

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## THE GOLDEN CHAIN IS BROKEN.

The Angel of Death has invaded our home. The golden cord has been severed. "Mother" has gone to her reward.

It was a sad affliction which came upon us on the afternoon of the eighth of February, 1901, the thirty-eighth anniversary of the birth of our youngest son, when, without warning, almost in the twinkling of an eye, the final summons came and my wife was called to her heavenly home. For many months she had been in her usual good health, with perhaps a gradual oncoming debility so slight as hardly to be noticeable, pursuing her usual domestic vocations, attending her church with gratifying regularity and taking the usual interest in affairs about her; so that it may be said that up to the final moment her health was vigorous, her mind clear and active and her body strong. Her household duties were her pleasure, her friends her comfort, her home her happiness. She was spared an invalidism and was translated in the manner for which she always expressed a preference. "When He is ready I hope God will call me in the twinkling of an eye; that would be glorious."

At noon we were joined by the chaplain of the House of Representatives, to whose recital of the exciting events attending upon Mrs. Nation's temperance crusade and appearance before the Legislature in the interests of prohibition we listened with pleasure. Throughout the recital my wife was much interested,

and repeatedly expressing approval of the vigor with which the crusade was being pushed regretted her inability to participate in the effort to bring the Legislature and State officials to a sense of their duty and the responsibility which rested upon them to entirely rid from the fair name of Kansas the blot of disobedience to the prohibitory law. Not an indication of illness was shown by her in any way. She was happy, joyous, enthusiastic and in apparently perfect health. Soon after the meal was finished she lay down upon her bed to take a few minutes' rest, as had been her custom, while I pursued my work. A little later she called me saying she believed something she had eaten had disagreed with her. I administered to her wants and sent a call to our physician, hoping she would soon be herself again. Resuming my writing, she called to me, asking if I was notifying our sons that she was not well. I replied in the negative, she rejoined, "That's right; I'm not sick, but will be all right in a few moments." The doctor was delayed and she was having some pain about her heart. I telephoned again for him, returning at once to her bedside. A neighbor, Mrs. Welcome, came in and assisted in ministering to Mrs. Fisher. In a few moments she lay back upon her couch, quietly closed her eyes and was in the arms of her Heavenly Father. She had passed away as peacefully as a babe sinking to sleep, and I was left alone. "The silver cord had been loosed, the golden bowl had been broken, the pitcher had been broken at the fountain." The Savior's hosts had been increased by the admission to the Heavenly City of this sainted woman, the heroine of many a struggle, the exemplar of a true Christian faith, a faithful wife and companion, a devoted and loving mother, a child of God.

My grief was overwhelming as it dawned upon me that my beloved wife was no more. For a moment a great sorrow crossed my pathway. But through the darkness came the light of Heaven and the cloud bore a silver lining. Mother had gone before, but she had gone to her Savior. She had left me, but she had gone to her God, to be there to bid me welcome. I could see her sitting at the feet of the Savior she loved, her face radiant with glory, her son Joseph in her arms, and I was comforted. She had fought a good fight, she had kept the faith and finished her work, and a crown of glory was hers. Why should I grieve? Had not her end come just as she had always wished it might come? Had she not but received her well-earned reward? Was she not blest by her Heavenly Father in being admitted into His kingdom? My bereavement was her blessing, my sorrow her joy, my affliction her relief. But for the comfort to be found in the religion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Brother of man, I could not have stood the blow, but would have sunk under its awful suddenness. Sustained by grace I am waiting my time. It cannot be long before I will be called to join her, our son and our dear departed friends in our home on high.

Loving and sympathetic hands ministered unto me in my affliction. Our sons and daughters-in-law who were at their homes hurried to my side and ministered unto me with grief-stricken hearts and tender and loving hands. The brethren of the church, Grand Army comrades, friends from over the city and State, neighbors and citizens of Topeka with whom we had hardly an acquaintance, came quickly and joined in my grief. I was not alone in my sorrow. There were hundreds who felt almost as if the loss was personal,

and these sustained and supported me. Mrs. Fisher's brothers came to attend her funeral and testify to her worth and of the great love they bore for her and her memory. It was hard to lay the form I had loved so long, and that had been the light of my earthly home and my companion through life, from sight; but, though grief-stricken and bereaved, my Heavenly Father sustained me, and I am left alone to finish my work. "God's will, not mine, be done."

