

The People that Laughed.



ON the balcony of the Royal Hotel, Bloemfontein, stood a group of men and women, laughing and joking at the strange scene before their eyes. Swirling and foaming a few feet beneath them flowed a mighty torrent. The spruit was full and overflowing, the street had been transformed into a river, and the hotel stood like an island in the course of the raging flood.

It never entered their heads that there was danger. But as they stood there, mirthful and light-hearted, watching the ever-rising waters, they felt a shock. The laughter ceased. The mirth was over. Consternation was printed upon every countenance.

But I will quote the newspaper account. Says the *Transvaal Leader* : " People staying at the Royal Hotel gathered on the balcony to watch the strange sight of the waters flowing in Fountain Street. Then came a sudden roaring rush of waters, flooding the street ten feet deep, and bearing all before it. A wagon, caught by the flood, crashed against the balcony and bore it down. The agonised people above clung to the breaking ironwork, shrieking for help. But little

help could be given in the face of those raging waters."

Two or three weeks after this tragic event a friend was showing me round the Bloemfontein Museum. Suddenly a picture caught my eye. It was a photo, taken during the recent flood, showing the hotel just before its collapse, with the people on the balcony.

The whole scene stood vividly portrayed before me. And I could not but think of others, whose danger is as real as that of the unfortunate inmates of the hotel, but who no more suspect it than they did.

Reader, do you know any such people? To make the question still more personal, are you yourself one such?

Laughter-loving and gay you may be, but your sins have exposed you to the danger of hell-fire. Meet God you must, sooner or later, and unless you get those crimson sins washed away, justice will compel Him to banish you into eternal darkness.

It is no time for trifling. Life is a serious matter. Eternity is more serious still. Serious questions confront you and call for serious answers. What of your soul? Where will you spend the great hereafter? Are you ready to meet God?

A thoughtless, butterfly kind of life scarcely suits one who can only remain on earth a few years at

most. Think! *You have notice to quit!* Go you must, and that very soon. Time is hurrying you on; death will hurry you out. What then?

Do not imagine that my remarks are only intended for old men and women. More die at seventeen than at seventy.

A skilled sportsman does not care to shoot a bird at rest. He delights to take it while upon the wing. "Bang!" goes the gun, and the little lark, soaring in the summer sky like a tiny speck upon the canopy of cloudless blue, falls to the ground. Its song was joyous, it feared no danger; but its life is over for ever.

That is how Death acts. He has room in his bag for the aged and wrinkled; but ofttimes he makes a special mark of the young and the blithe and the gay.

You may be winging your way merrily along under the sunny sky of youth and pleasure, but beware! Even at this moment Death may be aiming a shaft at you.

Death, however, is not the end. "After this the judgment." Have you thought of that?

A Christian lady was speaking to a young friend of hers about these matters.

"Oh," she replied, "I intend to become a Christian before I die. But I am only twenty-two, and there is plenty of time yet."

So think many. They do not mean to be lost for ever. It is their sincere intention to be converted some day; but they imagine there is plenty of time, and so they *put it off* until some future day—a day that sometimes never comes.

Amongst those who perished amid the ruins of the Royal Hotel was Mr. S., the proprietor. It appears that he had intended to leave that same day for Cape Town, but had put off the journey. If only he had put his intention into practice! He delayed, however, and lost his life in consequence.

Do not be content with *intending* to become a Christian. If you delay for a single hour in reaching the place of safety, you run a most fearful risk. By to-morrow you may be in eternity.

Why do I say "**THE** place of safety"? Because there is only one.

Where is it? Mark the answer. The only place of safety for sinners is under the shelter of the blood of Christ. Nowhere else can you find security from the coming storm of judgment. •

It is *your sins* that have imperilled your soul, and exposed you to God's righteous judgment. And if you are to be saved it must be through the removal of your sins. "Knowledge of salvation" is by "the

remission of sins " (Luke i. 77), and "Without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.)

If your sins are not to bring down judgment upon your head they must be *atoned* for, and nothing but the blood of the Substitute can atone for sins.

Now it is for this that Jesus suffered upon the cross. We read that He "suffered for sins"; not His own (for He had none), but for ours. He bore the wrath of God in order to make atonement for us. It is in this way that a refuge has been provided. He who flees to the Saviour is sheltered by the precious blood that He shed.

There were some at Bloemfontein who managed to flee in time. The day after the disaster the telegraph wires up and down the country were humming with messages from those who had escaped.

"Thank God, I am safe" were the words which in several instances conveyed the news to anxious friends.

In a truer and deeper sense the sinner that has fled to Jesus can use these words.

"Thank God, I am safe," such can say. Not "I shall be safe some day," but "*I am* safe, as safe as the blood of Christ can make me; as safe as if I were in heaven already."

Not "*I hope* I am safe," but "*I am* safe, because I

have confidence in Christ, and in the power and efficacy of His blood."

"Thank God, I am safe." Safe from the danger to which my sins exposed me! Safe from the judgment that I so richly deserve! Safe in Christ! Safe for ever!

Reader, can you say "Thank God, I am safe"?

It is vain to hope for safety in any other way than by trusting in Christ. If you lean upon your own fancied goodness, saying that you are "better than others," you will assuredly be lost.

If you expect to reach heaven by "trying," or "doing your best," or "striving to please God," you will meet with bitter disappointment at the end.

None but Jesus can save. During the Bloemfontein flood some brave men made an effort to save the lives of those in peril.

A man was carrying a child from Mrs. V.'s house, but suddenly in mid-stream he fainted and dropped.

Dr. T. was conducting a young lady through the flooded street, when the stream bowled him over like a ninepin, and the lady was borne away beyond his reach.

Another gentleman, who was carrying a child, was thrown off his feet by the force of the current, and nearly lost his own life.

These would-be deliverers did their best. They were *willing* to save, but were not *able*. They proved to be but broken reeds.

But Jesus is both willing and able. None but He can save you. No priest or preacher, no Christian parent or friend can ensure your safety. Efforts, works, religious observances, and a moral life are but broken reeds. Lean upon them and you will perish. But "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou shalt be saved*." (Acts xvi. 31.)

Do you still treat the matter lightly? Will you still pursue your way, merry and thoughtless, leaving your eternal welfare to chance?

Remember that, though it may be laughing time now, weeping time will come.

If you could have looked into the Bloemfontein Town Hall when, after the disaster, it was turned into a temporary hospital, you would have found the occupants overwhelmed with grief.

An eye-witness thus describes the scene: "Sounds of fearful sobbing filled the hall as some woman recovered from the stupor of shock to realise that her all had gone, and that perhaps she was a widow. One man mingled his sobs with those of the women. His three sons had been drowned before his eyes."

Will you find words, do you think, in which to chide yourself for your folly if you wake up in eternity to find that *your all has gone*? Your joy gone. Your friends gone. Your life gone. Your opportunities gone. Yourself gone, gone into the unutterable gloom of eternal night in the land where hope never comes.

You will never forgive yourself! But it need not be. God is very gracious. His grace is free, *but you must avail yourself of it*. It only flows through one channel, and that is, through Christ and His atoning blood.

Trust in Him and all will be well. The song-filled courts of joy above shall be your eternal abode instead of the region of wailing and despair.

Even here and now you shall taste of a joy that you never knew before. Fresh delights shall unfold before your wondering gaze. Pleasures that you never dreamed of shall be yours. All this is to be found in Jesus. Knowing and trusting Him is the secret of a happy life on earth, as well as of a blissful eternity by and by.

“In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”
(Psalm xvi. 11.)