

The Feelings of the Dead.

"In the winter of 18—," said Mr. H—, "there was a great deal of typhus fever in Edinburgh. It was a gloomy, sad winter, changing frequently from hard frost to warm, rainy, oppressive weather; and never did my native city better deserve the name of *Auld Reekie* than during four months of that year. The high winds, to which we are generally subjected in winter, seemed to have ceased altogether; the smoke, instead of rising, beat down upon the city, and notwithstanding its elevated situation and fine mountain air, the streets and houses were so murky dark, that there was very little difference between the short, dim day, and the long and early night. A sort of oppression fell upon all men's spirits, which was increased by the floating rumors of the awful ravages of disease in the town, brought home to us, every now and then, by the death of an acquaintance, a friend or a relative. Gradually, the fever increased in virulence, and extended far and wide, till it became almost a pestilence. It confined itself to no class, or age. Judges, lawyers, physicians, were smitten, as well as the humbler classes; old and young alike fell before it. Many good men in the ministry were taken away. It assumed the worst form of all, however, in the prisons of the city, and the accounts of its ravages within their walls was tremendous. As the minister of the — Kirk, I was not absolutely called upon to attend the prisoners; but I heard that two of my brethren had died, in consequence of their zealous care of the poor souls within those heavy walls. It was with difficulty that a sufficient number of the clergy could be found to attend to their spiritual wants, and I volunteered to visit the prisons, daily, myself. For nearly a fortnight I continued in the performance of the functions I had undertaken, without suffering in the least—except mentally, from witnessing the sufferings of others. But one Saturday night, as I returned home through the very gloomy streets, I felt a lassitude upon me, an utter prostration of strength, which forced me to stop twice, in order to rest, before I reached my own door. I attributed it to excessive fatigue; for I was without the slightest apprehension, and never at all looked forward to the coming calamity. When I reached home, I could not eat; my appetite was gone. But that I attributed also to fatigue, and I went quietly to bed. During the night, however, intense pain in the back, and in the forehead succeeded; a burning heat spread all over me; my tongue became parched and dry; my mind wandered slightly; and instead of rising to preach as I intended, I was obliged to lie still, and send for a physician with the first ray of morning light. His visit is the last thing I recollect for several days. I remember his ordering all the windows to be opened, notwithstanding the coldness of the day, and causing saucers, filled with some disinfecting fluid, to be placed in different parts of the room, in order to guard my wife and children against the infection. I then, for the first time, discovered that

I had caught the fever. I remember little more—for violent delirium set in soon—till suddenly, after the lapse of several days, I regained my consciousness, and with it a conviction that I was dying. My wife was kneeling, weeping, by my bedside, two physicians and a nurse were present; and it was strange after the dull state of perfect insensibility in which I had lain during the last twenty-four hours, how completely all my senses had returned, how perfect my powers of thought and reason. In my very healthiest days, I never remember to have had so complete command of all my mental faculties, as at that moment. But I was reduced to infant weakness; and there was a sensation of sinking faintness, not confined to any one part or organ, but spreading over my whole frame, which plainly announced to me that the great event was coming. They gave me some brandy in teaspoonfuls; but it had no other effect than to enable me to utter a few words of affection and consolation to my wife, and then the power of speech departed altogether. The sensation that succeeded I cannot describe. Few have felt it. But I have conversed with one or two who have experienced the same, and I never found one who, either by a figure or by direct language, could convey any notion of it. The utmost I can say is, that it was a feeling of extinction.—Fainting is very different. This was dying; and a single moment of perfect unconsciousness succeeded.

"Every one believed me dead. My eyes were closed, and weights put upon them. The lower jaw, which remained dropped, was bound up with a black ribbon. My wife was hurried from the room, sobbing sadly; and there I lay, motionless, voiceless, sightless; growing colder, and more cold, my limbs benumbed, my heart without pulsation, dead, all but in spirit, and with but one corporeal faculty in its original acuteness. Not only did my hearing remain perfect and entire, but it seemed to be quickened, and rendered ten times more sensitive than ever. I could hear sounds in the house, at a distance from my chamber, which had never reached me there before. The convulsive sobbing of my wife in a distant room: the murmured conversation of the physicians in a chamber below: the little feet of my children treading with timid steps as they passed the chamber of death; and the voice of the nurse saying, 'Hush, my dear, hush,' as the oldest wept aloud in ascending the stairs.