What could be more befitting than to see her for the last time at the altar of God's house?

We buried mother from the church of which she was a member on the afternoon of the 11th of February, the service having been delayed for the arrival of our second son from the South. Her pastor, Rev. Dr. J. D. McFarland, conducted the exercises, on the platform with him a number of pastors of the city assisting in the last sad rites. I would consider this chapter altogether incomplete did I not include some of the beautiful things said of my departed wife by those who knew her best, and did I not also include some of the beautiful testimonials to her character and life which have come to me to comfort me since her death. Rev. J. B. McAfee, a Lutheran preacher, spoke words of comfort and consolation that cheered my heart.

Rev. John D. Knox, who formerly belonged to the Pittsburg Conference with us, and who had been intimately associated with us in Kansas since 1865, spoke most feelingly from the pulpit, of her life and work, in the following beautiful testimonial:

"I feel altogether out of place in the pulpit on this occasion. I feel that I should be sitting by the side of Brother Fisher and be weeping with him. For nearly forty years I had known the deceased intimately and well. My Kansas acquaintance with her began

in Lawrence, in the spring of 1865, when I was on my way to Topeka to become pastor of the Methodist church in this city. Dr. Fisher was presiding elder, and I stopped at their home to learn of my duties and work in this charge.

"It was upon the occasion of that visit that I learned the particulars of the memorable Quantrell raid and of how Mrs. Fisher had tried to save her home and had saved her husband's life. She had shown me the cellar in which he had lain as the house was burned down over his head, and she had shown me the little peach tree which had supported the carpet and other effects under which he was hidden when she rescued him from the cellar after the floors of the house fell in, and while four bloodthirsty men sat on their horses, rifles and revolvers in hand, not sixty feet distant, waiting and watching that they might take his life. I was thrilled with the story, and could see from the locations and circumstances that a deed of remarkable heroism had been achieved by this clear-headed and honest-souled woman, this heroine.

"Just as her narrative was finished a terrible shock came upon us. One of the sons came running in from the street crying, 'Oh, mother, President Lincoln has been assassinated!' We were stricken speechless for a moment. Then Mrs. Fisher recovered her composure and said to me, 'Brother Knox, will we have it all to do over again?' I replied that it was an awful thing, but that I thought the war was ended for all time, and that there would be no more such suffering as she and her family had had to endure. She fervently replied 'Thank God for that comfort,' and uttered a prayer of relief, and also a prayer of sorrow at the Nation's affliction.

"Mrs. Fisher was a good woman, a wise woman,

a great woman. In the mountains, villages and cities of Pennsylvania, among the hills and cities of Ohio, on the prairies and in the towns and cities of Kansas and Nebraska and in the mountains of Utah she was true to humanity, to her church and to her God.

"King Solomon asked, 'Who can find a virtuous woman?' He meant not only one pure in domestic and social life, but one strong in all the virtues and graces—in all the elements that constitute a child of God. Had the royal Solomon, son of David, come from Jerusalem to Topeka before last Friday and asked me, 'Who can find a virtuous woman?' I would have answered him, 'I can; there is one at 1020 Fillmore Street.'

"Long ago this good woman believed in Christ to the justification and sanctification of her soul. Then to her faith she added virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. All of these things were in her, abounding in beautiful and divine proportions; so that she was fruitful in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. She had that love that casteth out all fear. Even now her broad intellectual brow and closed lips indicate that firmness and perseverance that characterizes a Presbyterian. To these she combined the fervor and zeal of a Methodist. When Dr. Clark was asked by an irritated man, 'Are you not a bigot?' he answered, 'No; I am a Methodist.' While Sister Fisher was a loyal and zealous Methodist, her catholic heart was so large it took in the whole world.

