



ELLA SIMPSON

Neighborhood Transformer

By: Charles L. Taylor

I—SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

“Ella Simpson, what do you think of that? Do you believe it?” She had just returned to her room from her Bible class, where, for the first time in her life, her heart had been strangely stirred by the study of the day.

Ella Simpson was a beautiful but worldly girl of nineteen summers. Despite every effort which her parents knew how to put forth for her, she had resolutely maintained her position of antagonism to Christianity, her one argument being that the Bible seemed to her like an old fiddle, on which almost any theological tune could be played, judging from what she had heard and seen.

In a spirit of sheer despair, her good parents finally resolved to send her away to a boarding school where, as they had heard, the Bible was taught in all courses, and where, as a result, the young people almost without exception were followers of the Lord Jesus.

But Ella was slow to accept the proposition. She was utterly disgusted with empty church form and hypocritical pretense, which was practically all she had known in her few years of contact with professed Christians. Even the religious life of her own people did not, to her, seem to measure up with the little she had heard of the genuine gospel.

Over and over again she had said to herself: “If I could find a consistent and reasonable explanation of how I came to be, why I am here, and where I am going hereafter—if I could get a clear idea of what it really is to be converted and kept from wrongdoing—I might wish to do differently. But I just don’t see any sense in the teachings of the church, and I am not going to make profession of something that I don’t believe.”

So she had gone on in what seemed to her father and mother a gay and thoughtless life, covering from them the seriousness of her thoughts, but always secretly longing for a true knowledge of better things. Like the great majority of youth, she found in her life a something which prompted to a higher experience, but which seemed impossible of realization.

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“Do you say I have to go to that school?” she asked when told of the plan to send her to a Christian institution of learning. “Why do you wish to force me? You ought to see that I cannot be pressed into a profession of Christianity by such methods. Of course, I will go, for I have never refused to comply with your wishes. Nevertheless, you may as well dismiss the idea that a mere change of place will make any one better.”

With the opening of this simple story, she had been at the new school home for about three months,—three very eventful months. Little did she know, when first she arrived at the school, that all students were required to make the study of the word of God a part of their regular daily class work. But matriculation day brought her the shock, and so great was it that she thought only of packing her trunk and returning home as soon as possible.

“Study the Bible every day! Who ever heard of such a thing? I wonder if my people knew about this? Why, we read the Bible scarcely at all at home, and here it is taken as class work! Well, just for curiosity, I will go for a few days; but I know I shall never like it. My last year in high school course, and taking Bible in order to graduate! Isn’t it funny? I hope my friends will never find it out.”

The Bible class of which Ella was a member devoted its hours to the study of the great fundamental truths of the plan of salvation. The teacher, a godly man of great sincerity and loving devotion, led his pupils through the fields of God’s beautiful world of living truth, and in a touching and heart-appealing way, brought home to them the story of God’s mercy as revealed in creation and redemption; of the wonderful harmony of Sinai and Calvary; of the atoning work of Jesus, who, as prophet, priest, and king, had undertaken a personal salvation for each; and of the unfolding of the great mystery of life, lost through sin, and restored through the gift of the Son of God.

There was something in the work of the class, which, from the first, to Ella Simpson seemed very peculiar. Curiosity gave way to admiration, and admiration soon lost itself in an ever growing something that commanded her interest and brought her conviction.

“What is the matter with me?” she asked herself, when, after two weeks’ attendance, she realized a greater interest in her Bible class than in all her other work. “Can it be that I am losing my mind? I have heard that people do lose their minds from too much study of the Bible.”

But somehow her alarm died away, and she went enthusiastically forward with her work, each day seeing more clearly the definite outlines of the blessed plan of life. Ere she knew it, her feet had been planted in the path of life; and with a willing heart, she found her way to the foot of the cross, a loving disciple of Him who gave His life for her. Then it was that there came to her a revelation which almost overwhelmed her. She heard it declared, and saw it apparently clearly set forth in Scripture, that she, Ella Simpson, did not have an immortal soul. She learned, if what she heard was true, that man possesses life and immortality only through acceptance of Jesus. She saw, too, that at death, neither righteous nor wicked go to their reward. She understood, for the first time, that there is to be no eternally burning hell. She hastened from the class to her room. Throwing herself upon her cot, she excitedly asked aloud: “Ella Simpson, what do you think of that? Do you believe it?”

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Strange indeed were the emotions of Ella Simpson's heart as she lay there on her cot, revolving over and over again the thought that people do not go to heaven at death. She had seen her brother laid in the tomb; but, according to what she had heard preached at the funeral services, he had gone to dwell with God and angels, and with the good and blest of all ages. Had she been mistaken? Was the minister wrong? Were her parents in the dark? What could be the matter?

So great was the strain upon her mind, of the new thoughts which had entered, that she was obliged to succumb to a raging headache, and finally fell into a troubled sleep. A few hours later, she was awakened by her anxious preceptress, who, missing Ella from dinner, had at last found her asleep, but apparently in a fever. Was the girl ill?

As this mother in Israel sat for a few minutes watching and wondering, she heard Ella give expression to: "O my brother! I thought you were in heaven! I thought you were looking down on me, and watching over me, and trying to help me! But you are just dead, just dead! Oh, oh!"

"What is it, child? What troubles you?" asked Mrs. Trumbull, as she gently laid her hand upon the flushed face of the girl, and awakened her. Ella opened her eyes, and looked full into her school mother's face; for Mrs. Trumbull was a devoted Christian, a tender mother, a tactful helper of girls.

"What is it, Ella? Are you ill?" The tears burst from the girl's eyes, and she unburdened her heart.

This was not the first time this good mother had met the questions put to her by Ella. She had to think back only a short time to find herself passing through the same valley of conflict. Death had robbed her of her treasures,—a husband, and two children,—and she therefore knew, in larger measure than her youthful charge, what it meant to surrender a long cherished idea, and to find the experience as taking her very life.

"My dear, this all seems strange to you. You are almost tempted to throw away everything you have been learning, thinking that in some way you are being deceived and led astray. You have so long thought of the dead as having gone to their reward, that to change is like tearing out your very vitals. But do not be afraid. Truth is truth, and all truth is self-evident, and it's every part is in harmony with every other part. You are longing to know God's will that you may do it; and Jesus has distinctly assured us that all such shall be made to know. The Spirit will guide you into all truth. Read John 7:17 and 16:13, and you will be comforted, I am sure."

How sweet and comforting her preceptress's little message seemed! How reasonable! And while not fully at peace, Ella determined not to draw back because of her trial, but to go forward with open heart, and allow God to lead her on into any truth of His word which she might need.

The weeks passed quickly by. To Ella, they were weeks of startling revelations. But more and more she came to see the beautiful harmony of the various phases of truth. Particularly did she learn that only through Christ and the resurrection from the dead, could she or any one else enter into life. Thus Jesus and His righteousness became her sole dependence. Her one prayer

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was that she might be truly born again, created anew in God, that thus she might be a partaker of the divine nature, and rejoice in the power of everlasting life.

And now she began to look forward to her Christmas visit home. What should she do? How should she plan for it? Old times and old pleasures came before her vision; but for some reason, they did not appeal to her. Until this time, she had not realized what change had taken place in her tastes.. But her ideas soon took shape, and she sat down and penned to her parents the following letter:

“Maple Plain, Minnesota,

“December 1, 1916.

“Dear Father and Mother;

“I am looking forward with much pleasure to my coming visit home. I am planning to have a fine time, but not as heretofore, with the boys and girls of the neighborhood. I am going to spend the time with you.

“First of all, I want to tell you that you need not plan on getting me a list of presents, as you have been accustomed to do, nor do I want you to arrange for a big feast. I will explain my reasons when I get home.

“But what do you suppose I want to suggest for my Christmas present? Mother, you just can’t guess. It is not a new set of furs, nor a new coat, nor any other beautiful thing to wear. I want you to get me a Bible,—a first-class Bible.

“And what I need, you need. So will you not get three of them, just alike? I want to study with you when I see you; for since coming to this school, I have learned to know God’s word as the most wonderful book in the world. We have never read it much, and, of course, have not understood it.

“Maybe you will think I am crazy, or fanatical; but I am neither. I have come to see that an understanding of the simple truths of the Bible causes one, in spite of one’s self, to be a Christian. And so I want to tell you some of the things which have made me a changed girl.

“Oh, how I disliked this place when I came here! It seemed to me the one spot on earth that I did not care to see. But now all is changed. You certainly ought to be happy that you sent me here.

“I hope to see you soon.

“Affectionately,

“Ella.”

The letter went safely to its destination. Mr. and Mrs. Simpson now found their occasion for surprise. The letter was read and read and then read again. They could not grasp the meaning of things.

II—FEARS FOR HER SANITY: THE PASTOR, MR. DUNCAN STEPS IN

“Well, wife, here is a letter from the girl, and it strikes me that she has gone a bit crazy over the question of religion.”

“What makes you say that, James? You frighten me.”

“Why, she says she doesn’t care for any Christmas presents, except a Bible! And she asks that we buy each of us a Bible, too, so that she may read and study with us when she reaches home. Isn’t that a little too much Bible for our family? And coming from Ella, as the suggestion does, I can’t understand it.”

Mrs. Simpson was an excellent woman of unusually good judgment, and not given to superstitious ideas; but at this time, she really lost her poise, and fell a victim to worry.

“James,” she anxiously said, “I am afraid daughter is going to die. I have heard that people sometimes become abnormally religious just before their final illness; and surely Ella has religion as I never supposed any one of her disposition could possibly get it.”

“But, after all, wife, this was what we thought we wanted for her when we sent her over to that school. We prayed that she might be a Christian and turn away from the world; but now that she actually begins a religious life, we think maybe she is a lunatic.”

“Yes, I know; but how can you account for so much religion in only three or four months? Why, she talks as though she had something we don’t have, and has to come home to teach us! And you must not forget, James, that Ella is only a girl yet, and we have been in the church for thirty years. Our daughter to come home Christmas to inform us in matters of religion!”

