

# Dying of Thirst.

BY

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LONDON :

W. B. HORNER & SON, 27, PATERNOSTER SQ.

And 10, D'Olier Street, Dublin.

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## Dying of Thirst.



**H**AVE you ever known what it is to be thirsty?

“Of course I have,” you’ll reply. “I have often felt thirsty enough on a hot summer’s day after a good walk in the sun, or a hard pull in a heavy boat.”

But I don’t mean that kind of ordinary every-day thirst. I mean, have you ever been *dying of thirst*, and felt that if you did not get water in a short time you could not live? I fancy not; but I have. It

happened to me in the days of the great Indian Mutiny, when I was quite a young officer, serving in the North-West part of India.

In the course of duty, it happened that on a certain desperately hot evening towards the end of the month of June, I had to ride from a village lying at the foot of a rocky hill to an outpost, which was placed in a small oasis, in a desert of sand. The distance was only about 14 or 15 miles ; but there was no regular road, only some paths through the sand-hills and over the desert through which the route lay.

I was a cavalry officer, and I had with me as guide a Sowar of my regiment, who was supposed to know the way.

The day had been a terrible hot one, and we did not attempt to start until about half-an-hour before sunset. I was capitally mounted, but the sand made the road so heavy, that we could go along only very

quietly. A fiercely hot wind of about 115° Fahrenheit was blowing, and before we had ridden three or four miles, I felt thirsty, and drank the contents of a bottle of soda-water, which I had fortunately put into one of my holsters as a precaution. We went on another three or four miles when I saw my Sowar, who was leading, turn off the road to what, in the almost vanished twilight, looked like a pool of water. I heard him utter an exclamation of disgust, and on joining him found that it had only been a kind of mirage, and that our fancied water was but sand.

We jogged on two or three miles more, and it seemed to me that we were not keeping our proper direction ; so I asked the Sowar if he was sure that he was going right. He answered in a very hoarse voice :

“ I don't know ; I think I have missed the track.”

“What is the matter with you?” I asked.

“Oh ! sahib,” he replied, “I am dreadfully thirsty. I am *dying of thirst*.”

I could quite sympathise with him, for I, too, had for some time again been suffering from intense thirst. But what were we to do? The wind was blowing as fiercely hot as ever, and the atmosphere was so thick that we could not see a star or anything on the horizon to guide us. The sand, too, had been blown over the tracks, and it was impossible, in the darkness which had now settled down, to see any paths at all.

However, it was no use standing there ; so I told the Sowar to follow me, and took what I fancied was about the correct line for our destination.

So we went on for a short time. I noticed that the Sowar's voice was getting rapidly hoarser as he replied to the questions I put to him,

At last he was just able to croak out, "I can't go any further," and dismounting from his horse, he threw himself on a small hillock of sand.

What was I to do? Our horses were evidently greatly distressed, especially the Sowar's, and I felt that I was in a regular quandary. To leave the Sowar there was certain death for him, and yet to wait where we were until the morning would be equally certain death for both of us. However there seemed to be but little option, so I dismounted and sat down on a neighbouring sand-heap, feeling that my mouth and throat were as dry as a cinder, and that I could not last much longer without water.

We stayed there, I suppose, about a quarter of an hour, hope growing fainter and fainter every minute, when, to our intense joy, we heard, far away on our left, the bark of a dog. It gave us new life,

and, jumping up, I managed, with some difficulty, to get the Sowar into his saddle, and then, mounting myself, I led the way in the direction from which the dog's bark had come.

In about a quarter-of-an-hour the voices of several dogs saluted our ears, and soon we reached a small native hamlet, and let the inhabitants know how badly we stood in need of water. They gave the Sowar a small kid-skin, called a "Mashkizah," full of water, and it was a marvellous sight to see how the Sowar clung to it, and drank and drank as if nothing could satisfy him. Yes, that draught of water was worth ten times its weight in gold to us, because we were just *dying of thirst*.

Have you come to realize, dear reader, that you, too, are dying, and just for the same reason. The water we needed was but material water; but the water you need is the water of life, and you are as

surely *dying* for want of it as we were for want of our material water; only the death we were dying was but the physical death of the body, whereas the death that you are dying is the spiritual, eternal death of your immortal soul.