"There was an old woman left with a light, to watch with the dead body, and I cannot tell you how painful to me was her moving about the room, her muttering to herself, and her heavy snoring when she fell asleep. But more terrible anguish was in store.—On the following morning, the undertaker came to measure me for my coffin. Although, as I have said, I was all benumbed, yet I had a faint remnant of feeling, which made me know when anything touched me, and a consciousness as perfect as in the highest days of health. You can fancy better than I can tell, what I

endured as I felt the man's measure run over my body to take the precise size for the awful receptacle that was to carry me to the grave. Then came the discussion of half an hour between him and the old crone in the chamber, in regard to black gloves and handkerchiefs. I am really ashamed of myself, when I remember the sensations I experienced. I never felt so unchristian in my life as I did then, when lying, to all appearance, dead; and the worst of it all was, I could not master those sensations. Will seemed to be at an end, even when consciousness remained entire. After that, what I most distinctly remember, was a long, dull blank. I fancy the room was left vacant, for I had no perceptions. The spirit was left to itself. Its only remaining organ of communication with the material world had nothing to act upon, and thought was all in all. But thought was intensely terrible. True, thought was concentrated altogether upon one subject. Every man has much to repent of. Every man who believes has much to hope and to fear, in the presence of another world. But repentance, hope, fear—I tell you the plain truth—another world itself never came into my mind. They seemed to have died away from memory, with that extinction of will of which I have spoken. All I thought of then was, that I was lying there living, and was about to be buried with the dead. It was like one of those terrible dreams, in which we seem grasped by some monster, or some assassin, and struggle to shriek or to resist, but have neither power to utter a sound nor to move a limb.

"I will not dwell much upon the further particulars. The coffin was brought into the room; I was dressed in my grave clothes; I was moved into that narrow bed, stiff, and rigid as a stone, with agony of mind, which I thought must have awakened some power in the cold, dull mass which bound up my spirit. One whole night I lay there in the coffin—hearing the tick of the clock upon the stairs—filled with strange and wild impressions—doubting whether I were really dead, or whether I were living—longing to see and know if my flesh were actually corrupting—fancying that I felt the worm. The morning broke; a dim, gray light found its way through my closed eyelids, and about an hour after, I heard the step of the undertaker and another man, in the room. One of them dropped something heavily on the floor, and a minute after they came close to the coffin, and the undertaker asked his assistant for the screw-driver. It was the last instant of hope, and all was agony. Suddenly, I heard my wife's step quite at the foot of the stairs. 'Oh God! she will never let them!' I thought. 'She who loved me so well, who was so dearly loved!'

"She came very slowly up the stairs, and the step paused at the door. I fancied I could almost see her, pale and trembling there. The undertaker asked in a loud voice, for the coffin-lid. But the door opened, and Isabella's voice exclaimed, half choked with tears, 'Oh, not yet—not yet! Let me look at him once again!'

"Love and sorrow spoke in every tone. My spirit thanked her; and never had I felt such ardent love for her as then. But the idea of a living burial was still pre-eminent. If she took that last look and left me, all was over. My anguish was beyond all description. It seemed to rouse my spirit to some great, tremendous effort. I tried to groan, to speak, to cry, to move, even to breathe. Suddenly, in that great agony, a single drop of perspiration broke out on my forehead. It felt like molten iron pouring through the skin. But the deadly spell was broken. My arms struggled within their covering; I partly raised my head, and opened my eyes wide.

"A loud, long shriek rang through the room, and my wife cast herself upon the coffin, between me and the hateful covering the man held up in his hand.

"I need not tell you all that followed; for here I am, alive and in perfect health. But I have never recovered my original color, and have ever remained as sallow as you see me now. The event, however, has been a warning to me. In many cases previously, I had calmly seen people hurried very early to the grave; but ever since, wherever I had influence, I have prevented the dead from being hurried before some signs of corruption presented themselves; for I am perfectly convinced that those signs are the only real tests of death."

The arbitrators of the recent telegraphic case, in which Amos Kendall and others were defendants, has been concluded, and the award agreed upon, but not yet promulgated. The terms are said to be satisfactory to the defendants.

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