Mr. Simpson had long felt it a virtue not to agree too fully with his companion; and on this occasion, when there seemed to be real principles at stake, he determined to counter his wife’s remarks by a few ideas of actual truth.

“Yes, we have been in the church for thirty years,” he said. “And what have we learned—actually learned—during all that time? How much has either of us studied? When I stop to count up, there are only a few times when I have taken pains to know what our church believes. And I guess if you were not too proud to tell all the truth, you would have to acknowledge you are not much ahead of me. There on the shelf is the only Bible we have in the house, and it isn’t very badly worn.”

“But Ella has been at school only three months.”

“That is all true; but if she has studied the Bible every day for three months, she has studied it more than we have all our lives. And I remember, now, that that was the plan over there at the school, and I was glad of it. I am inclined to believe, the more I think of it, that it is only about what we ought to expect. They have filled her mind with Bible, she has been converted, and now she wants us to know what she knows. She always was that way about everything she learned. I think the best thing for me to do is to go buy the Bibles, and let her have full swing when she comes home.”

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“Of course James, I hope you are right; but I still wonder what it all means. There must have been something very special to stir her up to take such a position, and I purpose to be on the watch. Anyhow, you know that while those school people seem to be very fine people, they do teach very strange doctrines. At least, I have heard so. And if what some of the neighbors say is true, Ella might easily become unbalanced. I have been a bit afraid of this all the time, though I haven’t dared suggest it before.”

“Somebody is rapping, wife. Who can it be?”

The opened door revealed the person of the pastor of their church.

“Come in, Brother Duncan. You have come just in time to help us solve a problem. Our daughter Ella, whom we sent away to boarding school to keep her from throwing away her life—she had become so worldly and frivolous, as you know—has been converted, and has written us a letter about her visit home at Christmas time, and what she wants us to do at that time. I want you to read the letter.”

Brother Duncan hastily scanned the missive from Ella; and as he did so, evidently he was none too well pleased.

“What makes you frown, brother?” was Mr. Simpson’s question. “Don’t you think we ought to be glad that the girl has taken her stand for Christ, and that she wants to study with us? It seemed to me at first that maybe she was slightly fanatical: but more and more I am coming to believe that if she is really a Christian, she ought by all means to love the Bible, and to wish to have her parents enjoy it with her.”

“Well, Brother Simpson, I am not ready to indorse entirely what you say. You see, it depends on what she has come to believe. While I agree with you that the people in charge of the boarding school are as fine Christian people as I ever knew, and really do love their Bibles, I would rather a child of mine be no Christian at all than to adopt their views. Their theology is entirely erroneous; and whoever accepts their system, loses confidence in our church work. If Ella has come to indorse their views of the Scriptures, you will see that she will cease to attend our church, and that she will influence other young people, and maybe yourselves, to do the same.”

“Have you investigated carefully the faith taught over there?” inquired Mrs. Simpson.

“Ah, indeed I have, and to my sorrow.” Replied the pastor.

“But why were you made to sorrow?” asked Mr. Simpson.

“Well, to tell you the truth, I will say that a few years ago, one of those very school men—the present Bible teacher there—visited the town where I was located, and preached continuously for several weeks. His work was so entirely different from the usual, that a large number of our people, in and out of the church, became interested, and actually accepted the doctrines taught. And while in my soul I knew that the man was teaching error, and while I sought, in public and private, to expose the evil of his work, the people were not satisfied. They took the stand that I ought to show that he was wrong, from the Scriptures. But that was something I could not do, and I doubt if anybody else could. The result was that the entire community came to regard me as ignorant and unreliable. Now I maintain that any work which serves to undermine confidence in God’s chosen ministers, and to win the people away from the religion

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of their fathers, must be of the evil one. I would advise you to deal quite resolutely with Ella, and restrain her before she goes too far. Call on me, if you wish, when she reaches home, and maybe I can aid you.”

When Mr. Duncan had taken his departure, there was a time of painful silence. The pastor’s remarks had not only failed to bring relief, but had made the situation more puzzling.

“Well, that is a mighty funny argument against a people and their teaching, it seems to me,” said Mr. Simpson. “If a doctrine is wrong, certainly the Bible ought to be the place to go to show it wrong. I can’t see that I should reject some clear teaching of the Bible just because it happens to be different from what my father believed fifty years ago. If Brother Duncan holds to that view, then maybe he could hold a whole church back from advancing, for the simple reason that the people who go to church take what he says rather than what the Bible declares. His little speech has upset me a bit.”

“Well, James, we have to be careful, you know. Brother Duncan is such a good man, and I can hardly think the Lord would let him lead us astray.”

“Well, wife, that may be all true in his case; but preachers are only human, and some of them have made mistakes and gone wrong. I am mighty ignorant of the Bible; but somehow, down deep in my soul, I feel that we ought to know the thing for ourselves, and not simply Bibles. I’ll get that girl the best I can find. And I’ll get one also for each of us. We’ll read a bit before she gets here, and then we’ll call Brother Duncan in to help us all get straight.”

III—CHRISTMAS ARRIVES—MOTHER’S FEELINGS—FATHER’S TOBACCO

“Here she is, wife! Take a good look! Does she strike you as being crazy?”

“Crazy? What does father mean?” This was a new word to be applied to her; and as the thought overtook the young woman, she found herself almost in confusion. Mrs. Simpson had intended not to have Ella know aught of the conversation that had occurred between her and her husband relative to the letter which had caused them so much agitation, yet she intended to notice fully anything and everything about her child which might give a clue to the change that had taken place. For some reason, she could not dismiss the idea that something very abnormal and really dangerous had been effected. It was very natural, therefore, that even in greeting Ella, she had revealed a peculiar though unwitting coldness of manner and speech which a sensitive heart like Ella’s could not fail to note.

But purpose begets greatness. With a transformed mind, and a heart pulsing with the goodness and love of God, with a cherished longing to be a blessing to her parents and former associates, Ella rose to the occasion which presented itself, and manifested a spirit of magnanimity both strong and beautifully attractive. Once she would have resented the very apparent coldness and suspicion of her mother; now she only cheerfully submitted and meekly bore, but found in them a call to act the part which her Master had acted before her.

It was Christmas eve. But, oh, how unlike any Christmas time ever known by the Simpson family! The usual bustle of receiving callers, of merrymaking, of giving and receiving presents,

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all were lacking. The young people of the neighborhood had learned, through the pastor, that Ella Simpson had probably fallen into a state of temporary weakness of mind, and that her company would prove to be unwholesome. Thus no one came to gladden the Christmas hour at the Simpson home. Mrs. Simpson particularly was ill at ease, and could scarcely restrain her feelings. The whole circumstance seemed to her as a dismal fore-promise of inevitable family disaster.

Not so with Mr. Simpson. If Mr. Duncan had “upset” him, Ella’s home-coming had placed him decidedly on his feet. His absolute composure and contentment largely neutralized his wife’s visible lack of both.

Ella had but one thought: What could she do to make home a happy and beautiful place all the time she should be there?

“Well, little girl, suppose we get the presents! We have done just what you asked; so there are no new dresses, nor furs, nor coats, nor candies, nor, in fact, anything else that your mother wanted to get. There is nothing but the Bibles,—one for each of us.”

“Oh, father, what a lovely gift! You cannot know how much I appreciate it. Last year I should have spurned it, and should not have hesitated to tell you of my feelings. But now all is so different! The Bible has changed my whole life. My tastes, my ambitions, my purposes, have all been remade. And how it has all come about, I really do not understand. All that I comprehend about it is, that I am not the Ella whom you sent away.”

“Ella,” interrupted Mrs. Simpson, “you have broken my heart. You do not seem at all like my child. I do not know you. You have so much religion, or what you call religion, that you are a fanatic. And Brother Duncan thinks so, too. I simply cannot help feeling that you are becoming mentally unbalanced. For several days now, I have been watching you; and not once have you gone to the piano to play a lively tune, not once have you shown your old-time spirit of fun, not once have you even had temper enough about you to resent things which once you called insults. Of course, I wanted you to be a Christian; but never did I think you would grown to be so good that you would refuse to be a girl among the girls.

“And that isn’t all, daughter. You have come home here with the thought that you know more about the Bible than either your father or your mother. Here we have been members of the church for thirty years, and you have not read the Bible for more than three months. It is only egotism, I think. Now I have not said anything about it to your father, but I have made up my mind that you ought not to return to that school. The teachers over there have misled you. Brother Duncan knows the Bible teacher, and is sure he teaches error. And I have respect for Brother Duncan’s opinion.

“One thing more, while I am speaking: When you get around with your new Bible to tell us what we do not know about theological questions, I mean to see that our pastor is present, that you may have opportunity to put a few new thoughts into his head. It is my opinion that when you have finished your course of instructions, you will be ready to give up some of the dangerous notions you have received.”

“Mother, did you say you wished me to be a Christian?”

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“Yes, but not such a specially good one.”

“Well, mother, about how good ought I to be? Do you think I ought to dance, and sing ditties, and play ragtime, and waste my time and your money, and dress as I once did?”

“No, I do not mean that, but—”

“But, mother, what else have I laid aside? Have I not been cheerful and active and simple and helpful ever since I returned to you? Have I not played for you the beautiful music of the gospel? Have I not been sociable, all except being foolish? Has my language been objectionable because I have left out the slang? Do I not dress becomingly? And has it not been a pleasure to you to have me with you in the evenings, instead, as last year, of having me gone from you and out with questionable company and not sure of the outcome?”

“Look here, little girl! Don’t ask your mother too many hard questions. Talk to me a minute. I want to know what you have learned over there that makes you itch to come home and study with us. You must have found something mighty important, or else you would never have made up your mind not to have the good old-fashioned turkey dinner. I can see why you ought not to go wild over the dance, and the crazy ragtime, and the bad company; but this no-big-dinner proposition is a new one to me.”

“That is the point that I too have in mind,” said Mrs. Simpson. “Who ever heard that religion had anything to do with Christmas dinner?”