Have you ever realized this? Have you come to know that thirst, of which the Holy Spirit speaks in the 55th chapter of Isaiah, when He says, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters"? That thirst of which our Lord tells the woman of Samaria, in the 4th chapter of St. John's Gospel, "Whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst"? That thirst of which we read in the last chapter of the Bible, "And he that is athirst let him come"?

I do trust that you have experienced it; because the thirst spoken of in these passages is just that longing which seizes men and women when they come to realize



that they are lost, ruined, hell-deserving sinners, and that, unless they can somehow get rid of their sins; unless they can somehow make their peace with God; unless they can somehow be changed, be converted, they will be eternally lost.

Oh! reader, this is true, solemnly, awfully true, whether you have realized it or not. You are by nature, and by your own deeds, a sinner. Hour after hour, day after day, year after year, have you been heaping up higher and higher the mountain of your sin. Month after month has the record in God's book of judgment been growing blacker and blacker against you. Do you doubt it? Why, just think what sin is. It is doing anything that is wrong in the eyes of an all-pure, all-holy God. The Bible says, "The thought of foolishness is sin." Jesus Christ Himself emphatically lays down that God judges not deeds alone, but the motives which under-

lie and prompt the deeds. He calls even an impure look adultery ! Oh, how can we, in the face of such facts, dare to fancy that we are without sin ?

Perhaps you'll say, " Oh, but I never thought I was without sin. Of course, I am a sinner. We all are." How easy to make that admission. But have you ever really thought out what that admission involves ? The Bible says that there is but one penalty for sin, and that is death. " The soul that sinneth it shall die." Not many sins or few sins, mark you. Not what we call great sins or small sins ; but *sinneth*, sins of any kind. Yes, " The wages of sin is death"—eternal death—eternāl destruction from the presence of the Lord ; and if you have not been born again, if you are still in your sins, then your position is one of most awful danger, for you may die at any moment, and if you die in your sin you will be eternally lost.

To realize this, to know this, to long for escape—this is to long for eternal life, this is the thirst we must have or die.

Do you realize these great facts, dear reader? Have you this thirst? Then there is glorious news for you in God's Word. "He that is athirst, let him come; he that will, let him take of the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) Yes, freely. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isaiah lv. 1.)

Are you thirsty? Then come just as you are. Come in your sin, in your guilt. Come without bringing anything in your hand; no good works, no moral improvement, no tears, no character. Just come without money and without price, and accept from God's hand what He Himself has done for you freely.

Does He not know that you are helpless? Yes, a thousand times better than you do. He knows that you can do nothing to win for yourself eternal life. So He just gives it to you as a free gift. "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ah, yes, that is the glad tidings, "In Christ Jesus." God, knowing our helplessness, knowing that we are sinners lying under the condemnation of death, has sent His Son to die in our stead, as our substitute; has Himself laid upon that Son "the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah liii. 6); and all He asks from you is that you should simply believe this, and trust in the great fact that Christ has really Himself borne your own, your very own, sins in His own body upon the tree (1 Peter ii. 24); and in the very act of believing you have, at once, eternal life. (Jno. iii. 36.)

But, perhaps, you'll say, "I do believe that Christ has really borne my sins, and

that God no longer looks at me, but at my Perfect Substitute ; that God counts me righteous because my Substitute is perfectly righteous ; but I am afraid I can't stand. I am afraid I shall fall, and then I shall have all my thirst again." God be praised if you can say so much.

Now turn to John iv. 14, and see what our Lord says about this thirsting again : " Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall *never* thirst." Don't be afraid. Trust the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not only able to save you to the uttermost, but He is able to keep you too. You have only to trust Him, and He will surely " guard you from stumbling " (Jude 24), and keep you till you join that glorious band, of whom we read, " They hunger no more, nor thirst any more."

Oh, may God open your eyes to see that He who hung upon the cross, and cried in His agony, " I thirst," was hanging there

in your stead. May you realize the glorious fact that, when He hung there your sins—yes, dear brother, dear sister—your very own sins, everyone of them, were by God the Father—not by you, mark you, but by God the Father—laid upon Him, and that by simply believing this, and trusting in its all-sufficiency, you have now, as a great glorious fact—the greatest and most glorious possible—eternal life.



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