

IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

by

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

TOM HAMMOND REVIEWING

IT was the morning after Tom Hammond had found CHRIST, and had closed with the great offer of redemption. He had scarcely slept for the joy of the two loves that had so suddenly come into his life.

During the sleepless hours, he had learned, for the first time in his life, the true secret of prayer, and that even greater secret, that of communion.

With real prayer there is always a certain degree of communion, but real, deep, soul-filling communion is more often found in seasons when the communing one asks for nothing, but, silent before his or her GOD, the sense of the Divine fills all the being, and if the lips utter any sound it is the cry, "**My Lord and my God!**"

Tom Hammond, reviewing all that GOD had revealed to him, learned in those first hours of his new birth the secret of adoring communion with GOD.

In the book of extracts he had been reading in the tube train at the moment when he had first heard of Major H--'s coming address on the Second Advent, he had come across one headed, "Frederick William Faber: The Precious Blood - chap. iv."

He had at the time been considerably impressed with the extract, though there was a certain note about it which he had failed to understand. In the flush of the great revelation that had come to his soul (in that little meeting at Spitalfields), he now found the book, and re-read the extract:

"I was upon the sea-shore; and my heart filled with love it knew not why. Its happiness went out over the wide waters, and upon the unfettered wind, and swelled up into the free dome of blue sky until it filled it. The dawn lighted up the faces of the ivory cliffs, which the sun and sea had been blanching for centuries of GOD's unchanging love. The miles of noiseless sands seemed vast, as if they were the floors of eternity. Somehow, the daybreak was like eternity. The idea came over me of that feeling of acceptance which so entrances the soul just judged and just admitted into heaven.

" 'To be saved I' I said to myself, 'to be saved!' "Then the thoughts of all the things implied in salvation came in one thought upon me; and I said:

" 'This is the one grand joy of life;' and I clapped my hands like a child, and spoke to GOD aloud. But then there came many thoughts, all in one thought, about the nature and manner of our salvation. To be saved with such a salvation!

"This was a grander joy, the second grand joy of life; and I tried to say some lines of a hymn but the words were choked in my throat. The ebb was sucking the sea down over the sand quite silently; and the cliffs were whiter, and more day-like. Then there came many more thoughts all in one thought, and I stood still without intending it.

"To be saved by such a Saviour! This was the grandest joy of all, the third grand joy of life; and it swallowed up the other joys; and after it there could be on earth no higher joy.

"I said nothing; but I looked at the sinking sea as it reddened in the morning. Its great heart was throbbing in the calm; and methought I saw the precious blood of JESUS in heaven, throbbing that hour with real human love of me."

"Yes," murmured Tom Hammond, "after all, to be saved by such a Saviour is a greater, higher, holier thought than the mere knowledge that one is saved, or of the realization of what that salvation comprises."

In every way that night was one never to be forgotten by Tom Hammond. He needed, too, all the strength born of his new communion with GOD to meet what awaited him with the coming of the new day's daily papers.

The paper from whose staff he had been practically dismissed in our first chapter (the editor of which was his bitterest enemy) had found how to use "the glass stiletto."

Some of the most scurrilous paragraphs ever penned appeared in his enemy's columns that morning. It is true that the identity of the man slandered (Tom Hammond) was veiled, but so thinly - so devilishly - that every journalist, and a myriad other readers, would know against whom the scurrilous utterances were hurled.

Tom Hammond would not have been human if the reading of the paragraphs had not hurt him. And he would not have been "**partaker of the Divine nature**," as he now was, if he had not found a balm in the committal of his soreness to GOD.

"That is the work of that fellow Joyce," he told himself.

Twenty-four hours before, if this utterance had had to have been made by him, he would have said,

"That beast Joyce!" But already, as a young soldier of CHRIST, the promised watch was set upon his lips. In the strength of the two great loves that had come into his life-the love of CHRIST and the love of Zillah Robart - the scurrilous paragraphs affected him comparatively little.

When he had skimmed the papers, attended to his correspondence, and to one or two other special items, he took pen and paper and began to write to his betrothed.

His pen flew over the smooth surface of the paper, but his thoughts were even quicker than his pen. His whole being palpitated with love. It was the love of his highest ideal. The love which he had sometimes dared to hope might someday be his, but which he had scarcely dared to expect.

The memory of his passing fancy for Madge Finisterre crossed his mind, once, as he wrote. He paused with the pen poised in his fingers, and smiled that he should ever have thought it possible that he was beginning to love her. "I liked her, admired her," he mused. "I enjoyed her frank, open friendship, but love her - no, no. The word cannot be named in the same breath as my feeling for Zillah."

He put his pen to the paper again, and poured out all the wealth of the love of his heart to his beautiful betrothed. When he had finally finished the letter, he sent it by special messenger to Zillah.