Ella’s new Bible lay in her lap. Had the time come to open it? Ought she to undertake now the duty of presenting to her people the truth which had so sorely vexed her, and which at one time had driven her almost to despair? If this was the time, how should she begin? While she thus questioned with herself, her father drew from his pocket the favorite tobacco plug, and quietly cut from it a piece, which he placed in his mouth. He loved his tobacco. Something told Ella that this was her starting point.

“Father, do you think it a Christian thing to chew tobacco?”

“Why, I have used tobacco all my life, and I’ve never yet seen anything about it to hurt my Christianity.”

“Is tobacco clean?”

“Well, not exactly; but what has that to do with my Christianity? Even Brother Duncan smokes.”

“Yes, I know that; but if tobacco is not clean, its use would not be right, would it, even though all the ministers practiced the habit? Whatever injures a person’s body, hinders him from doing his best for God.”

“But, little girl, you know very well that a man’s body isn’t his soul. My tobacco doesn’t hurt my soul, even though it may soil my mouth a bit. You can see that, can’t you?”

“No, father, that is exactly what I do not see. I used to hear you say this very thing before I went away to school; and while I could not see the reasonableness of it, I accepted it simply because you said it. But since I have studied the Bible, and have seen the wonderful plan of God in our creation and in our redemption, I cannot think even for a moment that your position is right.

And though mother may think me crazy, and though Mr. Duncan may hold the same opinion, I am happy to believe that I have found a wonderful truth about my life and yours which you ought to know, and which will surely make you glad when you do know it. Do you want me to use my new Bible to-morrow, and you study with me?"

"Sure thing, little girl! I'm ready if you are."

When Ella had retired, and they were alone, Mr. Simpson said to his wife: "Say, she's quite a preacher, isn't she? I didn't think, though, she would begin on me. I wonder what she is going to say. I'll be tickled to have her argue with Brother Duncan. I just think she'll get the best of him."

"Well, James, if Ella can find anything in the Bible to help you get rid of your filthy tobacco habit, you may be sure I shall be glad. You ought to stop using tobacco, and surely Brother Duncan ought also to give it up. What she has said to you this evening surprises me. Surely it is far from being crazy, and I want to acknowledge it. I myself am curious to know what she will say. We would better phone Brother Duncan early in the morning and see if he will come over."

IV—STUDY SWITCHES FROM TOBACCO TO THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

"HELLO! Brother Duncan? Say, the daughter is home, as you know; and she has promised to give to her mother and me to-day some of the 'crazy' notions about Bible matters which she gathered over at the school. We are anxious to have you present. Can you come?"

Mr. Duncan was very glad to receive the invitation, for he greatly desired to save the somewhat "too credulous schoolgirl" from the delusion into which she had fallen. He was sure that, separated from the adverse influences of the school, she would quickly yield to her old pastor's counsel.

"Well, Miss Ella," said the minister, as they met in the afternoon, "I am exceedingly pleased to meet you, not only because it has been a long time since I saw you, but also for the reason that I want to help you back into the good old way of the church in which you were christened and of which you have long been a member."

"Yes? But, Mr. Duncan, I have never been a Christian until now. I am really happy in the Lord, and I love His word, and I have come to understand what a true religious life ought to be. When you saw me last, I was a lost, worldly girl, even though I was a member of your church. Surely you would not wish me to return to my old life in sin."

"Hold on, you folks! This is Christmas day, and no time for argument," chimed in Mr. Simpson. "Get your new Bible, little girl, and let us start in on that question we had up last night. You give us just what you please; and if you get off some crazy idea now and then, why, Brother Duncan will straighten you out."

"The question of last night," Ella explained to the pastor, "was relative to father's tobacco. He took the position that the tobacco he uses may soil his mouth, but that it does not affect his Christianity. I believe the Bible shows plainly that whatever defiles the body does affect the

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relationship between man and God. In other words, there is an intimate connection between every habit of life and the real status of the soul.”

Mr. Duncan coughed, and moved uneasily in his chair. The subject was to him very unexpected and unwelcome.

“To make plain the point, let me read 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20: ‘What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.’ We are to glorify God in the body, because a price was paid for it. And of course we understand that the ‘price’ mentioned was the death of Jesus.

“Let us read again: ‘If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.’ This is in 1 Corinthians 3:17. Now I am sure you will all see that great value attaches to the body. Jesus died for it. We may not be saved if we defile it. In Romans 12:1, the apostle pleads that we present our bodies ‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God;’ and in 2 Corinthians 7:1, he admonishes us to ‘cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’

“Now, Brother Duncan, you are a minister of the gospel, and I am only a schoolgirl; but please let me ask you this question: If Jesus has died that we may have clean bodies; if to defile the body temples means final destruction; if our bodies must be living sacrifices, holy to God; if we are to cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh in order to be perfectly holy; and if tobacco makes the flesh unclean (as we all know it does),—then is not father, in using tobacco, doing something that will tend to cause him to be lost? Does not the use of the filthy weed affect his Christian standing before God?”

At this point, Mr. Duncan seemed to regard discretion as the better part of valor; so he only smiled a somewhat sickly smile, and remarked to Ella, that she was “proceeding very much after the manner” that he had expected she would, and he would “answer later.”

Mrs. Simpson was disposed to have him answer at once, and pressed him for a reply. The self-evident truth which her daughter had brought out greatly impressed her, and she did not wish her pastor to ignore it.

“Really, Brother Duncan, tell us what you think. You must know of some other scriptures which contradict these Ella has read, for I have often heard you say that the Bible is not always in harmony with itself. Do you know of any texts which teach that tobacco is all right?”

Before Pastor Duncan could make answer, and greatly to his relief, Mr. Simpson embraced the opportunity to remark that he wanted Ella to show, if she could, that his tobacco hurt his soul.

“I want my little preacher here to explain how a Christmas dinner, or a plug of good old Navy, can possibly get my soul into trouble. When I die, I expect to shed this outside Simpson which likes the tobacco, and, with my soul set free, go to glory. Isn’t that what you believe, Brother Duncan?”

“That is what our church teaches,” said the pastor.

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“The other day, I was reading a book of quaint and interesting things,” said Mr. Simpson; “and among the rest was an epitaph found on a Western tombstone. It just expressed my sentiments, and helped me a whole lot. It read likes this:

“ ‘Under this sod, beneath these trees,
Lieth the body of Solomon Pease.
Pease is not here, but only his pod;
He shelled out his soul, and went up to God.’

“That stuck me as a mighty good bit of theology; and if it is true, then I could use tobacco all my life, and leave all the results behind when I bid good-by to this body. I confess, though, that Ella has read some things here that seem to teach the contrary; and to be right out-and-out honest, I must say that I can’t see any place for dodging. The texts are plain English, and even my stupid brain can understand them. Ella, I want you to go after this soul question, if you know anything about it.”

Of course, this was the very thing the girl had desired. While much could have been said concerning temperance and the relation of physical habits to moral life, the matter of real interest to her at this time was the question of the soul, and how the truth on this point had worked to lead her to conversion. She thoroughly believed that if her parents understood the subject of life,—of man’s nature and final destiny,—they would become animated by a new spirit of consecration and heartfelt obedience. The vision that had come to her, she longed to have come to them.

“Well, father, I am willing and glad to try to investigate with you this question of the soul, although I have never claimed to be very well versed in the Bible. But I admit that I am somewhat embarrassed to have a minister of the gospel here to take part in the study. It might appear to indicate that I am given to self-confidence. However, if you and mother want me to go ahead under these circumstances, I will do my best.”

“Brother Duncan has come because I asked him. I wanted him to hear what you have to say, and I expect him to tell us wherein you are wrong. He thinks you have been taught things that are crooked. I don’t know. So I expect him to act as judge, and point out any mistakes we may make. Of course, I want him to use the Bible for proof. So go ahead, little girl. I’m with you.”

Ella had her school notebook handy, and began to make use of it.

“To begin,” she said, “I want to state, if I can, what I think I was once taught to believe. I understood that man was created immortal; that is, that within a mortal body, God placed an immortal, never dying soul. As farther has said, it was as a pea in the pod, although no one seemed to know just where it was located or what it really was. This soul, I thought, was hindered and handicapped by the body, and was made to suffer by the afflictions of the body, until, at death, it was set free, and went to heaven if good, or to hell if bad. As a part of God, it could not die, and must continue to live in bliss or in agony throughout eternity.

“Of course, I knew really nothing about it, except what I was taught; but, for some reason I always disliked to think that even if God did take a few good people to heaven when they died, He likewise sent to an eternal punishment all the poor sinners who had not found the Lord

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Jesus. It seemed to me, even when I was a little girl, that God did not love men very much, if, for the sins of a few short years, He would everlastingly torment all the lost. But I tried not to think of that.

“Then, when my dear brother died, I believed, naturally, that he had gone to heaven. Mother thought so, father thought so, and, if I remember correctly, Brother Duncan preached this at the funeral service. But—”

“But what?” interrupted Mrs. Simpson. “You do not doubt, do you, Ella, that our little Harry, my little Harry, is in heaven?”

“Mrs. Simpson, I felt sure it would not be long before Ella would shock you. It is just as I have told you. She has imbibed teachings which are utterly destructive of our whole Christian faith. Ella, do you mean to tell your mother that your brother and her boy has not gone to his reward, that he is not now in glory?” interrupted the minister.

“Answer that, Ella! Who ever would have thought you—”

“Yes, mother, I will answer. Let me ask Brother Duncan — for he knows the Bible — if all good people go to their reward, at death.”

“Certainly, child.”

“Have there been no exceptions?”

“Absolutely none. Abel is there, Enoch is there, Abraham is there, Moses is there (you know that Moses was on the mountain with Jesus), and David, Elijah (was not Elijah, too, seen talking with Jesus?), and all others. No, there have been no exceptions. God has remembered every one of His saints, and they are now reigning with Him.”

“Brother Duncan, you have your Bible: let me ask you to read father and mother Acts 2:29, 34. And will you kindly explain it to us all?”