"When she learned I had accepted the superintendency of the Ottawa District of the Kansas Children's Home Society she said to me she was too old

to adopt one of our orphans, but if younger she would gladly do so. She had, I remembered, years since raised an orphan girl to become a woman, wife and mother. And when I once called on Sister Fisher and I saw she was using a knitting machine I inquired, 'Why, Mrs. Fisher, what are you doing?' 'Oh,' said she, 'I am knitting to make money to pay the expenses of my orphan girl in India.' For years and years she toiled and gave of the fruits of her toil to support this helpless child in that far-off heathen land. In later years Mrs. Fisher said to me she had hoped the girl, grown to be a Christian woman, would have become the wife of a minister.

"A few days before Mrs. Fisher died my wife and I called to see her, at which time the subject of death came up. Sister Fisher expressed a readiness to die, when my wife said to her: 'Now, Mrs. Fisher, you don't mean you are ready to die any minute?' Lifting up her hand she exclaimed with emphasis, 'Yes; I am ready to die any day, any time. Let Him call when He will, I am ready.'

"She has gone to that fair and happy land  
 "Where all is tranquil and serene;  
 A calm and undisturbed repose;  
 Where no cloud can intervene;  
 There no angry tempest blows;  
 Every tear is wiped away;  
 Sighs no more shall heave that breast;  
 Night is lost in endless day,  
 Sorrow in eternal rest.

Equally praiseful and appropriate were the following remarks of Rev. George S. Dearborn at the memorial services held by the Conference at the First Methodist Church of Topeka on the 17th of March following Mrs. Fisher's death:

"The relations of the sisters of Bethany, Mary and Martha, to the Master and His mission, relatively considered, have been the subject of more or less theorizing and controversy among theologians and religious thinkers over a long period of time. I do not desire to enter into a discussion of this question upon this occasion, but it will be generally conceded that whoever combines the qualities and devotion of these sisters possesses the essential elements of a well-rounded Christian womanhood.

"I first knew Sister Fisher in the character of Martha. On the arrival of myself and family in Kansas in May, 1865, we reached Lawrence weary and travel-worn, on the tenth of that month, where Elder Fisher took us in and his good wife ministered unto us as we had need, providing us with the first meal and lodgings we had had in any private family in the State. Her generous hospitality and kindness were by no means exceptional to our case. They were often tested by others in that early period and were never found wanting. It was in the heart of Sister Fisher to do good and serve others.

"In less than a year from the date referred to I became her pastor while her husband continued his work as presiding elder, their home remaining in Lawrence. In this relation I had an opportunity to observe Sister Fisher in her exhibition of the character of Mary. She loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and hence was loyal and devoted to His church. She was a good hearer in the congregation, devoted to the work of the Sunday-school, and ready for duty in the various social and devotional services of the church. She did not forget a Christian mother's duty to her children. Two of them, Joseph C. and their adopted daughter, Jennie A., came into the church in connection with my pas-

torate. By more than a score of years this son, their third child, preceded her in his translation to the home of the immortals. Mother and son are now on the yonder side of the river of life. They await the coming of the bereaved husband and the other loved ones who still linger here.

"May all their kindred and other bereaved ones, together with ourselves as a body, share their greeting when the Lord shall call."

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The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, of which the deceased had long been a member, sent the following touching tribute of her worth and expression of sympathy with those whom she left behind:

"The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, in tender remembrance of our recent sorrow, and in grateful appreciation of the cheer and helpfulness of her in whose loving companionship you have been blessed for so many years, desire to express to you their sincere sympathy, their sense of personal loss and the great loss their society has sustained.

"Mrs. Fisher, with her discriminating mind, her unusual faculty for seeing the desirable end in spite of hindrances, her steadiness of purpose and unfaltering faith in a divine guidance, was an inspiration in all missionary and church enterprises.

"While deeply mourning the loss of a dear friend and co-worker, and while most keenly sympathizing with you in your greater loss, we can but rejoice that you have the happy assurance that she is gone to claim the well-earned reward of a long, useful and unselfish life."

