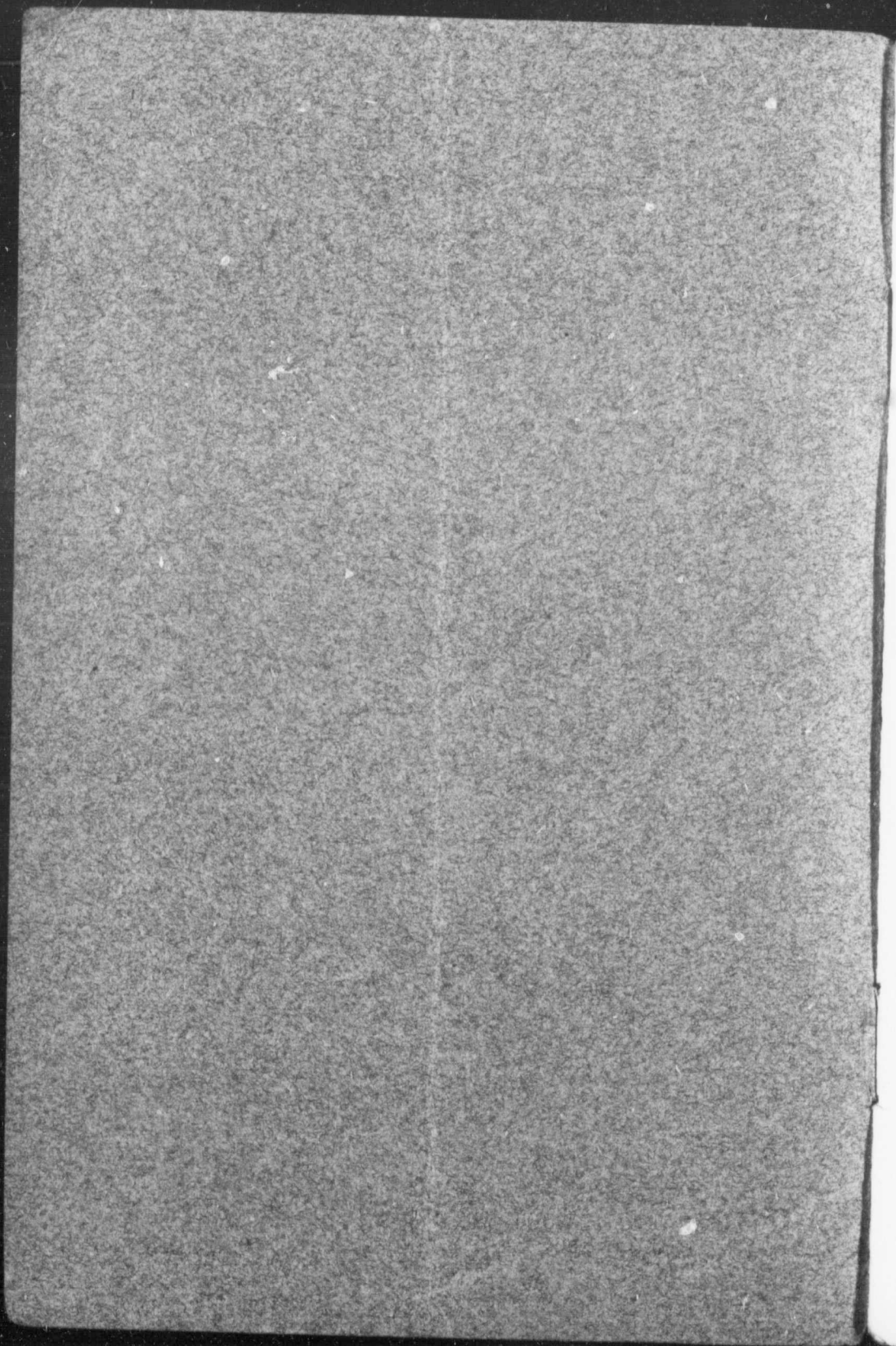
NWp
972.132
M982

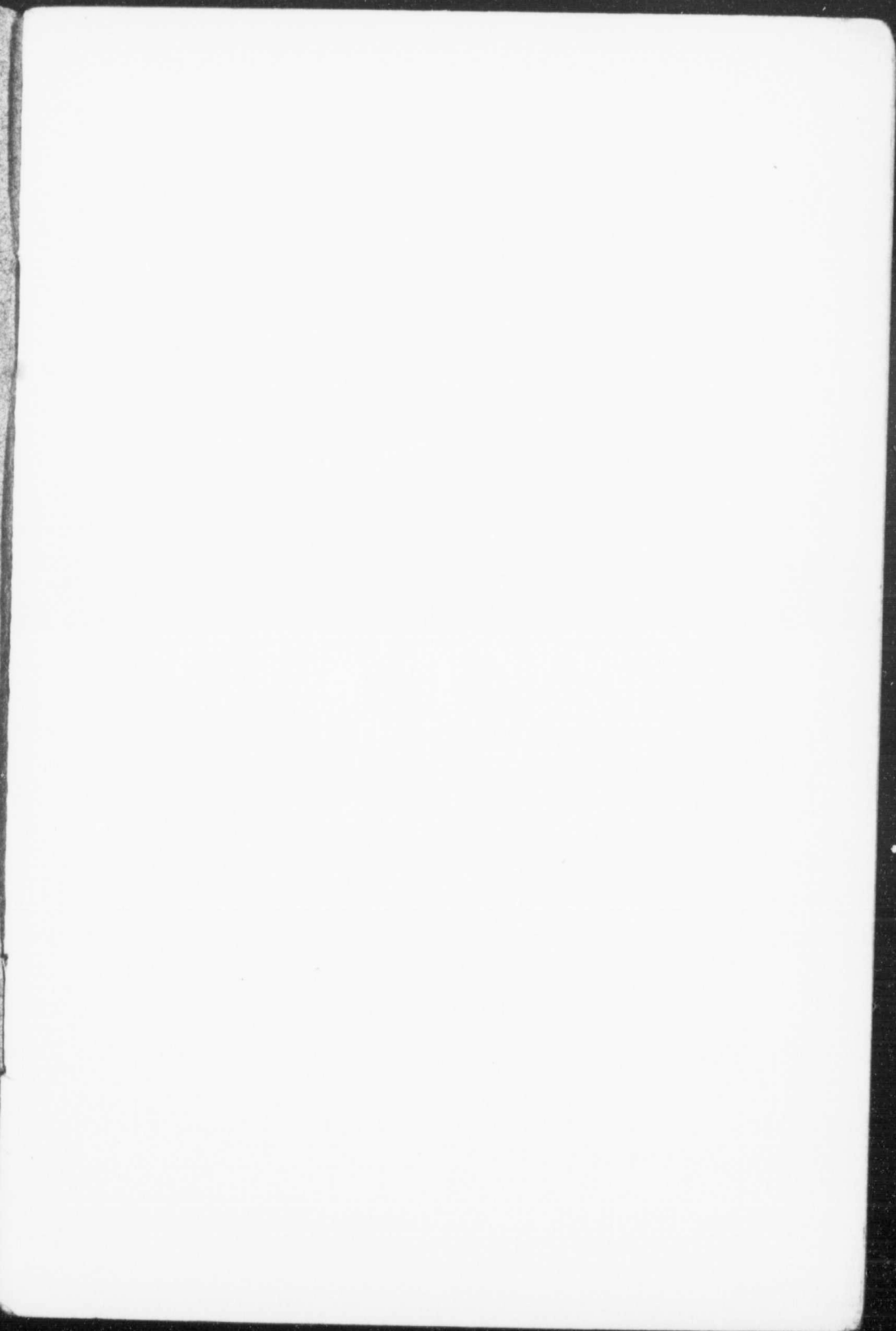
IN DIXIE AND MANITOBA

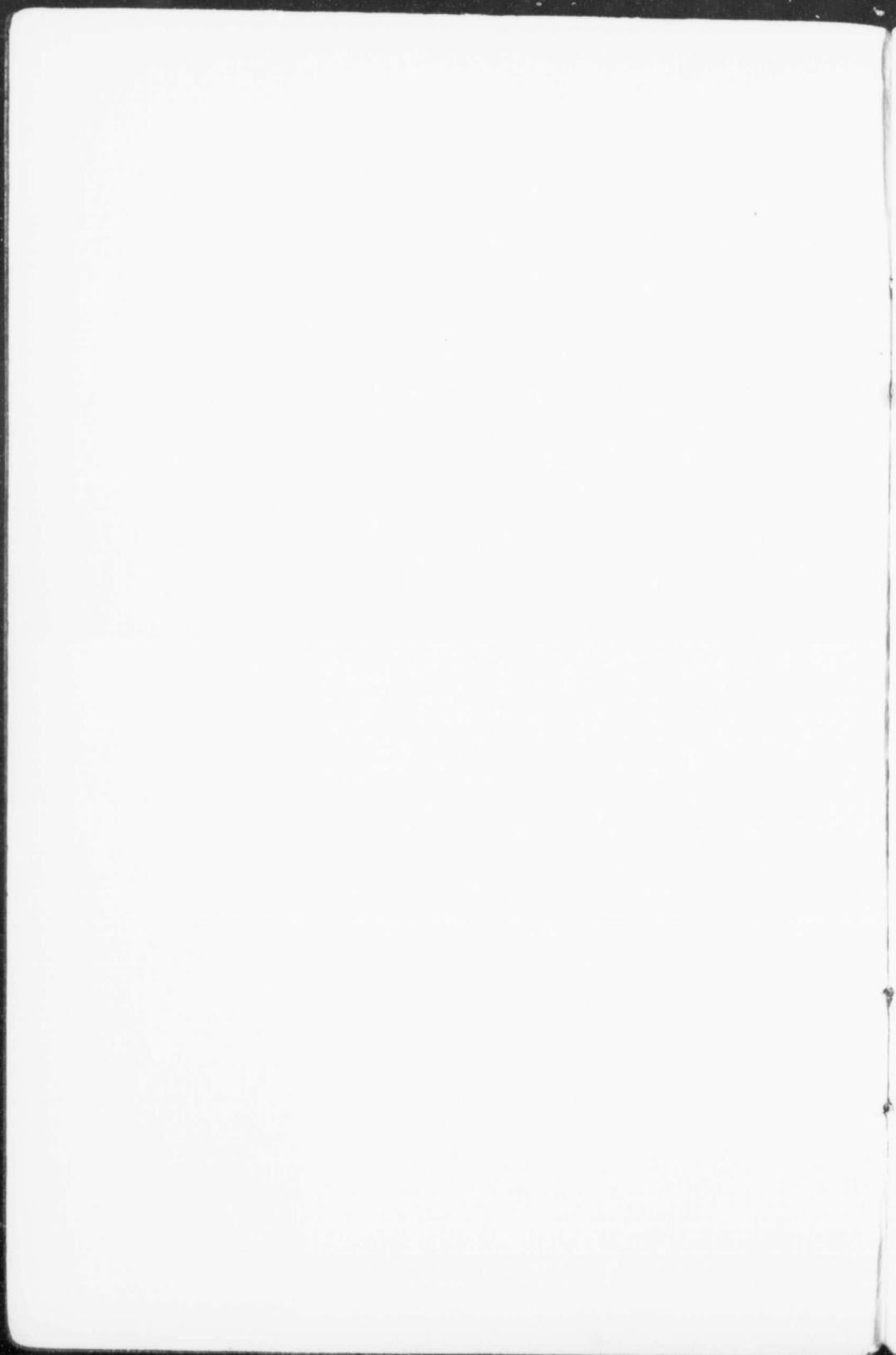
A TRUE STORY OF REAL LIFE



REV. J. A. MURRAY







IN DIXIE AND MANITOBA

A True Story of Real Life

BY
REV. J. A. MURRAY



TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1909

7107

972132

200871

IN DIXIE AND MANITOBA

A TRUE STORY OF REAL LIFE

In the year 1890 we were sent by the Stationing Committee of our church to the bright little town of Norland, in southern Manitoba. It was hard for me to reconcile myself to this move. Manitoba then stood for all that was wild and dreary and out-of-the-way to the people of the East.