“The minister turned and read from the inspired words of Peter’s Pentecostal sermon:

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day.” “For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand.”

“Before making your explanation,” said Ella to the pastor, “will you put with these words those uttered by David when he was about to die? They are found in 1 Kings 2:1,2. ”Mr. Duncan read, He [David] charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth.”

“Now, Brother Duncan, if there are really no exceptions, as you said, yet the Bible plainly declares David did not go to heaven, and he himself said he was going where all others go, what explanation have you to make?”

Evidently Pastor Duncan had never before met this question. He hesitated.

Down deep in Mr. Simpson’s heart, there had been, ever since Ella’s letter had come, a strange conviction that he ought to be a better man. He did not exactly understand himself, but at least one thing was settled,—he was going to be frank about his experience, and would get at the truth of matters if he could. The moment, therefore, that Mr. Duncan read the passages

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indicated by Ella, Mr. Simpson saw that if words have any meaning, then good people do not go to their reward at death; and when he noted Mr. Duncan's hesitation and evident confusion, he was stirred to speak:

"Don't dodge, Brother Duncan. What is your explanation?"

"While Brother Duncan is thinking, may I ask, father, that he tell us, along with the other things, if he does not know that the presence of Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration may easily be explained without belief in the doctrine that men go to their reward at death? Was not Moses resurrected, Brother Duncan? And is it not true that Enoch and Elijah never died, but were translated? The case of Elijah has no reference to death; and if Moses had to be raised from the dead before he could go to heaven, then his case also fails to teach what we have so long been taught. Is that not so?"

"I confess that this is a great question," said the pastor. "Suppose we defer my answer until another time."

"All right! To-morrow night?" said Mr. Simpson.

"That will be agreeable to me," Mrs. Simpson added. And then the pastor took his departure.

"Say, he's afraid, I believe!" said Mr. Simpson, as he raked out the ashes and put more coal on the fire, "People talk about 'great questions' and all that sort of thing when they don't know. And then he stayed such a little while! Why, any other time, he would have been with us to supper. But he's got to come on with his proof. I'll see that he's here to-morrow night. Just wait."

V—THE LIVING SOUL AND ITS CREATION

With keen appetite for the evening's study, the Simpson family set down at the hour appointed. Mr. Simpson, in particular, took delight in opening the Bible; and even Mrs. Simpson, with all her prejudice, began to experience a sense of enjoyment in her daughter's ability to tell "some of the things she had learned." Ella was quietly confident. She believed God; and while she had absolutely no desire and no real relish for controversial discussions, but wanted only that her parents should see the beautiful truth of life as God's plan of salvation presented, it, she was still willing to do her best under the circumstances which Providence seemed to have arranged.

The pastor came.

"Do you know, Brother Duncan, that for the first time in years, I find something telling me I ought to pray more? This study makes me feel serious; and before you begin your explanation, I would like to pray," said Mr. Simpson.

It was a childlike prayer, and, by the way, one of the first audible petitions which for years had been offered in that home. It called for God's help to see and understand and know. It asked that everything which was not true might be put to shame. It especially requested that the Holy Spirit teach him how to live aright.

"Now, Brother Duncan, your explanation!" This began the interview.

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The story of Mr. Duncan's effort to explain the scripture which Ella had him read the day before is too long for our space. To sum up, he sought to have it appear that the expression, "David is not ascended into the heavens," referred to the body, and not to the soul. "David's body went into the tomb," he said; "but his real self, David, went to eternal reward."

"Without even a wish to appear argumentative, Brother Duncan," said Ella, "may I ask you to define what the soul, or the real self, actually is?"

"Why, in a word, it is that part of man which in the word of God is indicated by the pronoun 'I'. For instance, Job says, 'Though the worms destroy this body, yet I shall see God.' That is, he would die in the flesh, but live and see God in the spirit."

"Is it always true that the 'I' refers to the soul, the real man, the one whom we really know?"

"I think so," was Mr. Duncan's uncertain reply to Ella's question.

"Then let me read this: 'If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee.' 'If I wait, the grave is mine house.' Job 14:14, 15; 17:13. Do not these verses teach that the I would wait in the grave until God should call?"

"Well, what do you think of that! Just as plain as the day, isn't it? Why, Brother Duncan, a child can see that."

"Yes," said Ella; "but let us all look at the text which Brother Duncan partially quoted a minute ago, Job 19:25-27: 'For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.' This, you see, is at the last day, when the resurrection takes place, and when all men shall be brought from the tomb. Then, in his flesh, just as literally as now, Job will live again. It has no reference to reward at death. Job did not expect to go to heaven at death, but to wait in the grave. Do you see that, mother?"

"It seems quite plain," said Mrs. Simpson. "What do you think, Brother Duncan?"

But Brother Duncan apparently was busy looking for some other passages, and did not reply.

"Say, little girl, you have asked Brother Duncan what the soul is, and he has not yet answered; but while he is looking for something, let me ask what you think about it, or rather what the Bible says about it, for, after all, it is the Bible that settles the matter." Thus Mr. Simpson came back to the main question.

"Very well, father, let us turn to the original account of the making of man, for it is there that the entire truth is told in few words. Please read Genesis 2:7."

Mr. Simpson read, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [gave him life]; and man became a living soul."

"Miss Ella," interposed the pastor, "do not forget that it was only the body which God made from the ground, and do not forget that 'the breath of life' was the soul which God placed within the body."

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“But, say, Brother Duncan,” broke in Mr. Simpson, “it says He made man out of the dust, and then afterwards just set him to breathing. That’s the way I’d take it.”

“Just a moment, father. Let me ask Brother Duncan two or three questions. If God made a body, and then put a soul into it, must the soul not have been in existence before? And do you believe in preexistence of souls? And if the soul is more free without than within the body, as you preached at Harry’s funeral, then does it not seem strange that God would have deliberately hampered the soul by putting it into a body? And further, does not the record show that the whole success of the enterprise of soul-making depended upon the existence of the man who was made from the dust? And further, does not the record show that the whole success of the enterprise of soul making depended upon the existence of the man who was made from the dust? Could there ever have been such a thing as a man, a living soul, without the creation from the dust?”

“Say, girlie, I guess I’ll have you for my lawyer, when I sue for divorce.”

“Do you mean when you get your divorce from tobacco?” Ella replied.

“But I have not finished. Brother Duncan, if the breath of life was an immortal soul in a man’s mortal body, then would not the same breath of life be an immortal soul in any other body?”

“Sure thing,” interposed Mr. Simpson.

Ella went on: “I am sure you will say so, for it is the inevitable logic of the question. Now, Brother Duncan, please read Genesis 7:21, 22.”

Mr. Duncan reluctantly read the verses indicated: “And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.”

‘Fowl, cattle, beast, and creeping thing had the breath of life. Did they have immortal, never dying souls?—No!

“Look again. Speaking of both man and the lower animals, the wise man says, ‘They have all one breath.’ Ecclesiastes 3:19. If this be true—and it is—then, according to your interpretation of Genesis 2:7, cows, horses, dogs, cats, yes, all animals, are immortal. But this proves what no one believes. It proves too much; and what proves too much proves nothing. The truth is, according to the plain reading of the Word itself, that the Lord made a complete man, a soul, out of the dust. But it was a lifeless man. Then He quickened what He had made, and it became a living man. Do you see that, mother?”

“Yes, daughter.”

“In the Bible, the Hebrew word which is translated ‘soul’ occurs hundreds of times, but never once does it have in it the thought of immortality. It has various meanings, according to the connection in which it is found. It is translated ‘life,’ ‘soul,’ ‘appetite,’ ‘anger,’ ‘one,’ ‘any,’ etc. In Genesis 1:30, it is rendered ‘life,’ the margin giving the phrase, ‘a living soul’; and the verse shows that it refers to the whole animal creation. All animals have the breath of life, and they

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all have souls. But they don't have immortal souls. Notice Number 31:28. It speaks of 'one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep.'

"To my mind, however, the whole matter is made clear in the original story of Genesis. After God had created man from the dust, and had given him power to live, He placed him in the garden, with permission to eat of all but one of the trees of the garden, the tree of life being the great center. So long as he was obedient, he could continue to have access to that tree, which was designed to impart to him the power of eternal existence; but if he should disobey, then he must be separated from the source of his life and die. Genesis 2:16, 17.

"I want you all to see this special truth: The life of God was not inherent in man. Eating was prerequisite to continued living. This evidently was God's plan; because when man disobeyed, God drove him from the garden, and separated him from the tree, lest he should 'eat, and live forever.' Genesis 3:22. Surely he did not have a soul that could not die, did he? For after he was cut off from the source, from 'the fountain of life' (Psalm 36:9), from the tree of life, he died. Whatever his gift of life, it was conditional. All this agrees perfectly with the teaching of the New Testament. Mother, please turn to John 3:36."

When this good old gospel text had been read, Mr. Simpson suddenly exclaimed, "I see it! I see it!"

"See what?" asked his wife.

"I see what Ella has been seeing. No one has life except he gets it through Christ, just as Adam had no life except as he found it in the tree. Is that it, little girl?"

"That is it, father; and I have wondered how anybody could believe in natural immortality, if he accepts this beautiful Word. Only the believer in Christ has life, and he finds it only by faith. Immortality is not born into man by nature."

"By request, Mr. Duncan, almost forgotten for the time being, read 1 John 5:11, 12: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

"Say, Brother Duncan, that finishes me. The girl is right. The plan is the same all the way through. We never saw the day when we were immortal by nature. At the first, man found eternal life in the tree of life; and now he can find it only in God's gift of life,—the Lord Jesus."

"Then Harry did not go to heaven when he died?" inquired Mrs. Simpson. "Oh, what do you mean? Brother Duncan, have you even read these things before?"

"If he did, he surely made a mistake," said Mr. Simpson, bluntly but pleasantly. Mr. Duncan said something about interpretations and various translations, but withal manifested a decided inclination not to argue.

Ella closed the study of the evening by calling attention to "a familiar illustration."

