

# IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

by

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### TOLD IN A CAB

A QUARTER of an hour before the time Zillah had given him, Tom Hammond was waiting near the "Mission Hall for Jews," where the meeting was to be held. He was anxious that she should not know of his proximity, so kept out of sight,- there were many possibilities of this among the various stalls in the gutter-way.

Presently he saw her coming, and the light of a glad admiration leaped into his eyes. "What a superb face and figure she has!" he mused. "What a perfect queen of a woman she is!"

From behind a wheel-stall he watched her cross over to the door of the Hall. Here she paused a moment, and glanced around.

"I believe she half expected to see me somewhere near!" he murmured to himself.

She entered the Hall. By the time her head was bowed in prayer, he had entered, and had taken a seat on the last form, the fourth behind hers. When she first raised her head from her silent prayer, she looked around and backward. In her heart she was hoping he would be there. If he had not been bending in prayer, she must have seen him. After that she turned no more, the service soon occupied all her thoughts.

He too became utterly absorbed by the service, of which the address was the chief feature.

It was largely expository, and from the first utterance of the speaker, it riveted Tom Hammond's attention.

The speaker, himself a converted Jew, took as his text Deuteronomy 21:22, 23.

**"If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and is sentenced to death, and thou hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not remain all night upon the tree, but, burying, thou shalt bury him on that day (because he who is hanged is accursed of God)."**

"Now, brethren," the speaker went on, "as far as I have been able to discover, in all the Hebrew records I have been able to consult, and in all the histories of our race, I have not found a single reference to a Hebrew official hanging of a criminal on a tree. To what, then, does this verse refer, and why is it placed on The Lord's statute-book?"

For a few moments he appealed to his Jewish hearers on points peculiarly Hebraic. Then presently he said, "Now let us see if the New Testament will shed any light upon this."

Turning rapidly the leaves of his Bible, he went on:

"There is a book in the Christian Scriptures known as the Epistle to the Galatians which, in the tenth verse of the third chapter, repeats our own word from Deuteronomy:

**"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them,"** and in the thirteenth verse says, **'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'**

"We all, brethren, as the sons of Abraham, believe that our father David's Psalm beginning, **'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'** was never written out of his own experience, but was prophetic of some other Person. Now, let me quote you some of the words of that Psalm."

In clear, succinct language, the speaker, quoting verse after verse of the Psalm, showed how literally the descriptions fitted into a death by crucifixion. Referring to the Gospel narratives of the death on the cross, he showed how they also fitted in with the description of CHRIST's death, and how CHRIST actually took upon His dying lips the cry of the Psalm, **"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"**

Then with wondrous clearness he referred to parts of Isaiah 53, and, continuing his theme, showed that it was evident that only one particular type of death could have atoned for the sin of the human race, a death that would render the dying one accursed of the Almighty. The only death that would fully carry out that condition was crucifixion.

"Our race waited for the Messiah," he cried, "and He came. Our prophet Micah said, **'Yet thou, O Bethlehem-Ephratah, little as thou art amidst the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall proceed from Me, One who is to be ruler in Israel!'** "

"The CHRIST was born at the only time in the world's history when He could have been executed on a tree - crucified. At a time when the Roman crucifixion was a Roman punishment - swayed our beloved land of Jewry.

So that Paul, the great Jew, chosen of GOD to be apostle to the Gentiles, wrote after the crucifixion of JESUS, the Nazarene, '**According to the time. Christ died.**' "

For some minutes the speaker appealed to his Jewish hearers with a wonderful power. Then finally addressing not only the Jews, but any Gentiles who might be present, he cried:

"We must know the meaning of sin, brethren, before we can understand the mystery of a crucified CHRIST. A beheaded, a stoned CHRIST, could not have atoned for a guilty world, but only a God-cursed death, a tree-cursed death could have done this. And CHRIST was cursed for us - He who knew no curse of His own. Ah! beloved, the guilt of the human race is the key to the cross.

"Times change, customs change, but sin remains, sin is ever the same, and only a living, personal trust in the crucified CHRIST can ever deliver the unsaved sinner from the wrath of GOD which abideth on him."