The morning after our arrival, I stood looking rather disconsolately out of the dining-room window of the parsonage, thinking with longing retrospect of the comforts and advantages I had left behind, when my attention was suddenly attracted by the appearance in the garden joining ours of a very stately, very handsome old lady. The morning sun glinted on her snow-white hair and brightened the colors of the pale purple ribbons in her dainty lace cap. She walked with indescribable grace and dignity. The little house from which she had emerged was the strangest dwelling I had seen for human habitation. It was quite round and had numerous little windows in it. It was painted a dull brown, and had morning-glories and

scarlet runners growing up its sides. I turned to my wife, who was also looking at the stately figure in the garden beyond, and said, "There is a history back of this. She hasn't always lived here. That grace and dignity were acquired in other scenes than these."

It was our privilege to spend the following three years as the next-door neighbors of Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont of the "Rotunda." In these years we made many pleasing and surprising discoveries regarding them. We found out that Mr. B., a courtly old gentleman of good education and exquisite bearing, who had been an invalid for years, had been at one time President Jefferson Davis' private secretary, and entrusted by him with an important mission to England, to raise money for the Confederacy on the eve of its fall. Before Mr. B. returned the crash came and the Southern Confederacy was no more. His family ran the blockade and went to him in the Bermudas, where they found a safe refuge under the British flag until an amnesty was proclaimed. Some time after this he went to Halifax and engaged in mercantile business. So successful was he in this that in time he had almost recovered his lost fortune. In an evil hour, by the earnest solicitations of a political friend, he was induced to enter politics as a campaign speaker. It was largely through Mr. B.'s logical and convincing utterances and his well-known integrity of character that his political friend carried the day, and entered the Parliament of Nova Scotia. Mr. B.'s political campaigning took him away from his business for weeks at a time, and it was while he was thus absent that his

unscrupulous partner saw his opportunity and robbed him of almost every dollar he owned. His political friend, who was now a Cabinet Minister at Ottawa, and in a position to help him, sent him to Toronto with the promise of a permanent position in the land office there. Mr. B. and his family removed to Toronto, where their little stock of capital quickly dwindled, but no position for him could be found. His friend seemed to have forgotten him. However, when Mr. B.'s situation became desperate, the wily politician assured him of a position if he would go to Winnipeg. To Winnipeg they came in 1882, the year of the boom, when bread was a dollar a loaf. Mr. B., his wife and little family arrived in Winnipeg with one dollar in money. After that he did not hear from the now famous friend again, and no position was given him. The energy and heroism and, above all, his calm trust in God, that had stood by him, now sustained him in his new and trying surroundings. He settled first on a farm south-west of Norland, and with the help of his family succeeded in making a livelihood in this, the land of his adoption. There grew up between the dwellers in the "Rotunda" and the little parsonage near by, where the minister's family dwelt, a very warm friendship, which deepened with the years, and, I believe, will be renewed where time is no more.

Shortly before we left for our new charge, Mrs. Murray went in to call on Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont. Mr. B. was sitting, sorrowfully thinking on many old friends of former days, of whom he had just heard as having passed away. He expressed the extreme lone-

liness which came over him as he thought of himself as almost the last of the circle left on the shores of time.

Mrs. Murray replied, "But do you ever think of how the circle is widening over there as it narrows here? Ought not that to be a great comfort to you?"

"Thank you, thank you, Mrs. Murray," replied the old saint, "for that beautiful thought; it will be a comfort for me as long as I live."

Soon after the Church of England minister came in to administer Holy Communion, and Mrs. Murray was asked to join in communion with the little company in the "Rotunda." And so we parted with the dear old people till the day dawns and shadows flee away. Not long after this parting Mr. B. was called away to join the circle of friends gone on before. A few years later his dear wife followed him. I was fortunate enough to be in Norland the day of Mr. Beaumont's funeral, and counting myself one of his friends, I joined the little company of mourners (the funeral was private), who carried him to the little Church of England burying-ground, there to await the resurrection of the just. Thus ended the mortal life of one of the most patient sufferers that it was ever our privilege to know. But, thank God, the spiritual life does not end here. We have never been the same in our home-life since we have known that dear old saint and his wife. When we have been in danger of becoming impatient under the smaller worries of life, we have thought of that modern Job of the "Rotunda," and we have been rebuked into quiet and perseverance in the good way.