"Father, do you, think an engine is an engine before water fills the boiler, before fire is put in the box, before steam is made for driving the shaft?"

"That's a silly question. Why do you ask it?"

“Is it just as much an engine when water and fire are withdrawn and there is not steam to move it?”

“I’m not crazy, little girl, even if I did once think you were. But why such silly questions?”

“This is the why, father: Man is God’s human engine. He was just as much a man, a soul, before receiving the breath of life, as after. He is still a man, a soul, after that breath of life leaves him. But he is a dead man, a dead soul. You see, the Bible plainly says the soul can die. Ezekiel 18:4. Jesus’ soul died and went into the grave. This is the thought of Acts 2:22-27. Jesus plainly foretold this. Matthew 26:38. Of course, if Jesus’ soul did not die, but only His body, a bit of humanity, then we are all lost, for a human offering could not save us.

“But if the engine illustrates the case of man, then we must have to admit that we should keep our bodies in first-class condition for God, just as the engine must be kept at its best for the work it was made to do. We would not think of allowing even an engine to go uncared for. It must be kept clean, it must be kept in repair.

“Now father, and Brother Duncan too, let me add that since I have learned how God made me, and why, what I really am, and the relation I sustain to Him, I have come to see that in order to be saved, this body of mine, this life and soul, are all to be dedicated. I cannot dance as I once did, and throw myself away. I cannot abuse my vital powers, and still be a consistent Christian. Nor can you. And I want to ask if I am not right in saying that God’s plan of life calls for you to give up your tobacco. This is the practical side of the matter.”

Just at this juncture, a long-distance call took Ella from the room, leaving Pastor Duncan alone with his parishioners. Mr. Simpson looked his minister squarely in the face, and said: “Brother Duncan, this plug in my pocked feels uncomfortable. I have about come to the conclusion that my tobacco habit fits in with an ever dying soul rather than with a never dying soul. I can see clearly enough that my soul is too intimately associated with my body for this filthy business to go on. How does your smoking look to you? Anyway, what are you going to answer the girl in the way of Bible proof? You know this is why we want you here.”

“Honestly, Brother Simpson, this is an embarrassing situation. Come over to the house tomorrow, will you?”

VI—“SOUL-SLEEPING” AND COMFORTING TRUTHS ABOUT HELL

“Well, if this doesn’t beat one! Say, wife, Brother Duncan isn’t coming over tonight. He has written a note to us stating that he is really too busy to take the time. He also adds that under the circumstances, he regards the study as unprofitable, and liable to produce in us a spirit of uncertainty if not of infidelity. He advises us to discontinue the investigation until the school year is ended, when he will be less occupied, and when he will feel more free to meet argument with argument.

“That’s a mighty funny note. I’ll tell you what I think: He was in a tight place about the tobacco, and he had no way of answering the girl’s arguments. She had too much Bible for him.”

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"I am surely disappointed in Brother Duncan," said Mrs. Simpson. "I thought he would show us where in Ella was wrong. But he has not offered even one text. I nearly made up my mind, last night, that he felt himself unable to meet her points. And I do not wonder. All Ella said seems so plain. James, are you going to stop the use of tobacco?"

"Going to? I've already done it this very morning. I gave my plug a bath in the lake.

Yes, no more tobacco. When a man gets the right idea about himself, and what God desires of him, there is no room for wrong habits. If the soul is the whole man, then I can't be a filthy man and have a clean soul. But, wife, I heard Ella saying something about our tea and coffee. What are you going to do about that?"

The conversation was here interrupted by Ella's entrance. She had been out for the afternoon to call upon a girl friend,—one of the girls who had been cautioned by Brother Duncan to beware of associating with Ella, because of her peculiar ideas. The warning had had its effect for a time; but as the young lady observed Ella as she went to and fro, she was impressed by her quiet, modest, yet cheerful demeanor, and finally decided to invite her to her home. The invitation had been accepted, and the visit had been so delightful that Ella's suggestion to come and join in the evening's Bible study at the Simpson home had been heartily received.

"Where is Brother Duncan, father?" inquired Ella.

"He sent me a note saying he is too busy to come. But I'm afraid that isn't exactly all the truth."

"I heard Mr. Duncan tell papa to-day that he was not coming over here any more, because Ella had such a peculiar way of getting at things, that he really did not know how to reply. He said he was terribly surprised to see how easily Mr. and Mrs. Simpson seemed to be led away by the nonsense Ella taught." Thus spoke Grace Spencer, the young lady who had just entered with Ella.

"Well, I should think you would have been afraid to come then," said Mrs. Simpson.

"Oh, no! What he said made me a bit curious. I really want to hear what Ella is teaching you people."

"Well, she has taught me a pretty hard lesson," said Mr. Simpson; "she has hit my tobacco."

"Oh, good, good!" replied Miss Spencer. "I guess I'll have papa come over, if that is what the Bible study is accomplishing. But, Ella, how in the world could you get your father to see? Papa just will not quit, and I do not know another thing to say. He points to our pastor, and says that if it is all right for the shepherd to browse, then it cannot be wrong for his sheep to do at least a little grazing."

"I read something to-day very funny," said Mr. Simpson, "and about this very thing we are studying. Let me get it for you."

The paper was brought, and Mr. Simpson read:

"We sing about the saints' abode,
'Beyond the bound of time and space:
And while we still our bodies feel,

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We look unto that heavenly place.
But if outside of time and space,
There is no time, there is no place.

“If immaterial is the soul,
Then surely it must nothing be:
And if it flies away at death,
‘That heavenly place’ to know and see.
Then nothing flies (what truth sublime!)
Unto no place, unto no time.

“Where place is not, and time’s unknown.
There other nothings, ‘gone before.’
Before the throne that never was,
Their voiceless melodies do pour;
For immaterial is that place
‘Beyond the bounds of time and space.’ “

“What do you think about that?” said Mr. Simpson to Ella, when he finished the reading. “It strikes me that the infidel who wrote the jingle had a pretty good lineup on things if the soul really isn’t anything. Anybody can see that if the soul is immaterial, as Brother Duncan says, and heaven is away beyond the bounds of time and space, then our old belief would simply be to have nothing going nowhere at no time where a lot of other nothings went at no other time.”

Miss Spencer was all interested. Like Mr. Simpson, she saw the absurdity of the doctrine, and at once remarked that she had often wondered how an immaterial soul could go anywhere, and how it could think and speak and offer praise. “Just the other day,” she said, “I heard Mr. Duncan say that souls are so small, ten thousand of them could be placed upon the head of a pin.”

Even Mrs. Simpson now forgot her usual conservatism, and joined in the laughing at the ridiculous thought expressed.

But Ella came to the rescue. “Father,” she remarked, “I hope we shall not make light of others’ belief. Let us find the beautiful truth of the Word, and with all our hearts, seek to show it to those who do not yet see it. I deeply respect the religious convictions of all Christian believers, and it really hurts me to have any one speak lightly even of those things which appear to have no sensible foundations.”

“You’re right, little girl. I guess this is another thing I must give up. Maybe it is as bad as my tobacco, or even worse. The tobacco hurts my own soul, while ridicule hurts others.”

“Yes, father, this whole question is one of practical Christian living. A true understanding of the matter of life and its relations makes one a true follower of Jesus. Now let us answer your query of this morning as to where people go at death.

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“First of all, I will say that, as a matter of fact, they really ‘go’ nowhere. Let me illustrate by the case of Lazarus. Turn to John 11. Verse 11 gives us Jesus’ statement, ‘Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.’

Verse 14 further tells us that ‘Lazarus is dead.’ It is Lazarus himself, not Lazarus’ body, of which Jesus speaks. The one whom the disciples knew; the one who thought, and spoke, and acted; the one who lived and loved; the actual man and the very soul, had fallen asleep, had died. Lazarus, the dead man, was there in the tomb. He had not gone to heaven, nor to some other supposed abode of good spirits; he had simply died and had been buried.

“Second, you will notice, from verse 43, that Jesus fully recognized this fact; for when he came to bring Lazarus back to life, He merely said, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’ He did not call him down from heaven, but up from the grave.”

“But, Ella, the Bible somewhere says that the spirit goes to God when we die,” said Grace.

“Please read the text, Grace, You will find it in Ecclesiastes 12:7.”

Grace read: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

“This, Grace, is the spirit, or breath of life, which God gave to man in the words of Job 27:3: ‘All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils.’ The margin for ‘spirit’ is, ‘the breath which God gave him,’ and refers to Genesis 2:7.

“It is important to keep in mind that the spirit is not the soul. The soul is the entire man, while the spirit is the life power which quickens and keeps the man alive. See Psalm 66:9.

“Here we are told that God ‘holdeth our soul in life.’ Every day, He imparts to us the power to continue. It is His life communicated through His word. Hebrews 1:3. And death results from the withdrawing of His power. Psalm 104:29 states, ‘Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.’ Nothing flies away at death, nothing goes to heaven.

“Let me refer again, father, to the illustration of the engine. The engine lives, so to speak, as long as the workmen keep it properly stored with the energy which we call steam; but when the steam is gone, the engine is dead. Nothing goes from the engine; it is dead or inactive through lack of power. Just so it is with man. ‘When Jesus said, ‘Lazarus, come forth,’ He spoke life power into the one who was dead, and he lived again. Isn’t that simple and plain?”

“Why, Ella, you are a real soul-sleeper. I should say. Mr. Duncan told me you were.”

“Well, Grace, let me ask you two or three questions: Do you believe in the second coming of the Lord Jesus?”

“Certainly I do.”

“Do you accept the idea that there will be a resurrection of the dead?”

“Most assuredly.”

“Do you think there will be a day of Judgment, to determine the rewards of all men?”

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“Y-e-s, but I never exactly understood the matter; for if our loved ones are in heaven, and the wicked are in hell, then there would not be much use for a Judgment.”

