

CHAPTER THREE

THE evening of November 21, 1873, found the *Ville du Havre*, according to Captain Surmount's report, prow east for France on a calm Atlantic, which was good news for everyone aboard. There had been a sharp squall off the coast of Newfoundland that gave most of the passengers a few seasick hours. But now there was no motion, and the calm was so complete that Mother said later she found it difficult to realize they were on the sea. The weather was clear and it was too early to fear icebergs.

The *Ville du Havre* was living up to its reputation as the foremost pleasure ship of the seas. The bouquets of flowers were still fresh in the large and sumptuous dining room, where Pastor Lorriaux, at dinner, was teaching Mother French from the menu in preparation for her stay in France.

The Rev. Emil Cook, another of the four French pastors, had organized a Sunday-school class among the many children aboard. The children themselves chose their first hymn: "I Want to Be an Angel."

After dinner Mother helped Mlle. Nicolet put the four little daughters to bed and rejoined her friends in the magnificent saloon. All the children had left for the night, but the young people returned from their after-dinner deck promenade and began organizing games. Another of the French pastors, Pastor Weiss, proposed a walk on deck, and Mother accepted.

Pastor Weiss was to write a small book, in French, a copy of which has come into my possession. It is his account of this last night on the *Ville du Havre*. He tells how Mother and he walked the deck, and of their conversation. The stars were unusually bright and the mantle of night diamond-studded, and although the moon did not shine, the air was transparent and clear. Mother remarked on the beauty of the night. Then she told him she had been very sad at the separation from her husband and home even for so short a time.

He reassured her. Only a few weeks, he said, and Father would be with her, and meantime she would be in France, where so many were waiting to welcome her.

"I know all this," she admitted, "and I have struggled against my feelings."

About two o'clock that morning, November 22, the *Ville du Havre* was carrying its sleeping passengers over a quiet sea when two terrific claps, like thunder, were followed by frightening screams. The engines stopped and the ship stood still. The passageways filled with terrified, half-dressed people shouting questions no one could answer. Mother and Mlle. Nicolet threw on dressing gowns, drew some clothing over the children, and ran on deck. Mother carried Tanetta, a big, healthy girl, more than two years old. They were among the first passengers to reach the deck. Pastor Lorriaux hurried across the dark deck to meet them.

"That must be the vessel that struck us," he exclaimed.

Several hundred yards away, to starboard of the *Ville du Havre*, towered the masted silhouette of a great iron sailing vessel. This ship that had rammed theirs and was itself badly damaged was the English *Lochearn*, Captain Robertson in command.

I have a copy of the famous Currier and Ives print that tried to portray the awfulness of this scene. Ships and sea were lighted only by the stars, but the *Ville du Havre* and *Lochearn* were like great wounded beasts caught in angry troughs of sea created by their struggles. Aboard the decks was indescribable confusion. Captain Surmount appeared on the bridge of the *Ville du Havre* and began shouting orders. Some of the officers and men were struggling on the afterdeck to loosen the lifeboats but they could not detach them, for it was only then discovered that everything aboard the beautiful pleasure ship was newly painted and stuck fast. By this time crowds of passengers, in nightdresses or scantily attired, were crowding about the boats or trying to extricate the life preservers suspended along the taffrail, but these, too, were stuck fast.

The sailors kept shouting that there was no danger, and all were to keep calm, but the passengers ran about frantically, fighting to reach the lifeboats. Curses, yells, and hysterical screaming made the deck a bedlam. Some people dropped to their knees and began praying.

Everything was happening so quickly, in such confusion, that it seemed impossible all this took place in a few seconds.

Tanetta was heavy, and Annie put her shoulder under Mother's elbow to help lift her weight. Maggie and Bessie stood pressed against Mother. Mlle. Nicolet and Willie Culver were there, and Pastor Lorriaux stood guard over the little group.

Then Maggie saw Pastor Weiss on deck and ran to him.

"You will stay with us, won't you?" she pleaded.

He promised he would. Then he noticed she was shivering with

cold. He said he would get some clothing, if Pastor Lorriaux would keep the little group together and try to get them to a lifeboat. Pastor Weiss ran below and seized his own overcoat and some shawls and wraps for the children. As he came back through the passageway he saw Pastor Cook standing there in his nightshirt, looking dazed.