We were close friends during the three years of our stay in Norland. This friendship was intensified probably by the fact that Mr. B.'s mother's family name and my own were the same. The influence of the home-life in Mr. B.'s family no doubt told for good on the children, though the only one we knew intimately did not always manifest the quiet dignity of that home.

DR. HARRY BEAUMONT.

Dr. Harry had struck the great West in one of its wildest moods. Boom days in Winnipeg made boom days for Manitoba. The breeze blew far and wide over the prairie. I have heard of a prosperous town being advertised by flaming hand-bills in Ontario, which was supposed to be situated on the site of old Pilot Mound. The slough close by was turned into an imaginary lake, on which ran imaginary boats for the convenience of the populace of said imaginary town. And so the excitement ran largely over the entire province. Naturally a young man with the blood of the Emerald Isle in his veins, constantly coming in contact with such conditions, would be likely to be carried away from the quiet dignity and Christian influence of the home. He took on something of the manner of the wild and woolly West. To those who did not know Dr. Harry intimately, his apparently reckless speeches and brusque manner gave the impression of heartlessness. There could be no greater

mistake. He was one of the kindest of men, both to his parents and his own wife and children. A few examples of his manner will suffice to illustrate what I mean. Harry had to make long journeys in the early days, and be absent from his home several days at a time, in order to make a living for his own family and help his parents. Mrs. Murray, of the parsonage, happened to be in the "Rotunda" one day when the doctor was going off on one of his trips, and while she was there he came in to say "Good-bye" to his father and mother, and in the most indifferent manner possible he said to his father, "Well, father, I suppose I will find you sitting in the same old corner when I come back." Then, turning to his mother, he said, in his jocular way, "Now, mother, don't let the devil fly away with you till I come back again." She, not noticing his manner, said quietly, "Well, Harry, it is near train time, so good-bye, dear." Then he hurried off into his own home to get a luncheon before starting on his journey. Mrs. Murray had business at his home also and followed him. She was astonished to find the apparently jovial man whom she had seen a few moments ago say "Good-bye" to his parents as if utterly indifferent, sitting at the table with the tears coursing down his cheeks, instead of eating the dainty luncheon his wife had prepared. When the minister's wife entered he began explaining why he could not eat, as his wife was urging him to do, and half apologizing for the manner in which Mrs. Murray had seen him say "Good-bye" to his parents. And at the same time he remarked, "I fear that some day I will

find them dead when I come back, and it just breaks my heart to have to say 'Good-bye' to my dear old father and mother."

Dr. Harry often assumed great brusqueness of manner. Against any person who displeased him he breathed out great threatenings and slaughter, which would have been very terrifying if people had not known that it was "just the doctor's way." Calling one day at the home of Mayor Smith, he asked to see His Worship. The mayor was out at the time. Mrs. Smith asked the doctor if he wished to see him. "Yes, Mrs. Smith, I wish to see that galoot of a husband of yours very much indeed." (The mayor and the doctor were very warm friends.) Mrs. Smith assured him that she would be pleased to deliver his message to the mayor as soon as he came in. With the greatest seriousness Dr. Harry assured the wife of the mayor that there would be a funeral very shortly, for he was going to shoot the town constable for neglecting to mend the sidewalk, and he had just come over to notify the mayor.

About fifteen years after the death of Mr. Beaumont, I received a message from a friend in Norland saying that Dr. Harry was very ill and was coming to Winnipeg Hospital for treatment, also suggesting that as an old friend of the family I should visit and talk with him on his spiritual condition. Immediately I phoned the hospital and requested the privilege of visiting Dr. B., which was cheerfully granted. I went in the afternoon and found the doctor weak from the journey in and suffering much. I saw that he was

not in a condition to bear a lengthened conversation, and yet I was anxious to say something that might be helpful to him in his time of need. Then, led as I believe by the Divine Spirit, I spoke to him with an abruptness such as I had never shown to any one in affliction before. I said, "Christ did not come to make any blind proposition to us. John, in the first chapter of his Gospel, verses 11 and 12, tells us that He (Christ) 'came to His own and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.' Now, that is very simple and very plain. Faith is too often darkened by a multitude of words. It means just to receive Christ as your Saviour and Master. If you so receive Him He will now give you the right to be His child." Then and there I believe he accepted Christ, and so far as I know never wavered till he was received to the home above. Indeed, I have been so assured by those who visited him daily after his return to his own home. The light of Heaven that shone in his soul when an infant in the arms of his "old black mammy" down in Dixie now came to abide forever. And so the next day when Mrs. Murray called to see him she found him rejoicing in his new-found Saviour.

