

Darkness in Philadelphia and Light in India

by Walter L. Wilson, M.D.

There lived in one of the cities of Kansas, a godly mother whose daughter, Margaret, was most ambitious and greatly interested in music. She had a good voice, was often engaged for local entertainment, and a member of the church choir. Her mother sought to give her the benefit of as much training as was available in the home town. The lure of a stage career was constantly tugging at her heart, and Margaret decided that she would go to one of the large cities for a deeper study and a greater development with the best teachers.

The mother worked and saved, denying herself many comforts of life, that she might enable her daughter to secure the voice culture which she so eagerly desired. The eventful day came and Margaret departed for Philadelphia, where she found a teacher of voice under whom she began to receive a splendid training. Margaret was a very pleasant girl, made friends easily, was attractive in appearance, and soon surrounded herself with new companions. Unfortunately, these were not God-fearing young people. They, too, were away from home and had drifted into the ways of the world. The whirl of the city and the enticing calls of the life of pleasure had enmeshed them, and soon Margaret also had become enveloped in the maze of worldly living.

The early training was disregarded and the fear of God was cast aside. The Bible remained unopened and prayer was neglected, while far away at home the dear old mother labored and saved, prayed and pleaded with God for her daughter. The letters were not as spiritual as they once had been, and in the stories to mother no mention was made of God nor of the church. There was much written, however, about parties, entertainment, recitals, but little about the things of God. The letters became more infrequent and shorter in length, as the heart of the daughter turned from God, from home, and from the one who loved her so much.

Among Margaret's associates were some who belonged to an atheistic society. These met at rather frequent interval, only to scoff at the Scriptures, to sneer at the Christians, to deride God,

and to find reasons and arguments for ridding the country of every Christian influence. Gradually Margaret's faith was taken from her. That which her mother taught her at home seemed now to be utter foolishness. The Bible which she once loved was now the subject of ridicule. No saving faith had ever been in Margaret's heart. The faith which she had was her mother's faith and not her own. She had never been face to face with the Saviour of sinners, and accepted Him for her own Lord and Saviour. Hers was a second-hand religion. She had no saving interest in Christ.

During the time of this apostasy, Margaret continued to train her voice and made a very bright pupil, of whom the teacher was justly proud. She sang well, her voice was clear, she could reach the high notes and sustain them easily. This splendid talent, together with her attractive personality, caused her to be received in the society of the elite. With nothing to sustain her heart, however, she became quite proud of her attainments, and was ashamed of the humble home far away in Kansas and of the mother, who in her humble surroundings had sacrificed much that Margaret might obtain the desire of her heart. The letters sent home reflected this feeling and hurt the heart of the mother deeply. She pleaded and prayed that God would send His Spirit into Margaret's heart and would bring her back to Himself. She did not know how this could be brought about, for she did not dictate to God; her only desire was that the Holy Spirit who deals wisely with souls would find some way into the heart of her daughter and save her from the terrible doom that lay in her path.

One day, as Margaret was practicing at the piano, a terrible depression came over her heart. She had been entertained at a number of functions recently, invitations had come from circles that made others envious of her popularity; she was having all that her heart desired in the way of pleasure and of training, still a darkness came over her soul which she could not understand. She was miserable in her soul. Pleasures aggravated the depression and nothing seemed to lift the load. Her friends tried to comfort her, although some criticized her for having the "blues" when she should be the happiest of the crowd.

This peculiar heaviness of heart perplexed Margaret very much. She could not understand it. She knew her mother was praying for her, for she had written Margaret that she was pleading with

the Lord to bring her back to God. Margaret had been denying that there was a God. She sought to make herself believe that the stories of the Scripture were a myth, that there was no judgment, and that the faith of the dear old mother was simply a beautiful tradition with no foundation in fact. She found no peace, however, in her studies of atheism, nor was she happy in the meetings where atheism was discussed and approved. The interest in her music lagged, and she no longer sang with a happy spirit, nor sought engagements, her chief desire being to flee away and to be alone. She decided in her heart to return to the home in the West and seek a refuge in her mother's arms.

Soon after reaching this decision, Margaret went home. The mother was astonished and the friends were perplexed. In fact, no one could understand why Margaret had so suddenly left a career with such promise. The morning following the first day at home, she awoke early and could not return to sleep. A voice kept saying to her, "Turn on the radio."

"I'll not do it," she said, "I am weary of that jazz. I left Philadelphia to get away from it and want no more of it. I'll not go down and turn on the radio." Again, she sought solace in peaceful slumber, but she rolled and tossed upon her bed, restless and heart hungry. Again, a voice seemed to say to her, "Go down and turn on the radio," but still she refused. After again seeking sleep, but in vain, she decided to obey that peculiar voice which seemed to demand obedience. She put on her bedroom slippers, donned a bath-robe and went down to the living room where the radio stood.

It was her mother's custom to listen each morning to the morning Bible lesson given over WDAF, the radio station of the Kansas City Star. The dial on the machine was set for that station. Just as Margaret turned the switch, she heard the speaker quoting: "And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven ... Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:48-50). These words were like a magic influence on her soul. The message seemed to be peculiarly fitted to her special need. The Holy Spirit was working, the mother's prayers were about to be answered. Mother had heard the daughter slipping down stairs quietly and she opened the bedroom door that she might hear the message herself without being seen by Margaret.

As the speaker told the story of the woman at Jesus' feet, the Lord used the Scripture to open Margaret's heart. She saw in the Saviour One who loved and welcomed the sinner, as well as One who forgave the sinner. She reasoned that if this woman could "go in peace," why could she not also receive that message from the Lord. As the Bible lesson ended and the voice of the speaker died away, she quietly knelt beside the radio and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ for herself. By faith she knelt at His feet, a suppliant for mercy, while mother upstairs was on her knees pleading with the Lord to save her daughter.

The prayer was finished, the Saviour accepted the seeking sinner, the burden was lifted, the darkness was gone, peace reigned in that troubled heart. Quickly she ran up the stairs and into her mother's bedroom, where they were soon clasped in each other's arms and weeping. The praying mother was rewarded. The Holy Spirit had heard her cry, sought out the wayward girl in the great city of Philadelphia, did His own peculiar work in her heart, and now she was praising the Saviour.

Margaret at once devoted herself to the study of the Scriptures, and began using her voice in the work of the Lord by singing the gospel story to the hearts of all within hearing. After some months she heard of a call for a volunteer to serve in India under a mission board. She applied for the position, took the examination, and was successful in obtaining the appointment.

After Margaret reached her destination and had begun her work for the Lord, she wrote this story to me in Kansas City for the encouragement of my own heart. How blessed it is when our Lord permits us to see some fruit of our labors! Let us be encouraged to lay hold of the Lord of the harvest for our drifting, wandering young people! He can reach their hearts and only He.

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