

A STUDY OF LIFE

THROUGH DREAMLAND'S OPEN DOOR.

By Henry B. Rankin.

"Even in the watches of the night it is the body, and not the soul that slumbers. The sleep of death is like the sleep of life; it belongs to the weary frame, not to the living spirit." Geo. Matheson.

"In brief, sleep is a sensible fit of that harmony which intellectually sounds in the ear of God; it unites the ligaments of my frame, takes me to pieces, dilates me out of myself, and, by degrees, methinks, resolves me into heaven." Sir Thomas Brown.

"If sleep brings pain such sure eclipse,
And wafts us to so fair a land --
If dreams such happy realms disclose,
What must it be when that pale rose
Of silence, held in Death's kind hand,
Is laid upon our tired lips?"
Julia N. Finch.

Two disclaimers are entered here as an appeal against criticism and prejudice in the reading of a singular dream I am about to relate. The writer is not a dreamer, nor given to the rehearsal of dreams. My sympathies have strong bias in the direction of that practical view of sleep as being useful only in "knitting up the unravelled edge of care", and my more desirable nights are those of dreamless slumber. There has never been a miserable moment in my life, so made because of the bad dreams which may have haunted my pillow. My waking hours have always had enough solid visions and purposes, without desiring to draw on the misery or hope that comes out of visions in slumberland.

A succession of painful days and nights had been passed through.

Pain and prostration had tossed my little life at their high tide. No sleep had relieved the tension of body, or soothed the wrangled nerves for several days and nights. There had come such periods before, and out of their stern discipline had been learned the need of being more than careful that these pain-battles should wear my vital forces the least possible. There is art for endurance, acquired in a veteran's drill through sufferings, during many years.

There may ~~such~~ pass-ways come ^{in human bringing experiences} ~~to an invalid's~~ life, ~~as~~ at one and the same time, ^{of} how hard it is to live, and yet how much more difficult it is to die. From such experiences a faculty may be acquired which makes possible ^{one's} ~~our~~ turning, hour by hour, with the wheel of time, while the life-thread is spun out so very, very fine and frail -- a thread the wierd ^{through her fingers of destiny,} sister draws out so tenuous and taut, but does not yet choose to sever.

At this moment of which I write, there was neither discouragement nor hopelessness. Such things had been masterfully passed by, through earlier disciplines. In great physical exhaustion one realizes loss of personal power. The ^{to} ~~body~~ ^{then sinks} and soul ~~sank~~ down seeking Everlasting Arms for rest:-- Would ~~some~~ ^{He who} hold this helpless body and tremulous soul ~~and~~ give quiet if only ~~one~~ hour?

May I not sleep, just once more? -- ~~was my faint yet fervid prayer.~~

~~"Drift towards life's terminal I trend,
The year seems short to-night;
God only knows what's at the end --
I hope the lamps are white."~~

The conscious borderlands faded away. I remember no more, but passed into sleep. This gentle nurse soothed my every pain, carrying me so

evenly and good I was no more the little former self circled by exhaustion and pain. I slept:-- nature's tenderest ^{noise} restore^d carried me into rest and peace.

Is this a dream?

The tones of a voice bathed my being:-- ^{of} ~~the~~ voice, most wonderful in sweetness, uttered two words:-- "I come," -- with such melody that had I awoke immediately, and without beholding the views afterwards presented, the music those five letters brought into my life could never pass from memory. Then ^{before} ^(strangely curtailed) my vision appeared a presence entering the chamber. Airy and light of texture, the drapery folded about the form, which was equally transparent, yet all so real and forceful that, at approach, the door and surrounding walls disappeared as if they were only shadows, and the form and drapery filled needed space in entering.

Looking upward I saw a -- countenance?-- No, not as we understand that word. The lineaments were not those of form only, although every outline was positive and distinct. All was transparent. Without thought or a moment's hesitation, I recall how I comprehended^d the presence to be that of Jesus, in His spiritual body. From ^{him} ~~him~~ came the voice and thrilling tones, "I come!" My whole being rose out of, and left my little self, to pass into startled contemplation and welcome of this Highest One. Such form, color, music! The voice "I come" did not cease as when once uttered by human lips in this life, but without being rearticulated, remained in suspended resonance of vibration, and in every note continuous in sound and seemed to be part and portion of the Being before me. This

, submerging my personality,
 Presence closed about me and filled all my chamber in every part as light
 would fill my room at noon-day.