The day before the doctor left the hospital for home I called to see him, and speaking to him as an old friend in a cheerful, assuring way, I said, "Well, doctor, the promises are all right and Christ is all right. He is true to His promises, is He not?" With an ineffable smile of joy, and tears of gladness, he

answered, "Yes, He is." Then a few words of prayer and we parted, to meet in the home of the blessed.

But some one may ask, "Did Dr. Harry have no regrets for the careless and comparatively useless life he had led? Did he only accept Christ and trust Him as a kind of fire-escape to climb into Heaven? Was there no genuine sorrow over a mis-spent life?" His sorrow seemed to be all after his conversion, and God only knows how deep it was. He never realized the wretchedness of the life he had lived till the light of Christ's salvation shone into his soul. A ministerial friend of mine, who was also a friend of the doctor, not Mr. Stodard, visited him soon after his return to Norland. "Oh, Mr. Brown," said the doctor, "I am now just creeping into Heaven without any hope of a reward. Mine has been a wasted life." "You must not look at it in that way, doctor," said my friend. "As you lie here and suffer and your neighbors and friends come to see you, you can tell them what great things the Lord has done for you. No one knows what good you may yet do." How well he tried to do this may be judged by the fact that he refused to take any opiates during the day lest his judgment might be clouded when talking to his friends who called to see him. If we, too, so repent, we shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

He returned home from the hospital to *die*, most people would say; I say, to *live* in the highest sense. All who visited him during those weary months of waiting and suffering in Norland were astonished at his child-like faith and patience, and could testify that

Dr. Beaumont was *alive* in a sense they had never seen him before. How deeply the life and teaching of "black mammy" were impressed on him was well illustrated by a dream related to his pastor, Mr. Wesley Stodard, the day before his death. Soon after the doctor's death, Mr. Stodard related this dream to the writer. He said, "I miss Dr. Beaumont very much. It was an inspiration for me to go and talk with him. His faith was so strong and child-like. Just the day before he died I went over and he told me of a wonderful dream he had had the night before. He was feeling very weak and knew it was coming near the last, and everything was black around him, and he seemed to be sinking into an unknown black sea, when suddenly a great light shone in upon him and the Gates of Heaven were before him, bright with glory, and there in the open gate stood the Lord Jesus Himself, smiling and beautiful, and beside Him stood the old "black mammy," who had been his nurse in his childhood, and little Dick, her son, who had died when just a little boy. Mr. Stodard said the doctor had often told him of this dear old black woman who had brought him up, and of little Dick, who had been his playmate until his death, which occurred when he was about twelve years old. In those early days any religious training he got, it was this old lady who gave it to him. He was with her when she died, and she had said to him then, "When your time comes, Massa Harry, don't be afraid, for old mammy Celey will be watchin' for you, just inside the gate, and the dear Lord Himself will stand with

open arms, and little Dick will be there, too. We'll all be watchin' every day for Massa Harry.' Mr. Stodard said he never heard one murmur of pain from him, although his pain must have been excruciating. He often said, "It hurts, son, but there is something that always helps me to bear it."

It was certainly a rare privilege to be with such an one in the dying hour. "The chamber where the good man meets his fate is privileged beyond the common walks of life, quite on the verge of Heaven." I do not wonder that Pastor Stodard esteemed it as the Gate of Heaven. But the writer esteems it even a greater privilege to have had the honor of leading the doctor to the Christ, of whom old "Black Mammy" told him fifty years before down in Dixie. He sleeps in God's acre in sunny southern Manitoba, beside his father and mother, whom he loved so dearly. Good-bye, doctor, for a little while. When we meet again I have good hope it will be in the morning of eternal day.