"Why are you not dressed?" he demanded.

"Our stateroom was smashed in," Cook answered. "How I am saved I cannot say. I helped a woman look for her children under the rubbish and found the water rising fast."

By this they knew that the *Ville du Havre* had been struck on the starboard athwart the mainmast. The staterooms Father had insisted on changing were the first to catch the crushing blow of the iron ship, and their unfortunate occupants were the first on the *Ville du Havre* to die.

The hysteria mounted on deck. Hundreds were fighting and crowding to reach the inadequate boats. Several clung to deck settees which later saved their lives. Two or three succeeded in wresting life preservers from the paint, donned them, and flung themselves into the sea. Willie Culver was last seen trying to loosen the ropes of a life belt with his penknife.

Mrs. Goodwin and her children did not reach the deck. They were never seen again.

The ship's doctor, a kind and devoted man, ran below to care for the wounded trapped in their staterooms, and died with them.

Mother told me that in the space of a few seconds she was forced through a spiritual struggle. She and the children, being the first to reach the deck, were nearest a lifeboat being freed, but others, scrambling, pushed her little group back. Was she doing right, she wondered, to permit her children to be beaten back by people whose frantic desire to save themselves left them without mercy? Should she not fight for her children's lives, if not for her own?

At that moment the ship shuddered, the screaming grew, the confusion became more terrifying. Pastor Weiss thought there were too many people on their side of the ship.

"Hurry to the other side!" he shouted, just as the mainmast crashed down carrying with it the mizzen, and the two boats over which there had been so much struggle were carried overboard together with all those struggling to free them and those who had fought their way in. Mother and Pastor Lorriaux were both hurt, but slightly, and Mother, hearing the heartrending death screams from the water, knew that if she had "stood for her rights" she would have perished with those who fought hardest to live.

The *Ville du Havre* was sinking rapidly. Mother knew this was

the end; she knew, too, it was not hard to die. She thought of Father with anguish, then, "he would rather think of me with the children." That gave her courage.

The great ship careened to starboard. The water was very near. There was a moment of awful silence as the deck slid lower to meet the sea.

Little Maggie was holding Pastor Weiss's hand. She looked up into his face.

"Pray," she begged.

"God help us," he responded.

There was another loud crash as the bow broke from the ship and sank. Maggie, who until this moment had been terrified, dropped Mr. Weiss's hand and went to Mother. She was suddenly calm and unafraid. Tanetta, her arms around Mother's neck, was quiet. Annie was still helping Mother support her, and Bessie, silent and pale, clutched Mother's knees. Mlle. Nicolet, the two pastors, Mother, and her little girls stood quietly together.

As Maggie stepped beside Mother she lifted her dark eyes. "Mama, God will take care of us." Then little Annie said, "Don't be afraid. The sea is His and He made it."

The sea rushed over the afterdeck as a watery canyon opened to receive the vast ruin of the *Ville du Havre*. The little group went down together, with all on that crowded deck and all those trapped below into blackness whose depth stretched many miles, into a whirlpool created by suction of bodies, wreckage, and savage water. Only twelve minutes after the *Ville du Havre* was struck it sank with all on board.

As Mother was pulled down she felt her baby torn violently from her arms. She reached out through the water and caught Tanetta's little gown. For a moment she held her again, then the cloth wrenched from her hand. She reached out again and touched a man's leg in corduroy trousers.

Once in Jerusalem, when I was a child and we were very poor, someone gave me a little corduroy coat. Mother was pleased that I had a warm coat to wear, for winters are cold in Jerusalem, but I saw the agony on her face. She could never touch that material without reliving the moment of helpless anguish when she felt her baby drawn from her hands by the power of the Atlantic, and reached for her again and felt the corduroy.

The splash of an oar brought her to consciousness. She was lying in a boat, bruised from head to foot and sick with sea water, her long hair heavy with salt and her thick dressing gown in ribbons. She knew, with no need of being told, that her children were gone.