“Now let me ask this: If the dead go immediately to their reward, why should the Saviour come to earth after them? Yet this is just what He will do; for He said, ‘I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.’ John 14:3. Again, Revelation 22:12 states, ‘Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.’ Does He reward them at death, have them with Him in heaven for a long time, and then at the end of the world come down here to reward them? That would be more than foolish.

“And if the righteous are all in glory, why should there be a resurrection? The resurrection is to cause people to live again. But if they already lived, the resurrection would be a farce. Yet the Bible teaches us that the resurrection is absolutely necessary to our reaching heaven. Read 1 Corinthians 15:13, 17, 18: ‘If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.’ ‘And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.’ And 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 shows conclusively that it is by the resurrection, at Christ’s coming, that all the righteous dead of all the ages are taken to their reward.

“Another thing: With the righteous all in the home of God, and the wicked all in torment, why should God have a Judgment day? Are some to be obliged to change places, because a mistake was made? Will God take some from heaven and send them to perdition, and vice versa?

“No, there is no such thing taught in the Scriptures as souls going to heaven at death. The doctrine is one which contradicts the plainest fundamentals of the gospel.

“Grace, you asked me if I am a soul-sleeper. Whatever I am, I am sure I am in agreement with the prophets, with Jesus, with Paul. Isaiah taught the sleep of man in death (Isaiah 26:19); Ezekiel taught it (Ezekiel 37:12-14); Hosea wrote of it (Hosea 13:14); Jesus proclaimed it over and over again (John 5:28, 29; 11:25; Luke 20:37); and Paul made it one of the chief points of his teaching (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 Acts 24:15; 17:18).”

“Well, I never heard these things before,” said Miss Spencer. “But they are surely very plain. I do not see why Mr. Duncan should call them ‘crazy ideas.’ I shall certainly have a talk with him. I am going to make him sit down with me and explain why he preaches as he does.”

“It was very hard for me, Grace, to think Harry had not gone to heaven. For a time, I was really desperate over the matter. But truth is self-evident, and my sincerity compelled me to yield. And ever since, the Bible has been to me a new book, and the Christian life so easily understood.

“Since I have learned that man is not immortal by nature, that all life centers in Christ, that men do not go to their reward at death, I have had answered that question which so long perplexed me. I have come to see that God is truly love, and that He will not punish eternally, forever and ever, the poor deluded souls who refuse Christ. I no longer think of Him as unjust. I no longer have my old infidelic feelings.”

"This is the thing, Grace," said Mr. Simpson, "that made me give up my tobacco. You see, God wants to save men. He wants us, all there is of us, Never mind about souls, but think of men, just men. I am to be a man while I live, and be saved as a man while here on earth. Then at death, I simply go to sleep for a time, waiting the call of God in the morning of the resurrection. It's the finest and most sensible thing I ever heard. It's making me young in my old age. Bring your father over to-morrow night."

As the evening study closed, Mrs. Simpson called attention to a point which Ella had explained to her privately. "It has been a great blessing to me," she said, "to know that little Harry will come up in the resurrection just as I saw him last. He is not living and growing and changing so that I shall not know him. He will still be my own sweet child. It seems very beautiful. And I am going over to comfort your mother, Grace. You know she thinks your brother, who was killed in the railroad wreck, and who was still in sin, is suffering the agonies of the lost. But he is not; he simply sleeps."

"Oh, Mrs. Simpson, I wish you would?" said Grace. "Come over to our house and study, will you not, please?"

VII —MRS. SPENCER'S JOY ON LEARNING THAT HER SON IS NOT IN HELL

"Spencer, the girl invited us over tonight; and while I didn't want to come out through the cold, I concluded I'd be selfish if I said no, so here we are." Thus spoke Mr. Simpson as he sat down in the Spencer home the next evening.

"Well, Simpson, if you had heard Grace grow eloquent when she returned last night, you would have had no question about coming. Bless me, she talked more Bible in twenty minutes than I have heard in twenty years, I guess. I can't tell exactly what she is trying to get at, but she made one thing plain: she said you had given up your tobacco, because of something you have learned about your soul."

"Now, we do not wish you men to do much visiting tonight," said Miss Spencer; "I want Ella to go on with her Bible Study, and tell us all she possibly can in the time we have, and I am going to ask her if she can give mamma anything to show that my brother George is not at this time suffering among the lost."

At this point, Mrs. Spencer spoke. "Ella," she said, "if I could know that George is unconscious, and not suffering the torments of hell, there would be lifted from my heart a terrible burden. The thought haunts me by night and day. Why, sometimes I almost feel angry with God."

"So do I," said Grace.

Mr. Spencer chewed a little harder, but remained silent. It had been quite generally known, however, that after his son's tragic end, he had not only increased his tobacco supply, but had been given to the practice of taking now and then a glass of something stronger than water, "just to help forget a bit."

"Spencer, if you don't mind, suppose we have a word of prayer before we study."

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Not to enter irreverently the sanctuary of prayer, yet to tell what may be helpful, it may be said that Mr. Simpson's prayer of that particular evening was one of great earnestness and pathos and sympathy. To Mrs. Spencer, it was the most beautiful prayer she had ever heard. It gave her comfort. It brought a rift in the dark cloud that had so long shadowed her soul. It was a prayer for help to know God's will, and that His blessing might be upon the home in which the seekers were met. As in a dream, Mr. Spencer found himself saying "Amen," and saying it audibly. He afterwards felt ashamed of his boldness. Mrs. Spencer wiped away a tear.

Ella began the study with a brief review of what had been previously studied. She showed that man was not created immortal; that everlasting life is found only by faith; that man dies and goes to the grave; and that when Jesus comes the second time, He will resurrect and take with Him to their reward all the righteous of all time.

"But are you certain, Ella, that those who die are unconscious—totally unconscious?" asked Mrs. Spencer.

"Mrs. Spencer, the Bible has only one thought concerning death. Throughout the record, it describes death as a sleep.

"Let me read. Deuteronomy 31:16: 'Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers.' 1 Kings 2:10: 'David slept with his fathers.' 1 Kings 11:43: 'Solomon slept with his fathers.' 1 Kings 14:31: 'Rehoboam slept with his fathers.' 1 Kings 22:40: 'Ahab slept with his fathers.' Whether they were righteous or wicked, the record is the same—they slept. This was God's way of saying they died.

"David prayed, Psalm 13:3, 'Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.' Jeremiah 51:39 speaks of the final death of wicked men as 'a perpetual sleep.' Jesus first spoke of Lazarus as being asleep, then afterwards said he was dead. John 11:11, 14. And of the death of Stephen, the good man of apostolic days, the simple statement is, 'He fell asleep.' Acts 7:60. 'Sleep is a Bible word for death. But sleep is absolute unconsciousness. True sleep is dreamless. He who slumbers truly, has no sense of the passage of time."

"How in the world, then, could our pastor ever have received the idea that after a person dies, he is more conscious than he was before?" inquired Mrs. Spencer.

"Yes, Mr. Duncan told me, the other day, that death is not actually death, but only transition," said her daughter.

"But the Bible says sleep, doesn't it?" emphatically interposed Mr. Simpson. "And I don't see how a sleeping man can be awake and thinking."

"Suppose," said Ella, "we again turn to what the Lord has said. It is better to follow Him than the best of men. A 'Thus saith the Lord' is infinitely better than all human opinion. Let us read Psalm 146:3,4."

Grace read: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

"Father," said Miss Spencer, "you will remember that Mr. Duncan told us another thing. He said that the body died, but that the soul departed into a higher state of thought. Now I see a serious discrepancy. If the soul does the thinking, and does not die, how could it possibly pass

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into a higher state of existence and have no thought? This test says that the 'thoughts perish.' Either the body does the thinking, thus making thoughts perish with it, or else the soul has no thought after death, no matter where it goes. Of course, this is just as clear as it is true; but how can we explain Mr. Duncan's statement?"

"At Harry's funeral, you will recall," remarked Mrs. Spencer, "our pastor made this statement: 'To-day this sweet child still lives, and is looking for the time when he may again take sister in his arms, and know her as he could not know her here.' If this is true, then my poor boy, among the lost, and suffering agony, is tormented with terrible thought of never meeting us again. And to think that it is all eternal!"

"Mrs. Spencer, let me read to you a text which shows still further that the dead are not conscious. Here it is, Job 14:21. Speaking of the parent who has died, it says, 'His sons come to honor, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.' Whatever may happen to the children is naught to parents after they are gone. They have ceased to think. They have gone into the grave, into the land of forgetfulness. Their anxieties, their perplexities, their disappointments, their heartaches, are all ended. And so it is with the children. Once they are gone, their consciousness has ceased."

Ella continued: "Listen further, and get real comfort. Will you yourself please read Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6?"

Mrs. Spencer tremblingly read: "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun."

"Oh, I think that is the grandest text I ever read!" said the poor woman, who for months had been almost in despair over the death of her son, gone without hope in Christ. "Then he isn't thinking, is he? He isn't in agony, is he? Oh, this makes me love God! It gives me a new hope."

"Grace, will you please read verse 10?" said Ella.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

"Putting together all these thoughts, we see that the real person, the 'thou,' the thinking part, the part that loves, or hates, or envies, as the case may be, is what goes to the grave. And when it has gone there, all its activities cease forever, or until the time when God calls again to life. Is not that plain to all of you?"

"This seems to explode another thing which I heard our good Pastor Duncan say," said Mr. Spencer. "He said that when Christians die, they go right up into glory, and there praise God; but when I asked him what the wicked did down in their quarters, he said that was something we could and should entirely leave to God. And all the time, I was worrying over our boy."

Again Ella found the text which met the point, for she carried her good school notebook with her. She asked Mr. Spencer to read Psalm 115:17.

"The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence."

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"I believe God knew that men would trouble us with these wrong ideas, and He put this down to help us," said Ella.

"Simpson, that's a wonderful verse to me. For the first time in my life, it seems as though the Bible were speaking just for me." Thus Mr. Spencer candidly confessed his faith.

"That's the way it came to me. And that's the reason I came to give up my tobacco. And, somehow, all the time now, I want to be a better man. The Bible keeps right on speaking to me."