Then came words additional to those two first spoken, but not
 taking their place, all part of the same source and with no less tone-
 melody: —

"That you should have Life!"

Suddenly, as part, and as if a personal embodiment of the "you"
 in the tones, I was for one briefest instant of time, conscious of, and came
 back to myself as I was when in pain-laden littleness, before sleep had
 soothed me with silence and rest. I almost awakened into my own former
 exhausted personality. *"The red light is a danger light,"* but this only for a slightest interval; then with
 an instantaneous *rush* ~~flash~~ *flashed* in the briefest instant of time, my whole past life
 was in view before me. It was as if my life had been, before this, far
 away, though still a connected part, and now had all come back home to me,
 and was mine again, in every minutest event and faintest detail. But this
 partial recognition was only for the briefest time, for then -- no longer
 with my body! -- I sprung away from what had been pain-filled barriers --
 for with that word "Life" a consciousness of new being filled me. There
 was *any expanding* springing, bounding, expanding outward on all sides from within the
 small self I had always known. ~~and~~ Into this new personality went all that
 life I have just spoken of, as coming in to me from all my past. This was
 so real, so present, so actually me! but with immeasurably more sensitiveness
 and fullness! *than when I first lived through those near by, or distant years*
 The five senses heretofore hemmed in by my body, also all
 capacity for thought and emotion, which before had transcended the senses, --
 all were expanded and equally freed from my former body in the briefest of
 instants.

Memory ceased, and instead of recollecting, I became all I had ever felt and thought, heard, read or beheld, of everything in my life lived thus far, but, now, ~~that~~ I had passed beyond.

The "I come -- that you should have Life", were ~~the~~ words that brought all my past existence into a present now. ^{Amid} ~~With~~ the enrapturing tones around me and ~~present~~ continuously present, I lived anew my former life, but with a vast expansion and emphasis, into, and with all that was ^{my} past. ^{There was} ~~and~~ such enlarged sensitiveness, bringing peace and pleasure, to things within, and around me, that ^{all} words are helpless, as a means of conveying to the reader, what I experienced then, ~~and is now quite vivid, in a degree, to my own memory as I write these lines.~~

~~The situation and thrilling consciousness then experienced is not possible to put before you by memory painting in any words.~~ ^{in that instant} What I contemplated was not so much my surroundings without, as those within, — ^{my} new personality. It was, all my life reunited, and now expanded into this ^{comprehensive} intensely ~~conscious~~ personality. ~~Just here I did not look outward. It was within, and almost exclusively myself, that I saw beheld.~~ I began a new comprehension of, and acquaintance with myself. For more than half a century I had not known the manner of building going on within me. My personality had now all ^{ed} ~~come home, to me.~~ Each past incident, with all their facts and emotions, as now present, were so much higher, deeper, wider; — every tint and thrill that I was conscious of, was so much more beautiful than I had ^{as they transferred.} ~~that~~ comprehended them to be. I cannot conceive now, in my present awakened life, of anything, not even the most familiar thought, emotion, or pleasurable exercise of any one of my five senses, that compare in vividness with the impressions they each produced on me there, or the power their exercise then

gave me.

I realized with rapture then -- what now I recall and write with a shudder of awe -- the entire immortality of all my past, and also what I had received by contact, association and impression from without my personality, during my whole past life.

I recall ~~that~~ ^{present} there was ^{then}, no such thing as time. All consciousness of the flight of moment after moment, which ~~was~~ ^{suggests} experience in this life, did not exist there. Neither heart-throb, nor breath, measured, or counted, the coming and going of time. Neither heart-throb nor breath, ^{connected,} ~~measured,~~ or had part in registering, the relation of events. This was the most startling of all my sensations -- this the only comparative memory I recall as occurring to me then, ^{while} ~~spanning the arches between time and the Land of the Timeless.~~

Amid all this purely personal experience there remained vibrating with melody the tones -- "I come" -- "That you may have Life". Visibly through, and enveloping all, there remained, as at first, the indescribable, and as was interpreted to my comprehension there -- the charming presence of Jesus. It was ^{this} ~~the~~ visible presence which vitalized, which harmonized and brought all parts of my past into what now in memory seems a complete -- (shall I say electrical?) -- connection with this Supreme One? It was not this, or anything like it, but I know no earthly symbol of union more fitly to apply. It would need the language of immortals to express those eternal verities, ^{and immortals, in the Land of the Timeless only} ~~could communicate by it.~~

On the instant of my comprehending what I interpreted to be the personal presence of Jesus -- and then became conscious of the new personality of what was myself, which I have described, -- at this instant that

same voice, but even more melodious and orchestral toned in volume, and fuller of ravishing harmony^{ies} than had been the previous tones, which ^{had} continued yet, full and perfect -- this voice uttered with most startling effect, the additional words:-

"And have Life more abundantly."

