

Forty-Eight Hours In Hell

by John W. Reynolds

One of the most interesting cases of resuscitation that ever came to my knowledge was that of George Lennox, a notorious horse thief of Jefferson County. He was serving his second term. Sedgwick County sent him to the prison the first time for a similar offense - stealing horses.

During the winter of 1887 and 1888 he worked in the coal mines. The place where he was laboring seemed dangerous to him. He reported the fact to the officer in charge, who made an examination, and deciding that the room was safe, ordered Lennox back to his work. The convict, obeying, had not continued his work more than an hour, when the roof fell in and completely buried him. He remained in this condition fully two hours.

Missed at dinnertime, a search was instituted for the missing convict, and he was found under this heap of rubbish. Life seemed extinct. He was taken to the top, and on examination by the prison physician, was pronounced dead. His remains were carried to the hospital where he was washed and dressed, preparatory for interment. His coffin was made and brought to the hospital. The chaplain had arrived to perform the last sad rites preparatory to burial. A couple of prisoners were ordered by the hospital steward to lift the corpse from the boards and carry it across the room and place it in the coffin. They obeyed, one at the head, and other at the feet and were about half way across the room when the one who was at the head accidentally stumbled over a cuspidor, lost his balance, and dropped the corpse. The head of the dead man struck the floor, and to the utter surprise and astonishment of all present, a deep groan was heard. Soon the eyes opened, and other appearances of life were manifested. The physician was immediately sent for, and by the time he arrived, some thirty minutes, the dead man had called for a cup of water, and was in the act of drinking when the physician arrived.

The coffin was at once removed and later on was used to bury another convict. His burial robes were also taken from him, and the prison garb substituted. On an examination he was found to have one of his legs broken in two places, and was otherwise bruised. He remained in the hospital some six months, and again went to work.

I learned of his peculiar experience while apparently dead soon after, from a fellow miner. Prompted by curiosity, I longed for an acquaintance with Lennox to get his experience from his own lips. This opportunity was not offered for several months. At last it came. After being removed from the mines I was detailed to one of the prison offices to make out some annual reports. The subject of this man's return to life was being discussed on e day, when he happened to pass by the office door and was pointed out to me. It was not long until I had a note in his hand, and asked him to come where I was at work. He did so, and here I got well acquainted with him, and from his own lips received his wonderful story. He is a young man, probably not over thirty years of age. He had been a hardened criminal; is possessed of a very good education, and naturally very bright.

The most wonderful part of his story was that during the time he was dead. Being a shorthand reporter, I took his story from dictation.

Said he, " I had a presentiment all the morning that something terrible was going to happen. I was so uneasy on account of my feelings that I went to my mining boss Mr. Grason, and told him how I felt, and asked him if he would not come and examine my coal room, the place where I was digging coal. He came and seemed to make a thorough examination, and ordered me back to work, saying there was no danger, and that he thought I was going, 'cranky'. I returned to my work, and had been digging away for something like an hour, when all of a sudden, it grew very dark. Then it seemed as if a great iron door swung open and I passed through it. The thought then came to my mind that I was dead and in another world. I could see no one, nor hear sound of any kind. From some cause unknown to myself, I started to move away from the doorway, and had traveled some distance when I came to the banks of a broad river. It was not dark, neither was it light. There was about as much light as on a bright, starlit night. I had not remained on the banks of this river very long until I could hear the sound of oars in the water, and soon a person in a boat rowed up to where I was standing.

"I was speechless. He looked at me for a moment, and then said that he had come for me, and told me to get into the boat and row across to the other side. I obeyed. Not a word was spoken. I longed to ask him who he was, and where I was. My tongue seemed to cling to the roof of my mouth. I could not say a word. Finally, we reached the opposite shore. I got out of the boat, and the boatman vanished out of sight.

"Thus left alone, I knew not what to do. Looking out before me, I saw two roads which led through a dark valley. One of these was a broad road and seemed to be well traveled. The other was a narrow path and led off in another direction. I instinctively followed the well-beaten road. I had not gone far when it seemed to grow darker. Ever and anon, however a light would flash up from the distance, and in this manner I was lighted on my journey.

"Presently I was met by a being that is utterly impossible for me to describe. I can only give you a faint idea of his dreadful appearance. He resembled a man somewhat, but was much larger than any human being I ever saw. He must have been at least ten feet high. He had great wings on his back. He was black as the coal I had been digging, and in a perfectly nude condition. He had a spear in his hand, the handle of which must have been fully fifteen feet in length. His eyes shone like balls of fire. His teeth, white as pearl, seemed fully an inch long. His nose, if you could call it a nose, was very large, broad and flat. His hair was very coarse, heavy and long. It hung down upon his massive shoulders. His voice sounded more like the growls of a lion in a menagerie than anything I can recall.

"It was during one of the flashes of light that I first saw him. I trembled like an aspen leaf at the sight. He had his spear raised as if to send it flying through me. I suddenly stopped. With that terrible voice I seem to hear yet, he bade me follow him; that he had been sent to guide me on my journey. I followed. What else could I do? After he had gone some distance a large mountain appeared to rise up before us. The part facing us seemed perpendicular, just as if a mountain had been cut in two and one part had been taken away. On this perpendicular wall, I

could distinctly see these words, 'This is Hell.' My guide approached this perpendicular wall, and with his spear handle gave three loud rasps. A large massive door swung back and we passed in. I was then conducted on through what appeared to be a passage through this mountain.