The address closed. Tom Hammond awoke from his intense absorption of soul. He had long since utterly forgotten Zillah. He had seen only himself, at first. his own sin, and that his sin had nailed CHRIST to the cross. Then, better still, he saw the CHRIST.

Only a few nights before he had paused to watch a Salvation Army open-air meeting. The girl-officer in charge of the corps had announced thirty-eight as the number of the hymn they would sing, and prefaced the reading of the first verse by saying:

"This hymn was written by an ex-drunkard - an ex-blasphemer. His name was Newton - drunken Jack Newton, he was often called by his mates, and by others who knew him. He was a sailor, on a ship trading to the African coast, at the time when his soul was aroused to its danger. He was in agony, not knowing what to do to get rest and peace.

"One night he was keeping anchor-watch. He was alone on the deck, the night was dark and eerie. His sins troubled him. All that he had heard of the crucified CHRIST - whom he had so often blasphemed - swept into his soul, and he groaned in the misery of his sin-convicted state.

"Suddenly he paused in his deck-pacing, and looked up. To his fevered imagination, the yard which crossed the mast high up above his head appeared like a mighty cross, and it was remembering this, with all the soul-experience of that night, that in after years, when he became a preacher of the gospel, and a noted divine, Dr. John Newton wrote:

"I saw One hanging on a tree  
In agonies and blood,  
Who fixed His dying eyes on me,  
As near the cross I stood.  
'A second look He gave, which said,  
"I freely all forgive  
My blood was for thy ransom paid,  
I die that thou may'st live.' "

Recalling these words now, Tom Hammond's soul received the great Revelation. He heard no word of the closing hymn and prayer, but passed out into the open air a new man in CHRIST. The mission-leader had given an invitation to any who would like to be helped in soul matters to remain behind. Tom Hammond noticed that Zillah lingered.

It was half-an-hour before she came out. Tom Hammond had lived a lifetime of wonder in the thirty minutes.

Like one in a delicious dream Zillah walked on a few yards. Suddenly she became aware of Tom Hammond's presence at her side.

"Zillah!"

He gave her no other word of greeting. It was the first time he had ever called the young girl by her first name. He took her hand, and drew it through his arm. She barely noticed the tender action, for her soul was rioting in a new-found joy, and she poured out, in a few sentences, all the story of her supreme trust in CHRIST the Nazarene.

His voice was hoarse with many emotions, as he said, "I, too, Zillah, have to-night seen JESUS CHRIST dying for my sin, and have taken Him for my own personal Saviour!"

Suddenly she realized how closely he was holding her to his side, how tight was the clasp of his hand upon hers. She looked up into his face to express her joy at his new-found faith. Their eyes met. A new meaning flashed in their exchanged glances.

A four-wheeled cab moved slowly along in the gutter-way, the driver uttered a low "Keb, keb!"

Tom Hammond seized the opportune offer, and whispered, -

"Let us take a cab, Zillah. I have something to say to you which I must say to-night."

Before scarcely she, realized it, she was seated by his side in the cab.

There is a moment in every woman's life when her heart warns her of the coming of the great event in that life, when love is to be offered to her by the only man who has ever loomed large enough in her consciousness to be able to affect her existence.

This moment had suddenly unexpectedly come to Zillah Robart.

Her heart warned her that the crisis was upon her. She had done nothing to precipitate it. It had met her, drawn her aside, and had shut her up in the semidarkness of this vehicle with the only man she could ever love.

The cab rattled over the cobbles of that wide East-end thoroughfare, past the throngs of moving pedestrians, though, to her consciousness, the whole wide world consisted of but one man - the man at her side.

He had secured her hand, he held it in his strong, hot clasp. She held her breath in a strange, expectant ecstasy. Then the inevitable came. She felt its coming.

Tom Hammond was drawing her closer to himself.

She was yielding to that drawing. She caught her breath again, and as she did so a rush of strange tears filled her eyes.

"Zillah!" his voice was hoarse and deep.