"Have you really quit your tobacco?"

"Sure thing. And, do you believe it, I don't even care for it! And I threw my plug into the lake three days ago."

"What you are saying is very interesting; but shall we go on with our study?" said Ella.

"Yes, indeed," replied Mr. Spencer. "This is the finest thing I ever struck."

Mrs. Simpson now read Psalm 6:5: "In death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?"

"I wish to have you all keep in mind," Ella remarked, "that none of these scriptures can reasonably be made to speak of the body, as distinct from the soul. As Grace has said, it would mean utter confusion thus to believe. All know that it is the function of the soul to love, to remember, to praise, and to give thanks. Thus it is the soul that is considered in all these statements.

"Mother, will you now give us the words of Isaiah 38:18, keeping in mind what I have just said?"

Mrs. Simpson read, "The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth."

"Now," said Ella, "take the first part of the next verse: 'The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day.' Do you not clearly see that life, and hope, and praise all have a distinct place only until we come to die? That death ends all our functions? That all that lives comes under the power of the grave?"

"Ella," interrupted Mr. Spencer, "maybe you haven't known it; but ever since you came home, our pastor has been visiting around, cautioning the folks to be careful about letting their young people associate with you, because of your ideas about the Bible. Of course, he has told everybody about this soul question; and we have all been discussing it, you may believe. Yesterday one fellow asked me what becomes of a man's soul when something strikes him and he becomes unconscious. I didn't know the least thing about it. What do you say?"

"Mr. Spencer, you have asked one question, let me put another. It was asked in our Bible class. How does it happen that a moderate blow on the head will cause a person to become unconscious, to know nothing, while a very hard blow on the same part will cause him to know everything? This, you see, must be true if death only releases the soul and gives it larger and freer life.

“The truth is, the moderate blow on the head, which causes unconsciousness, temporarily suspends the function of thought; but the harder blow, causing death, completely destroys that same function, and all others as well. The soul remains in both cases. In the first instance, it is simply an unconscious soul; in the second, a dead soul.”

“Ella,” said, Mr. Spencer, “answer this: Do you believe our boy is going to be burned, and burned forever? This terribly concerns me.”

VIII — THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTIGATES THE SUBJECT OF HELL

Mr. Spencer was at the grocery the next morning, and so also were several of his neighbors.

“Spencer,” said his friend Forsythe, “have you heard that Simpson has quit his tobacco?”

“Yes, he told me about it last night.”

“Wonder how it happened.”

“Well, he’s been studying the Bible.”

“Is Mr. Duncan studying with him? If he is, I should think Duncan himself would quit.”

“No, not Duncan, but just Simpson’s daughter. Say, Forsythe, she’s a marvel, that girl is. Duncan was in to call on us, and told us the girl was crazy, and we ought to give her a wide berth. But last night, she and her folks came over to study with us (Grace invited them); and let me tell you she did me more good in a religious way than I have done for me all my life before.”

“What on earth did you find in the Bible to interest you, old man?”

“Now, no foolishness, Foresythe. You know that when George was killed, he was not ready to go. And wife and I have been about insane ever since; for according to all that we had been taught, he had gone to hell. I never thought much about the doctrine of a burning hell until that time; but since then, I have almost hated the thought of religion.”

“Well, you don’t think there isn’t any hell, do you? But really, Spencer, I have always believed Ingersoll was pretty nearly right. You know he said that if God would burn a man eternally for the sins of a few short years, He was an unjust and cruel monster. And that is one of the reasons why I take no stock in a lot of this preaching about the love of God. But the hell is there in the Bible all right, and so I stay out of the church.”

“I don’t know, Forsythe, what to say in reply; but if you will come over to the house to-night, you may hear something that will interest you.”

At this point, the pastor came in. Immediately Mr. Spencer accosted him: “Hello, Brother Duncan! I’m right glad you came just at this time. I have a question. It is about a matter that Forsythe and I have just been discussing. Do you think there is such a place as hell?”

The men gathered at the store closed in to catch the reply.

“Well, brother, I have always believed and preached that way. Certainly there is, for it is taught by the word of God.”

Ella Simpson: Neighborhood Transformer

“Very well,” continued Mr. Spencer; “if there is such a place, can you locate it? You know, Brother Duncan, that I am interested, and that I have a reason to be. Now where is it? And is it burning men to-day?”

“But, my brother, what stirs you to ask this question? You are not getting mixed with the Simpsons, are you? Brother Simpson is already pretty badly muddled, and I fear for you if you allow yourself to take up any study with Miss Ella. You will remember that I cautioned you.”

This was an interesting bit of news to the little group standing by. Mr. Spencer was somewhat irritated.

“Yes, you did caution me; but last night, when the girl came over at my daughter’s invitation, and read the Bible with us, she helped me wonderfully. And I think you are mistaken when you say Simpson is muddled. Do you know he has begun to pray and study his Bible? Do you know he has actually given up his tobacco? Why, he told me last night that the Bible seems like a new book, and that it is almost like a letter to himself. He just enjoys it. Is that getting muddled?”

“You don’t say that old man Simpson has stopped his tobacco, do you?” asked one of the later comers.

“That isn’t all,” replied Mr. Spencer. “The idea of being a better man got hold of me too last night. There’s something about that little daughter of Simpson’s, and something in her teaching, that gets a fellow’s feelings stirred up. That one study of hers helped me more than all the sermons I ever heard. My tobacco is going next, I’m thinking.”

“Spencer, did you say that you are going to study the question of hell to-night?”

“Yes, sir; and you are all invited. And I want to ask our pastor here if he will not come and help me to understand about my boy. If my son is in a burning hell, our minister ought to know and tell me. Will you come over, Brother Duncan?”

The pastor gave several very unsatisfactory excuses, and having made a slight purchase, went out.

The little group of men looked knowingly at one another. Mr. Forsythe was first to speak.

“Spencer, he wasn’t honest with you,” he said.

“That’s right,” the others added.

“It seems to me that this hell doctrine leads people to be unfeeling, even the preachers,” said Mr. Spencer. “But all come over to-night.”

And they were all there. When the Simpson family arrived, they were greeted by a full parlor. Mr. Simpson was invited to pray; after which Ella, somewhat embarrassed and apologetic, began:

“Mr. Spencer is interested to know about the punishment of those who die in their sins. Do they immediately go to a place of torment?”

“In our previous studies, we have seen that when man dies, he does not go to either heaven or hell. He simply dies. He falls asleep. He is absolutely unconscious. His thoughts have perished.

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He has no more any part in anything that is done under the sun. And he remains thus until the end of all time, when the resurrection takes place, and he goes to his reward, either good or ill.

“All this must be true, because by nature man is not immortal. God ‘only hath immortality.’ This you find in 1 Timothy 6:16. Eternal life and immortality are found in the gospel. See 2 Timothy 1:10. Therefore only those who accept Christ by faith receive eternal life. John 3:36.”

“That sounds sensible,” whispered Mr. Forsythe to the one who sat next him.

“To answer directly the question raised by Mr. Spencer about sending men to punishment at death, let us read 2 Peter 2:9: ‘The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of Judgment to be punished.’ And Acts 17:31 tells us that God ‘hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world.’ Before the great day of final account, there is no place of suffering known as hell.

“However, both the Old and the New Testament speak of the dead as being in hell; but the original words refer only to the grave. In the Hebrew, the word for grave, or place of the unconscious dead, is sheol; in the Greek, hades. The American Revised Version, does not translate the words, but simply puts them into the text, thus making it impossible for the ordinary reader to make a mistake. The dead go into sheol, or hades,--into the grave. They do not go into torment.

“An illustration of this is found in Acts 2:31. This text says the soul of Christ ‘was not left in hell.’ In other words, it simply tells us that He was not left in hades, or the grave.”

“That clears away a mighty lot of fog, Miss Ella,” said Mr. Spencer. “That gets me out of the dark.”

“May I ask a question, Miss Simpson?” interrupted Mr. Forsythe. “You don’t mean to have us understand, do you, that hell-fire is not taught in the Bible?”

“No, indeed, Mr. Forsythe. I do say, though, that at present there is no burning hell, and therefore there is no one now suffering in hell.”

“Then what is the hell of the Bible?” he asked.

“In reply, I may first say that the Scriptures teach no such shocking idea as eternal torment. That would make God unjust. But God is love, and all that He does in punishing sinners is in harmony with His nature.”

By request, Mr. Spencer read Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.” Mr. Simpson followed with Psalm 37:20, “The wicked shall perish.” Another gave the words of Malachi 4:1, “Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

“And to conclude the entire story,” said Ella, “verse 3 tells us, ‘And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.’”

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“Look also at Obadiah 16. The wicked ‘shall be as though they had not been.’ And Psalm 37:10 also emphasizes this same truth by saying. ‘Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.’

“In the final day of fire, the wicked are to perish, to come to ashes, to be as though they never had existed. This punishment is death. Matthew 25:46 plainly declares that this punishment, this death, is ‘everlasting.’”

“But, Miss Simpson,” said Mr. Forsythe, “I have read somewhere that the wicked are tormented forever. Doesn’t it say so?”

“Yes, but ‘forever’ is limited in its meaning. When applied to men, it refers only to their lifetime. Let us take two or three illustrations. 1 Samuel 1:22, 28 tells us that little Samuel was lent to the Lord by his mother ‘forever,’ or ‘as long as he liveth.’ 2 Kings 5:27 shows that leprosy would be in a certain family forever, or as long as the family should continue. Jonah used the term ‘forever’ when speaking of the three days he was in the whale’s stomach. And surely I do not wonder.

“The ‘torment’ of the wicked spoken of in Revelation 14:11, to which reference has been made, continues only until they are finally consumed, until death ends their sufferings. They are tormented only so long as they live. They are only mortal beings, and thus they perish. Do you not think that plain, Mr. Forsythe?”

“It surely does seem plain,” he answered.

Evidently all in the room were of the same opinion. Mr. Spencer, in particular, was radiantly happy. His good wife smiled and nodded.