"For some time we traveled in Egyptian darkness. I could hear the heavy footfalls of my guide and thus could follow him. All the way along I could hear deep groans as of some one dying. Further on, these groans increased, and I could distinctly hear the cry water, water, water. Coming now to another gateway, and, passing through, I could hear, it seemed, a million voices in the distance, and the cry was for water, water. Presently another large door opened at the knock of my guide, and I found that we had passed through the mountain, and now a broad plain lay before me.

"At this place my guide left me to direct other lost spirits to the same destination. I remained in this open plain for a time, when a being somewhat similar to the first one came to me; but instead of a spear he had a huge sword. He came to tell me of my future doom. He spoke with a voice that struck horror to my soul. 'Thou art in hell,' he said; 'for thee all hope is fled. As thou passed through the mountain on thy way hither, thou didst hear the groans and shrieks of the lost as they called for water to cool their parched tongues. Along that passage there is a door that opens into the lake of fire. This is soon to be thy doom. Before thou art conducted to this place of torment never more to emerge - for there is no hope for those who enter there - thou shalt be permitted to remain in this open plain, where it is granted to all the lost to behold what they might have enjoyed instead of what they must suffer.'

"With this I was left alone. Whether the result of the terrible fright through which I had passed I know not, but now I became stupified. A dull languor took full possession of my frame. My strength departed from me. My limbs refused to support my body longer. Overcome, I now sank down a helpless mess. Drowsiness now took control of me. Half awake, half asleep, I seemed to dream. Far above me, and in the distance, I saw the Beautiful City of which we read in the Bible. How wonderfully beautiful were its walls of jasper. Stretching out and away in the distance, I saw vast plains covered with beautiful flowers. I, too, beheld the river of life and the sea of glass. Vast multitudes of angels would pass in and out through the gates of the city, singing, oh, such beautiful songs. Among the number I saw my dear old mother, who died a few years ago of a broken heart because of my wickedness. She looked toward me and seemed to beckon me to her, but I could not move. There appeared to be a great weight upon me that held me down. Now a gentle breeze wafted the fragrance of those lovely flowers toward me, and I could now more plainly than ever, hear the sweet melody of angel voices, and I said, 'Oh, that I could be one of them.'

"As I was drinking from this cup of bliss it was suddenly dashed from my lips. I was aroused from my slumbers. I was brought back from happy dreamland by an inmate of my dark abode, who said that it was now time to enter upon my future career. He bade me follow him. Retracing my steps I again entered the dark passageway, and followed my guide for a time, when we came to a door that opened in the side of the passage, and going along this, we finally found ourselves passing through another door, and lo! I beheld the lake of fire.

"Just before me I could see, as far as the eye could reach, that literal lake of fire and brimstone. Huge billows of fire would roll over each other, and great waves of fiery flame would dash against each other and leap high in the air like the waves of the sea during a violent storm. On the crest of the waves I could see human beings rise, but soon to be carried down again to the lowest depths of this awful lake of fire. When borne on the crest of these awful billows for a time their curses against a just God would be appalling, and their pitiful cries for water would be heart-rending. This vast region of fire echoed and re-echoed with the wails of these lost spirits.

"Presently I turned my eyes to the door through which I had a few moments before entered, and I read these awful words, 'This is thy doom; Eternity never ends.' Shortly I began to feel the earth give way under my feet, and I soon found myself sinking down into the lake of fire. An indescribable thirst for water now seized upon me. And calling for water my eyes opened in the hospital prison.

"I have never told this experience of mine before for fear the prison officials would get hold of it, think me insane and lock me in the crankhouse. I passed through all of this, and I am as well satisfied as I am that I live, that there is a Heaven and there is a Hell, and a regular old-fashioned Hell, the kind the Bible tells about. But there is one thing certain, I am never going to that place any more.

"As soon as I opened my eyes in the hospital and found that I was alive and on earth once more, I immediately gave my heart to God and I am going to live and die a Christian. While the terrible sights of Hell can never be banished from my memory, neither can the beautiful things of Heaven I saw, I am going to meet my dear old mother after awhile. To be permitted to sit down on the banks of that beautiful river, to wander with those angels across the plains, through the vales and over the hills carpeted with fragrant flowers, the beauty of which far surpasses anything that mortal can imagine; to listen to the songs of the saved - all this will more than compensate me for living the life of a Christian here on earth, even if I have to forego many sensual pleasures in which I indulged before coming to the prison. I have abandoned my companions in crime, and am going to associate with good people when I am once more a free man."

We give this account to the reader just as we received it from Lennox.

It is one of the most wonderful experiences it has ever been our lot to read. May God bless this message from Mr. Lennox to the awakening of many lost souls. Oh, how can men doubt the existence of a real, literal burning Hell? Tell me, how can they, when we have the Word and remarkable revelation such as the above from time to time? Men and women, stop! Face about! Get a real Bible experience of a heart-felt salvation, lest you experience the reality of not only forty-eight hours, but an Eternity in Hell.