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The Ministerial Association of Topeka was not unmindful of the sorrow their colleague and brother had suffered, and at a meeting held soon after my wife's death sent the following report of their action in relation thereto:

"Elizabeth M. Acheson was born January 28th, 1826, of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian parents, in New York City. Her family resided in Baltimore for a time and then moved when she was a child to Carroll County, Ohio. From childhood she loved Christ, but in Steubenville, Ohio, during a revival in 1846, she obtained a clear consciousness and happy evidence of her acceptance with God. In after-life she attained to that perfect love that casteth out all fear. On May 1st, 1849, she was united in marriage to Rev. H. D. Fisher, of the Pittsburg Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and for fifty-one years and nine months was a faithful wife, mother and helper in the Gospel.

"The fruit of her toil and holy life may be found in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kansas, Nebraska and Utah. She was a patient, loving, hard-working, courageous woman. Her benevolence was equal to her ability, and her Christian charity extended to all. She hated all wrong and oppression, especially that of slavery and the liquor traffic. She joyed in her children and lived for her sons. Many daughters of the King have done virtuously, and she stands among the foremost in the ranks of the shining ones. It is therefore

"Resolved, That while we sorrow with Dr. Fisher in his great loss in the death of his wife we rejoice that for over fifty-one years he enjoyed the companionship of such a patient, loving, helpful and courageous helpmeet, and with him hope for a happy reunion in the sweet bye and bye; that in her long, eventful, faithful

life and triumphant death we recognize the power of the Gospel of Christ to lift a frail woman into the heights of national fame for courage, tact and wisdom, and to keep her free from pride and vanity, she with meek and quiet spirit going to her grave with the blessings of the earth and sky."

A large number of letters of condolence have been received, of which but a few are given to show the appreciation of the people of God of the life and work of our dear departed wife and mother. Among them is the following from the Rev. Charles M. Sheldon, author of "In His Steps":

*"My dear Dr. Fisher:*

"Permit me, in company with very many others out of the great host of your friends, to express my sympathy for you at this time. You know the source of your abiding comfort. May He who alone is all-sufficient at the time of our great bereavements be very near you to bless and comfort you.

"Very cordially, your friend and brother,

"CHARLES M. SHELDON."

From good Sister Embley, of Wamego, a tender letter of sympathy and tribute came as precious ointment:

"WAMEGO, February 8, 1901, 7:30 P. M.

*"Poor dear Father Fisher:*

"We have just learned of the deep sorrow through which you are passing, but we know that the reward of the righteous is surely Mother's, that she will receive a 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

"She has just preceded a little, that is all, to await a happy reunion where there are no more partings,

and our loss is surely her gain. For if any one was ever prepared through both faith and works it was dear Mother Fisher.

"Our prayers and tears are yours."

Brother and Sister De Wolff, of Garnett, who lived with us a long time at Lawrence, and who knew the deceased intimately and well, testified their sorrow and their love for her memory as follows:

*"Dear Brother Fisher:*

"We were surprised and pained to learn last evening in the *Globe-Democrat* of the death of your good wife. But a few days ago, in looking over a lot of old photographs, we came across one of Mrs. Fisher and the boys as I had the latter in my Sunday-school class at Lawrence. We were talking over old times, of the pleasant hours spent in your home, of the many acts of friendship shown us by Mrs. Fisher, of the growth and development of your sons into active, highly-respected and useful men and citizens, of the condition of Mother's health, and wondering when the end to her would come.

"Happily, in this case, the end is but the beginning of a long, blissful, endless life with the blessed Lord, in Whom she so fully believed and trusted. We are sorry, Brother Fisher, that you have to make the balance of the journey alone, but refer you to John 14: 1, 3, 27, and to 1st Thessalonians 4:13 to 17."

Brother and Sister Mayor, of Council Grove, contributed to our comfort in the following touching message:

*"Dear Brother Fisher:*

"We were grieved to see that Mother Fisher had passed away. We had not heard she was ill until

we noticed the account of her death in the *Capital*, and we hasten to send our earnest sympathies.

"This is the heaviest blow that has ever fallen upon you, no doubt, and we join in our earnest prayers to our Heavenly Father for His richest blessings to rest upon you, and that you may prove the fullness of that grace which has been yours to enjoy during the past, and which you have so often commended to others under similar circumstances.