From a watch one of the passengers carried, that stopped when the ship sank, they estimated that Mother had been in the sea for an hour.

She had been rolled under and down, and as she rose unconscious to the surface a plank floated under her, saving her life.

The English sailors of the *Lochearn* were patrolling the littered waters in their smallboats, saving all they could of the survivors of the ship their own had sent to the bottom of the sea. Only drifting fragments were left of the once magnificent *Ville du Havre*.

A few minutes later the same boat that rescued Mother picked up Captain Surmount. He had been thrown from the bridge of his sinking ship. Aboard the *Lochearn* she found Pastor Weiss and Pastor Lorriaux. Mlle. Nicolet was among those lost.

Pastor Lorriaux could not swim, but he caught first a bit of wreckage and then a life preserver, and finally something like a raft which must have been a fragment of ship's flooring. While clinging to this he saw a log floating near by to which ten or fifteen people were clinging. A boat passed them but was too full to stop, and when it had hoisted its rescued to the *Lochearn* deck and hurried back, the log had gone down with all who had clung to it.

Pastor Lorriaux divided his time between Mother and his friend Pastor Blanc, who was picked up unconscious, covered with blood from many wounds, and nearly paralyzed. Some of Pastor Blanc's ribs were broken and he had great difficulty in breathing. Pastor Cook was picked up later.

No sooner was she aboard the *Lochearn* than Mother was told that two of her little girls, which ones she never knew, had come up in the sea near a man to whom they clung. He told them to hold to his coat, for he swam well and hoped to save them. First the smaller one relaxed and disappeared, and he had nearly reached a boat when the other child sank.

When Mother heard this, it was with difficulty that Pastor Lorriaux prevented her from throwing herself after them into the sea.

She knew her children were gone, but she could not forbear hoping. As each boatload was hoisted aboard the *Lochearn* she joined the others who ran to scan the newly rescued relatives or friends. There were parents who met their children and embraced silently and long. There were others who turned silently away. Poor Mother was one of these; still, as each boatload came she sought her four little girls.

The night stayed clear, and from the *Lochearn's* deck the rescued could scan every particle of floating debris. Under the direction of Captain Robertson of the *Lochearn* sailors continued to ply their boats over the scene of the disaster, without a thought of fatigue or even pausing to rest or eat. There were shouts of finds and of salvation, and over all, on the *Lochearn*, the tragic sound of lamentation.

Captain Surmount stood silent and apart on the deck, staring at the calm sea where his beautiful ship had been lost.

The sailors on deck were busy dressing wounds and helping restore the unconscious. They distributed warm drinks and whatever clothing they could scrape together. Some nearly stripped themselves trying to cover the rescued.

The cries for help that at first had come from every direction were growing fainter. The icy waters were crushing out the lives of the last survivors swept beyond range of the rescue crews.

One succeeded in holding his wife on the surface until a boat reached them, and just as he was helping her into it, his heart failed, and he died.

Another reached a boat just as a woman did. Fright crazed him, and when the sailors forced him to let the woman into the boat they found he had gone raving mad and was trying to bite.

A feeble cry was heard from a young girl struggling in the sea. A bloody gash across her face had been made by a man when she came close to a plank he was holding. From another direction came piercing, insistent cries from a little girl clinging to a piece of wood. "I don't want to be drowned," she was screaming. They were able to pick her up—the only child saved. As the last boat was returning with the last survivors the sailors saw a woman rise from the sea holding a child in her arms. They tried to reach her, but she did not reappear.

Again and again the *Lochearn's* boats went out, but no more survivors were found.

By this time it was nearly four in the morning.

The stars were still brilliant, and the skies clear, as they had been since the beautiful sunset the evening before. If the night had been stormy, not a soul could have been saved from the *Ville du Havre*.

Gradually the heart-rending sounds of affliction aboard the *Lochearn* gave way to the softer tones of mourning as the last hopes were replaced by sorrowful reality. Everybody had lost someone, and some families were totally wiped out.

Over the weeping was heard the tranquil murmur of the Atlantic, as if nothing had happened to disturb its calm. The sea looked so placid that it was difficult to realize that it had just annihilated one of the largest steamers afloat, and engulfed, as if in play, two hundred and twenty-six lives.