He had not forgotten that Major H--'s second meeting was that day.

Three o'clock found him again in the hall. This time it was quite full. There was a new sense of interest, of understanding, present within him as he entered the place. This time he bowed his head in real prayer.

The preliminary proceedings were almost identically like those of the previous occasion, except that the hymn sung - though equally new to Hammond - was different to either of those sung at the first meeting. But, if anything, he was more struck by the words than he had been with those of the other hymns.

And how rapturously the people sang:

“ 'Till He come! Oh, let the words
Linger on the trembling chords;
Let the 'little while' between
In their golden light be seen;
Let us think how heaven and home
Lie beyond that 'Till He come! ”

This time a lady, a returned Chinese missionary, led prayer, and then the major resumed his subject.

"We saw, dear friends, at our last meeting," the grand old soldier-preacher began, "what were some of the prophesied signs of our Lord's second coming and how literally these signs were being fulfilled in our midst to-day. This afternoon, GOD willing, and time permitting, I want us to see how He will come; what will happen to the believer; and also what effect the expectancy of His coming should have upon us, as believers.

"First of all, how will He come? While JESUS, who had led His disciples out of the city, was in the act of blessing them, He suddenly rose before their eyes, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Have you ever thought of this fact, beloved, that the cloud itself was a miracle? Whoever heard of a cloud at that special period of the year, in Palestine? And I very much doubt if anyone, save the apostles, in all the country round about, saw that cloud. If you ask me what I think the cloud was, I should be inclined to refer you to the 24th Psalm, and say that the cloud was composed of the angel-convoy, who, like a guard of honor, escorted the Lord back to glory, crying, as they neared the gates of the celestial city, **'Lift up your heads, oh, ye gates, and let the King of Glory come in!'** "

"He went away in a cloud. The angels, addressing the amazed disciples declared to them that **'He would so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go.'**

"It may be that to the letter that will be fulfilled, and that our Lord's return for His Church will be in an actual cloud. I think it is probable it will. Anyway, we know that He will come **'in the air,'** for Paul, to whom was given, by GOD, the privilege of revealing to His Church the great mystery of the second coming of our Lord, and who said, in this connection:

" **'Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,'** when writing more explicitly to the church at Thessalonica, said:

" **'For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'**

"Now, beloved, can any words be plainer, simpler, than these of Paul's, forming, as they do, the climax to all that has gone before in the New Testament. JESUS had Himself said,

" **'I will come again and receive you unto Myself.'**

"The angels said,

" **In like manner as ye have seen Him go, He shall come again,**' and now Paul amplifies this manner of His coming, while, at the same time, he emphasizes the fact of that return.

"Now let us look, dear friends, at the separate items of that detailed coming. We have already, more than once, alluded to the secrecy of the return of our Lord for His people, and people are puzzled over the language used by Paul's description of the return. **The Lord shall come with a shout**' Then the world at large will hear Him coming? No; we think not. Or, if they hear a sound, they will not understand it.

"The Lord's voice in His spiritual revelations is never heard save by the Lord's people. But there is the voice of the archangel - how about that? The same rule applies to that, we think.

"There were godly shepherds watching their flocks at night, near Bethlehem, and there was a whole host of angels singing, but the Bethlehemites did not hear. No one appears to have heard or seen anything save the godly shepherds. The same, we believe, applies to the **'trump,'** the call of GOD.

"In this connection it is interesting to note a fact that probably was in the mind of Paul when he wrote thus to the Thessalonians. The Roman army used three special trumpet-calls in connection with departure-with marching.

"The first meant, 'Pull down tents.'

"The second, 'Get in array.'

"The third, 'Start.'

"Did Paul, moved by the Holy Ghost, translate these three clarion notes in the topic of I Thessalonians 4:16, after this fashion:

"1. **'The Lord Himself.'**

"2. **'Voice of the archangel.'**

"3. **'The trump of God.'**

"But leaving that, again I would emphasize this truth, that it is only the trained ear of the spiritually-awakened soul which ever hears the call of GOD. We believe that all Scripture teaches the secrecy as well as the suddenness of the rapture of the church.

"In all the many appearances of the risen, resurrected Lord JESUS, during the many weeks between the resurrection and the ascension, even though, on one occasion, at least, He was seen by 500 disciples at once, yet there is no hint, either in the Word of GOD or in the records of history of that time, that JESUS was ever seen by the eye of an unbeliever. And depend upon it, no eye will see, no ear will hear Him, when He comes again, save those who are in CHRIST.