"Her memory will be precious to you and also to the Church in the different places where you have labored for the Master. We congratulate you on her blessed happy life being spared to you so long, and give grateful thanks to God for the influence of her life and character upon the Church and the world. Her reward will be great. And it will not be long before you will be called to go, too. It will be a pleasant thought for you to contemplate that when you go Mother will be at the gate of the city to meet and greet you. God bless you."

Mrs. M. Mellor, a very dear friend of Mrs. Fisher, living in Salt Lake City, Utah, and for a long time a member of our home during my pastorate there, expressed the sympathy she felt and the sorrow she suffered in words which have brought great comfort and cheer:

*"My dearest Friend:*

"I cannot tell how my heart aches for you. It was a great shock to me to learn of our dear Mother's death. I have lost the best and dearest friend I ever had or ever will have on this earth.

"Oh if I could only be with you and do something to comfort you in your great sorrow. There is no one who knows what this loss is to you better than my-

self. I will always remember her as a grand and noble woman. There is not another one who can take her place in my heart. I loved her as if she were my own mother, she was so good and kind to me always. I have always felt as if I had a home to go to at any time, and was always sure of a welcome by her. Her death is a great blow, but we must remember that she has only gone on a little way before. May God bless and comfort you."

The dedication of this volume and the recital of our Golden Wedding Anniversary occasion furnish a key to the foregoing pages, which are designed to emphasize the beauties and values of a splendid Christian life. The question, "What is Your Life?" is answered in one word—"Opportunity." Shakespeare has said, "O, Opportunity, great is thy crime." Her life has proclaimed, "Glad Opportunity, great is thy reward." Her opportunity was well improved.

The question of greatest import which comes running down the ages is, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Properly, this question is an affirmation—"If a man die, he *shall live again*." And this declaration has been demonstrated in the case of our Savior. For "Now is Christ risen and become the first fruits of them that slept." "Because He liveth we shall live also."

Paul has declared, "Behold I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in the twinkling of an eye, and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

Upon this subject Mrs. Fisher was well-informed. From her youth she had been a careful student of the Bible, and often in her advancing years dwelt with rapturous delight upon the thought of being changed

into the likeness of Christ in a moment. Her desire, very often expressed, was at last granted. For her illness was brief, and while still in the possession of her mental faculties, having talked intelligently with the good sister who was at her bedside when her life went out but a moment before she breathed her last, she was called by the Master she had served so well. Without a sigh or a heavy breath, without a struggle or an emotion of any kind, the weary one was at rest. Her freed spirit did not cease to live. It simply took its flight to realms of eternal day.

It is as reasonable to believe that we shall live hereafter as it is to believe that we live at all. Death is no more a mystery than life. Not all men understand the former, no man understands the latter. Death does not end all. Better by far that none of us had ever lived than that none of us shall ever live again. It is impossible and unnatural to think that one so intelligent, so devoted to the welfare of humanity, so constant in her faith in Christ the Redeemer, has ceased to live and shall live no more. Mrs. Fisher was translated, that she should not see death. The beautiful body in which the loving, trusting, believing soul dwelt, sleeps. The spirit has gone to the God who gave it. She often sang,

"Asleep in Jesus: Oh how sweet  
 To be for such a slumber meet!  
 A calm and undisturbed repose,  
 Unbroken by the last of foes."

I am alone, but not forsaken. The God of my fathers, the God of my Church, the God of my wife, the God of my soul, brings me comfort and peace. She has but gone before. Every cycle of the sun brings me one day nearer home. Kind friends minister to my wants and extend their comfort and sympathy. The

death of my wife broke up our home, but I have found another with my youngest son and his wife, and mourn not as one without hope, happiness and earthly comfort. Wherever I go I am greeted by friends whose recollection of Mother is as meat and drink to my soul. The days are not long, the nights are not dark. The sun of God's righteousness lights my pathway, and through the vision of His truth I am enabled to see the Zion of my Heavenly Father, where my loved ones who have gone before are received into their Master's arms and where I soon shall join them.

"Blessed be God, who giveth us the victory!"

"Amen, so let it be;

Life from the dead is in that word,

"Tis immortality."