She realized the meaning of the hoarseness. She knew by her own feeling that the depth and intensity of his voice was due to the emotion that filled him. She knew she would have found herself voiceless at that moment had she tried to speak.

"I love you, my darling!" he went on. "I have loved you from the first instant I met you. You have felt it, known it, dear. Have you not?"

She tried to speak, her lips moved, but no sound came from them. But she looked into his eyes, and he read his answer.

With a sweeping gesture of passionate love he gathered her into his arms and showered kisses upon her lips, her cheeks, her forehead, her hair.

She lay like a stunned thing in his arms. Her joy was almost greater than she could bear. Then as his hot lips sought hers again, she awoke from her semi-trance of ecstasy, and with a little sob she flung her arms upwards and clasped them about his neck, crying,

"Love you, my darling? Love seems too poor a word to express my feeling, for GOD knows that, save my Lord JESUS, to whom to-night I have fully yielded, you are all my life."

Her voice was stifled with a little rush of tears. Where she lay on his breast, he felt how all her frame quivered.

"And you will be mine, dear Zillah - and soon?" His eyes burned into hers, asking for an answer as loudly as his lips.

She did not answer him for a moment. Her heart beat with a tumultuous gladness, and her brain throbbed with the wonder of what she conceived to be the honor that had come to her. Wondering incredulity mingled with the rapturous ecstasy that filled her.

"But you are so great-so -" She paused, she could find no words to express all that prospective wifedom to him appeared to her.

He smiled down into her eyes. Her loveliness seemed to him greater than ever before.

"You seem like a king to me!" she gasped at last.

"You, Zillah," he smiled, "do not seem, you are, a queen to me. Say, darling, the one word that shall fill all my soul with delight - say that you will be mine - and soon, very soon!"

"I will."

There was the intensity of a mighty love in her utterance of the two words.

He gathered her to himself in an even closer embrace, and spent his kisses on her lips.

The flush of pride, of love, burned deeper in her face. "Oh, - why is it given to me to have such bliss?" she murmured.

The words were low-breathed; they sounded like a gasping sigh of delight more than a voiced utterance.

For a moment, clasped tightly in his arms, she was silent, and he uttered no word. Presently he whispered,

"Will it give you joy, I wonder, my darling, to know that I have been a man free of all woman's love before? I have seen many women, in many lands, the loveliest of the earth - though none so lovely as you, my sweetheart. It is no egotism on my part, either, to say that many women have sought my love by their smiles and favour. But none ever won a word of love or response from me."

The cab was passing a great central light in the heart of a junction of four roads. Her eyes, full of a great rapture, sought his. His were fixed upon her face, and filled with a love so great that again she caught her breath in wonder.

"But you, my Zillah!" He caught her close to himself again, and bending his head, let his lips cling to hers, "But you, darling!" he continued, "have been to me all that the heart of man could ever wish for, from the first moment I met you. May GOD give us a long life together, dearest, and make us (with our new-born faith in Him) to be the best, the holiest help-meets, the one to the other, that this world has ever known."

Where she lay in his arms, he felt her tremble with the intensity of her joy. As he looked down into the deep, dreamy lustrousness of her eyes, he saw how they were full of a far-off look, as though she was picturing that united future of which he had spoken.

Perhaps he read that look in her eyes aright. Then, as he watched her, he saw how the color deepened in her face. She slowly, proudly, yet with a glad frankness, lifted herself in his arms until, in a tender, passionate caress, her lips rested upon his in the first spontaneous kiss she had given him.

"If CHRIST, to whom we have given ourselves to-night, should tarry," she whispered, "and we are spared to dwell together on earth as husband and wife, dear Tom, may GOD answer all that prayer of yours abundantly. "

The cab turned a corner sharply at that moment. He looked through the window. They were within a few hundred yards of where he had given the driver orders to stop. Zillah would have, on alighting, only the length of a short street to traverse before reaching home, and he would take a hansom and drive back to the office. But the intervening moments before they would part were very precious, and love took unlimited toll in those swift, fleeting moments.

~ end of chapter 18 ~

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