" **'The world seeth Me no more'** our Lord said, **'but ye see Me.'** **'Him GOD raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before GOD, even to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.'**

"When the voice of the Father came from heaven, witnessing to JESUS' truth, the people that stood by failed to hear it as a voice, but exclaimed,- **'It thunders.'** In the case of Paul on the way to Damascus, those with him heard nothing understandable.

"Enoch was taken secretly. Noah was shut into the ark before the flood came. Only Israel, at Sinai, and not the surrounding nations, understood those awful physical manifestations of GOD's power. Elijah was taken secretly. The nation neither saw nor heard anything of it.

"When will He come? I do not know; no one knows exactly; but this we do know, from the Word of GOD - that nothing remains to be fulfilled before He comes. He may come before this meeting closes. Again we know by every sign of the times that His coming cannot now be delayed much longer.

"Now to a very important feature as to the truth of the second coming of the Lord. There are many who argue that such teaching will tend to make the Christian worker careless of his work, his life, etc. There was never a more foolish argument advanced.

"First take a concrete illustration that gives the flat denial to it - namely, that the most spiritual-minded workers, at home and abroad, are those whose hearts (not heads only) are saturated with, not the doctrine merely, but the expectancy of their Lord's near return. Then, too, every such worker finds an incentive to redoubled service in the remembrance that every soul saved through their instrumentality brings the Lord's return nearer - **'hasting His coming'** - since, when the last unit composing His Church has been gathered in, He will come.

"Scripture, dear friends, is most plain, most emphatic, in its statements that the effect of living in momentary expectancy of our Lord's return touches the spiritual life and service at every point. **'We know,'** wrote John, **'that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.'** That, beloved, is the general statement. Now let us look at some of the separate particular statement.

"Writing to the Philippians, Paul connects heavenly mindedness with the return of the Lord for His Church saying, **'For our conversation'** - our manner of living, our citizenship - **'is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.'** To the Colossians the great apostle showed how the coming of the Lord was to be the incentive to mortification of self. **'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth,'** etc. James taught that the real cure for impatience was this dwelling in the hope and expectancy of our Lord's coming again. **'Be ye also patient,'** he wrote; **'stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh!'** We live in an age which is cursed with impatience - children, young men and women, parents, business people, domestic people, pastors, Christian workers, Sunday-school teachers, all alike have their spiritual lives and their work marred by impatience. A real, moment-by-moment heart-apprehension of the possible coming of JESUS in the next moment of time, is the only real cure for this universal impatience in the Christian Church.

"Then take another great sin in the Church, beloved - censoriousness. Oh, the damage it does to the one who indulges in it, and the suffering it causes to the one who is the victim of it. But here, again, a full, a constant realization of the near coming of our Lord will check censoriousness. Writing to the Corinthians, in his first epistle, Paul says, **"Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts."**

"The great quickener, too, of Christian diligence is to be found in the coming of the Lord. Peter writes to us saying, **"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, . . . seeing then that these things shall be, . . . what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy living and godliness; looking for and hasting the coming . . . Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."**

"May I say, too, in all gentleness and love, that it has seemed to me, for years, that the missing link in nearly all 'holiness' preaching (so called) is this much-neglected expectancy of our Lord's return. Paul connects holiness and the second coming of CHRIST, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, saying, **"The God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"**

"The scoff of the world, dear friends, against us, as Christians, is that the professed bond of love is absent from our life. And here again GOD's Word shows us that a real living in expectancy of our Lord's return would teach us to love one another. In that same epistle I have just quoted, Paul says, **"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord with all His saints"**

"I have only time, this afternoon, for but one more of these references, and that is a very elementary though a very essential one. Paul, in that same epistle, teaches that to be saved means that we are saved to serve. **"Ye turned to God,"** he says, **"to serve . . . and to wait for His Son from heaven"**

"I must close, friends. But before I do, do let me beseech every Christian here this afternoon to go aside with GOD, and with His plain, unadulterated Word. Assure yourself that JESUS is coming again, that He is coming soon, and that you are so living that you shall **'not be ashamed at His coming.'** Should He tarry till Thursday next, and He is willing to suffer me to meet you here again, we will continue this great subject on the line of the three judgments. Let us close our meeting by singing hymn number 308."

Like one in a strange, delicious dream, Tom Hammond rose with the others and sang:

"JESUS is coming! Sing the glad word!
Coming for those He redeemed by His blood,
Coming to reign as the glorified Lord!
JESUS is coming again!"

As he left the hall, and thought, "How Zillah would have enjoyed, how she would have been helped, by this meeting!" he muttered.

"How senseless of me not to have told her of it when I wrote this morning.

He smiled a little to himself as he murmured:

"May I take this bit of remissness as a sign that the Divine love was predominant within me, rather than the human? Or was it that I am not yet sufficiently taught in the school of human love?"

~ end of chapter 19 ~

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