In an instant every limit to space vanished away on all sides, and ~~the same~~ above, and beneath me. I was everywhere. Infinity of space was as present to me there^{then,} as this room here is now in which I am writing. That voice with those melodious words filled all ~~this~~ limitless space^s, as completely as the song of my friend can fill this room.

The memory of ~~those~~ comprehensions so vivid then, thrill and startle me, even now as I write. All I knew previously of distance and space, being bounded by limits, ceased. On every side, above, below, the universe became to me visible surroundings of radiancy and life, without limit, or end. Vision had no bounds, no obstructions. That quietness, and serenity of my surroundings, so markedly so before,--in all save the melody of those tones syllabiling the twelve words quoted,--now vanished.

Everything -- everywhere was life and motion. Such life! That life I have described when the thrilling voice first sounded -- "That you should have Life", and which then changed my own being -- this was the companionship, this the form, and this the manner^{all} of life that there surrounded, ~~those radiant, ideal surroundings~~ filling all space. A new earth! A new Heaven! A new Universe^{all} filled with new living personalities beyond any mortal conception, or any of my paltry descriptions. Yet all this life was so related to the former one, but with the barriers and limits removed, that my awe and rapture, was almost

equalled by my wonder, that I had been so blind, and not seen these ^{inner} wonders and their beauties before, *in others as well as myself.*

Amid this life as part of each one, and surrounding and beyond all, *and connecting all,* was the bodily, visible presence and form of Him who in my chamber I comprehended as Jesus, and who now ^{here} filled infinity of space. Each life there was enveloped and permeated with a degree of His radiant brightness reflected on them, which thus became the only revealing medium of the individual soul to itself, as well as of each to all, and all to each.

I will pass mention here of any personal recognition which there occurred between me and the many in whose "angel faces smile, I had loved long since, and lost awhile". This is not for human speech -- a stranger intermeddled not therewith; but I will note my recognition there of those men and women, as such, who, by sympathy of thought, in my familiarity with history and literature, there had existed, during my past, some familiarity and harmony which united ^{me} ~~as~~ to them, in a degree similar to that which ^{in this life} draws us to our intimate friends. I knew and was known of them. As in the past I had lived in communings of thought with, in and of their life, I found now, they had also, been equally intimate with me. They knew me and I comprehended that I saw the souls of men and women.

That I was perplexed I recall, but more than happy, serenely, and joyously so, both, by my own strangely enlarged personality, but ^{more} also, in the strange and vivid comprehensions of what surrounded me. Faculties, emotions, language, with startling facility to communicate, with delicacy and force, all undreamed of, ~~or~~ only in fragments, or faintest outline, as being possible to ^{any} existence before, -- now filled my own new life, and also met me on every side, in the life of others.

I was emerged from a tiny childhood, lived in a far-away ^{country,} ~~land~~, to a fullness within, and infinite vastness ^{beneath, above and} ~~around~~, all of which I was made to comprehend, in a ^{startling} degree, and a part of which, I was.

I did not then — as seems to me now when trying to recall — think with the measure of words, or behind the limits which here hem in comprehension of every environment. The interests, and vastness of the scenes before me, engaged faculties, and refinements of spiritual powers, this world's words are powerless to describe, or any reader, probably, to understand, for I realize while writing these sentences out of my memory, how cold, and colorless, they will be to any reader, compared with what they were to me ^{while there} ~~in this scene~~, and ~~that scene~~ ^{are} as really before me ^{now} as any other memory, or personality of life, or view of earth, which I have felt, or seen, before, or since.

What I have written out as being my own enlarged life, was similarly the lives of others, ^{as there} ~~revealed~~ ^{who ed that} ~~and filling~~ ^{as it seemed to me} ~~that~~ universe of limitless space; only, in others, larger, clearer, purer, more beautiful every way than I. Thus they saw, welcomed and communed with me — and I, wonderingly, recall that I was not there cast down, or confused, as now seems I should have been while communing with them.