“Maybe it will make matters even plainer to call attention to one further thought. Fire is to destroy the wicked, and it is called ‘everlasting fire.’ Matthew 25:41. But evidently this term is used because the effects of the fire are everlasting. “The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, so Jude 7 tells us,” continued Ella, “is set forth as an example of the final destruction of men. Those cities were destroyed by ‘eternal fire.’ But note this: The fire turned them to ashes. See 2 Peter 2:6. And Lamentations 4:6 speaks of the cities as being ‘overthrown as in a moment.’ Eternal fire—that is, fire eternal in its effect—forever destroyed those wicked cities, but did it very quickly. The wicked also will be quickly and mercifully destroyed.”

“My but I wish Ingersoll could have heard this lesson!” enthusiastically exclaimed Mr. Forsythe. “I don’t believe he ever would have been an infidel if he had. Eternal hell doctrine turned him from the Bible, yet it isn’t in the Bible at all. This gives me a new view of the whole question of life.”

“Mr. Forsythe, this was what led me to be a Christian girl. Never before—”

“And let me say that these sensible ideas have completely changed me,” broke in Mr. Simpson. “My tobacco is gone, my Bible is a new book, and we are having prayer over at our house now.”

“Friends, to-night begins a new experience for me,” declared Mr. Spencer.

“Simpson, I’m with you for a new neighborhood. I can’t explain my feelings, but I really believe in the goodness of God.”

Ella Simpson: Neighborhood Transformer

Grace Spencer and her mother both cried for joy. A father and husband was being transformed. That was a wonderful evening as the Spencer home. A beautiful and powerful something stirred every heart. The tears of Mrs. Spencer and her daughter caused more than one eye to glisten; and men who for years had known nothing of emotion, found their hearts strangely pulsing.

For a short time, no words were spoken. Then Mr. Forsythe broke the silence by inquiring if it would be possible for the company to meet at his home the next Sunday night, that thus his wife and children could have an opportunity to hear. This met the approval of all, and the party dispersed.

IX — THAT STUDY AT FORSYTHE'S

The next day proved to be a very interesting one in that community. Telephones were kept busy. Ella Simpson's studies were the chief subject of inquiry and discussion; and at the little grocery store were gathered many of the most representative churchmen, to discuss the causes of Brethren Simpson and Spencer. The question which most vitally concerned them was the fact that two old-time users of tobacco had broken the habit.

Another feature which attracted attention was the manifest interest in Christian living shown by some who never before had been known to have any regard for the church or its teachings. Among these was Mr. Forsythe. And when the word went around that he had actually invited Miss Simpson to come to his home for Bible study, there was a sensation.

Pastor Duncan, seeing that a general interest was being awakened, determined to take advantage of the situation, and that day announced a sermon for the following Sunday night on the topic, "The Soul and Its Hereafter."

The placards displayed by the pastor at once brought a crisis. Open opposition showed itself; and many, even stanch church people, were free to express their disapproval of their minister's course. That a good work had been accomplished could not be denied; and Mr. Duncan's effort to check it, seemed part of envy and dense ignorance of the actual needs of the community.

At the suggestion of Mr. Forsythe, it was arranged that the study at his home should be conducted as a question box. He himself, as well as others, wished to interrogate the youthful Bible teacher. This was very agreeable to Miss Ella, whose experience at school had fitted her for just such a plan. Her vacation was now closing, and questions freely asked and answered would greatly aid in helping the largest number to see the beauty of the gospel.

Sunday evening was ideal; and the multitude of jingling sleigh bells told that many were taking advantage of the opportunity to visit a neighbor, to attend church, or to meet appointments. Mr. Duncan congratulated himself on a full church. He would be able now "to check the ravages of a moral pestilence" which was sweeping over his field.

At Mr. Forsythe's commodious home, provision had been made for the interested few who had promised to come; and Ella and her parents had driven over early, that the work of the evening might be undertaken at the earliest possible moment. The friends were prompt in arriving, and ere long it was manifest that the expected attendance was to be greatly exceeded. More and

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more came, until the house was crowded. Ella could not understand it. Nothing like it had ever been known in that neighborhood.

At the church, all was different. Mr. Duncan faced more empty pews than had greeted him in many weeks. His specially employed choir had few to enjoy its music. And the pastor inwardly understood. The thing he had sought to avert had already occurred. His sheep had wandered into a strange fold.

The question box night at Mr. Forsythe's home was remarkable in many ways. A spirit of candor and good will marked all that was done, and the presence of the unseen Friend was felt by all present. A large portion of the company were young men and women, all of whom were deeply impressed by the tremendous change that had been wrought in Ella. From the fickle, vacillating, worldly girl, she had been molded into a sober, fixed, lovely Christian woman. Evidently she had found that of which they had long heard but had never known. Her life was a demonstration. That night, the reproach of the false charge of being semi-insane was lifted from the girl's shoulders, and all seemed anxious to have her understand their altered sentiments.

The questions were varied, but all were designed to get at the actual truth of the Bible relative to God's plan for saving man from wrong habits. What sin is, how it came into the world, how it may be put out of the life, how one may enjoy a victorious experience,--these and other practical phases of life received their due share of attention.

But that which held the center of the field was the great question which Mr. Duncan had chosen for his evening's discourse,--"The soul and It's Hereafter." Many who had known nothing of the studies of the week before asked for a review of the points taken up.

Again the "little theologian," as Mr. Simpson called his daughter, went over the story of man's creation. She showed that God only is immortal; that an inherent life was never given to man; that he could continue to live only by having access to the tree of life; that disobedience shut him away from the tree and thus brought death; that this death included the whole man; that death is a dreamless sleep; that man waits in the grave until the resurrection day; that if there were no resurrection, there would be no hereafter; that there is no heaven to enjoy or hell to suffer until the day when Christ comes, which is the end of the world.

She dwelt at length upon John 3:16. "All life is absolutely dependent upon the Saviour. Without Him and His righteousness, humanity must perish; and that 'perish' means, to cease to be." Again she read John 3:36 and 1 John 5:11, 12. She showed that by faith only, the life and immortality of Jesus Christ are received and held.

"All depend on Him," she said. "Through Him is restored to us all that was originally lost. He gives repentance from sin, forgiveness of sin, and power to live above sin. Calvary is the sinner's only hope. And Christ will bring again to man the home that was originally given. This will be a real home for real people."

"Right there," said Mr. Spencer, "is a matter I don't understand. What is the heaven in which we are to live eternally?"

"If sin had never entered the world," Ella replied, "you can readily see that this earth would have remained man's home. That was God's plan. And the fact that sin came will in no wise

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thwart the plan. Jesus said He came 'to save that which was lost.' Luke 19:10. All that was lost will be restored. Matthew 5:5 says the meek shall inherit the earth.' Micah 4:8 shows that the 'dominion' given to man at first will come again into his possession. Matthew 25:34 declares that in the final day, Christ will say to His redeemed ones, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' You see, He points them back to the beginning,—to the Paradise home.

"This earth is to be the home of the saved. Here will be found once more the tree of life and the river of life. Revelation 22:1, 2. All things will be made new. Revelation 21:5. There will be no sickness, no pain, no death. Isaiah 33:24; Revelation 21:4. And we shall know one another. 1 Corinthians 13:12."

"Miss Ella," inquired one of those who heard for the first time, "where did you get hold of this knowledge? This is a remarkably simple truth, and I wonder that I have never heard it before."

"I learned this from my Bible teacher at the boarding school I am now attending," she modestly answered.

"But who are the people—what denomination?"

"The denomination is not important, in fact, being tied to a denomination usually cripples one's connection with Christ. My contact with this little school has shown me that God will have a small remnant of people who are true 'Christians', who teach acceptance of the entire Bible, and have nothing to do with traditions of men, and who believe implicitly in the keeping of all the commandments."

"Every honest and intelligent person knows that Saturday is the Sabbath," added Mr. Forsythe; "and if the Bible teaches the seventh-day and teaches Christ, as Miss Ella says it does, and does not nullify the plan of salvation by the doctrine of an everlasting hell, than that is the 'Christianity' that I wish to be more closely associated with."

"There is another feature of a true 'Biblical Christians' life that has greatly appealed to me," said Ella, "and that is the thought that salvation through Christ includes the entire person, physical as well as mental. This is the direct outcome, you see, of the right understanding of the nature of the soul. Jesus died to save complete men. These 'Biblical Christians' therefore teach temperance in a most practical way. They hold that a wholesome, clean diet, which will make good blood and a sound body, is absolutely in line with Christian experience. To state it logically, it may be placed this way: Good diet makes good blood; good blood, a good body; a good body, a good mind; a good mind, good thoughts; and good thoughts, good character. To defile the body, by whatever means, is, in their view to make light of God's claims upon us, and to war against the best interests of the soul."

"That is why I am no longer using tobacco," said Mr. Simpson.

"Here, too," said Mr. Spencer.

Next day, Ella Simpson returned to her school life; but behind her she left more than one happy home, and many persons who had joined her in the beautiful faith of complete salvation through Christ. Moreover, Grace Spencer accompanied her as a student, thoroughly devoted to the idea of preparing for the Master's service.

Ella Simpson: Neighborhood Transformer

The good work still goes on. Day after day, the light of the Scriptures continues to shine forth. The influence attending the simple message of the lovely schoolgirl, which led unconverted men and women to the Saviour, caused many souls in that neighborhood to hunger for better things, they were yielding to God's Spirit's call, and found a new peace and a new power in proclaiming the merits of Calvary.

Pastor Duncan resolutely refused to give up the 'traditions of his church', clinging the whole time to 'empty church form' and 'hypocritical pretense'. Finally at last Duncan found himself again having to move, for most of his 'flock' had chosen a new God; our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Ella's Bible teacher has since been invited by the community to come, and give God's last-day message which is now being proclaimed more fully in her home town. Ella Simpson found the truth concerning the soul; and the truth, through her, led many a tired and discouraged one to the Lamb of God, who bears away the sins of the world.