The most impressive and startling fact of all in the scenes so vividly before me, was that the Christ-life in bodily form, or, what I comprehended as such, — and that had filled my vision when seen at first and alone in my chamber, was, under the enlarged capabilities I now had, and which were possessed, as then seemed to me, in a larger degree by all around me, — that Presence and radiancy transcended all its first apparent limit of outline, and there filled the infinity of space, as sunlight does this world at noonday. This Presence enclosed and penetrated and permeated as sunlight cannot, all

the innumerable throng, and was within, and of every part and particle of the Spiritual Life I beheld, both of myself and all others around me.

These individual souls differed more markedly with each other, ^{than any} dissimilarity of character, or personal appearance, presents ^{contrasts of} in this life.

But it was this Presence of Christ, this real essence and substance, so distinctively and exclusively His, so omnipresent and full of soul-light, - this was within, and around, every individual soul, and ^{became} their medium for expression. All that was harsh, and crude and incomplete, in any personality, was softened of outline, and refined in character to be, as this, there, seemed to me, in some slight degree part of this spiritual body of Jesus, and capable to dwell in communion, very close with Him, and, in unbroken harmony, with all other souls. To approach and communicate with any soul, I noticed, depended for entrance ^{to be} through the everywhere present and grace-giving Life of this wonderfully ^{diffused} personality and character of our dear Jesus.

Life touched life, by this new Christly union, with most revealing nearness, ^{While} ~~and~~ each one was individual in outline ^{and} ~~personal and unlike,~~ ^{in character} any other, ^{yet} ~~and~~ their character ^{was} transparent and ^(so) ~~visible~~ ^(that each) ~~life~~ looked upon, and through every other life. Nothing was hidden. Each one was known by every other soul, as entirely, and in the same enlarged degree, as they ^{there} knew their own self. There was no private, or hidden thought, emotion or purpose. That Presence and that incomprehensible Light, which shone around, and between all, had united us in this new fraternity of immortal humanity. I do not in this life know, or comprehend my own self, my own emotions and thoughts, as I then did the entire soul-life, and being of those about me, and they, each one, of me.

This life was not limited to what we here call, the mind and the emotions. To this fact, every part of my new existence responded with startling surprise. The five senses which connect us with the material world here, were, in the new life, recognized by me with a pungency, delicacy, clearness and sensitiveness I had never received through, or by them, in my earth-life. The sense of touch was a joy beyond words; the thrill of pleasures and satisfaction from vision were beyond measure in mortal sentences, and sounds brought melodies earth's most rapturous symphonies, had been no preparation to me for.

Then a change -- here just at this, to me, thrilling portion of my experience, amid that rush of joy and peacefulness no words ^{of mine} can portray; -- filmy curtains, as of contracting space, began nearing me on every side. Lost was the presence, one by one, of the innumerable throng, until then so palpably present ^{with me.} I felt part of my own new self diminishing, fading -- ^{beyond my grasp and} fleeting away, slowly beyond my consciousness. I struggled intensely to ^{and bear away with me the wider visions.} retain my enlarged consciousness close to me. But all in vain! -- little by little, the old narrowing limits pressed me in, until I lay in my chamber, once more, finding that as when left, still lit by the personal presence and voice, as at first, sounding, "I come". Then this grew fainter, as if passing farther away, while the light and beautiful outlines became less and less real, and at last, silence and darkness, closed all, with me awake, as of old, a little very helpless life, full of exhaustion and racked by pain. I was awake. Once more I was amid what some sad souls so blindly measure as the all of human life!

While human life here is a separate individual one, and largely, to one's self, an inner, and hidden one, even from ourself, yet all there is of it, will sometime be disclosed, fully, to us, and to others, and at some

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period, will take into active conscious ^{fellowship} ~~being~~, those of its own like and quality, where and when all secrets and silences, with their mysteries of this universe, will be no longer barriers to an intimate, clear-visioned, immortal fraternity of humanity. There we can enter a largest, personal and companionable, visible, intelligent presence, with each other; amid the intimate, personal companionship of God, by the uniting presence of Jesus Christ.

..... I cannot refrain adding for my reader, ~~on~~ the question that haunts my own meditations whenever visions of that "Life More Abundantly" cross the lens of meditative memory:-- Was this a dream? Or was I, for brief moments, amid the realities that mortal eye hath not seen, -- that hath not entered into the mind of man?

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