The *Ville du Havre* had been manned by Captain Surmount and a crew of one hundred and seventy-two officers and men. When Captain Robertson of the *Lochearn* completed the two-hours search after the collision, his men had picked up six officers and twenty-three of the crew, twenty-eight passengers, ten of them women, seventeen men,

and the little girl, nine years old, making a total of fifty-seven saved.

The figures, so sadly eloquent, give no idea of the heartbreaking realization brought by this reckoning.

They extinguished Mother's last hope.

Among reports later spread about Mother was one that she claimed supernatural experiences while fighting to save her life under the sea. I found a scrap of paper on which she wrote the following words:

I had no vision during the struggle in the water at the time of the shipwreck, only the conviction that any earnest soul, brought face to face with its maker, must have; I realized that my Christianity must be real. There was no room here for self-pity, or for the practice of that Christianity that always favours and condones itself and its own, rendering innocuous the sharp two-edged sword of the Word which was intended to separate soul from spirit and the desires and thoughts and intents of the heart. This soft religion was as far removed from Christ's practice of Christianity as east from west. Nothing but a robust Christianity could save me then and now. . . .

Mother told me, long after, that when she came back to consciousness in the boat and knew she had been recalled to life, that her first realization was complete despair. How could she face life without her children? Horrible as was her physical suffering, her mental anguish was worse. Her life had been bound up in her little girls. What was life worth now, and what could it ever be without them?

Then, she told me, it was as if a voice spoke to her. "You are spared for a purpose. You have work to do."

In that moment of returning consciousness she lifted her soul to God in an agony of despair and humbly dedicated her life to His service.

One of the first thoughts that came to her was a memory of Aunty Sims, pointing her finger and saying: "It's easy to be grateful and good when you have so much, but take care that you are not a fair-weather friend to God!" That phrase repeated itself in Mother's mind. She thought, "I won't be a fair-weather friend to God. I will trust Him, and someday I'll understand."

The shipwreck of the *Ville du Havre* would remain one of the unexplained tragedies of the sea and its greatest disaster up until the sinking of the *Lusitania*. It was never determined what actually happened. There seemed no reason for the collision. Captain Robertson sighted the great steamer long in advance from the *Lochearn*, for it was, as has been said before, a clear night of starlight and calm. Sailing vessels were always given the right of way.

It will never be known whether the officer who had taken Captain Surmount's place on the bridge gave the order to stop, or if the order, once given, was badly executed, for he went down with the ship.

Captain Robertson did not realize at once that his ship had cut the *Ville du Havre* almost in two. Had he known six or seven minutes earlier how serious conditions were aboard the *Ville du Havre*, he said later, he could have rendered much more effective help. But he understood from Captain Surmount's shouted French that the steamer was not badly injured.

Captain Robertson said it was only twelve minutes from the time the ships rammed until the steamer sank, but the saving of the survivors took more than two hours.

He carried out the rescue work from a dangerously damaged ship. In fact, he expected the *Lochearn* to sink immediately after the collision and was astonished when it did not, for the bowsprit was demolished.

The fact that his damaged vessel was able to keep afloat encouraged Captain Robertson to think it was strong enough to resist the pressure of the sea, and that by the use of pumps he might bring her safely to harbor. Because she had no cargo, the *Lochearn* sat high out of the water and the holes in her prow were above the sea line, while the watertight bulkhead prevented the water from forcing its way into the hold. But it was soon apparent the *Lochearn* was in danger.

The flag of distress was run up. This is generally the ship's national flag—in this case the English—flown upside down.

For a second time the survivors of the *Ville du Havre* faced death, this time with their rescuers.

In these days of radio and wireless it is hard to realize the anxious watching these poor people had to endure with only a flag to indicate their plight. But it was only a matter of hours before a small ship was seen approaching under full sail.

Twenty times I have crossed the Atlantic, once by air, and I know how rare the meeting with a ship can be and how seldom one is sighted on that vast expanse of water. Yet here, within the space of a few hours, three ships came together at a given point, and the arrival of that stout little sailing vessel, the *Trimountain*, commanded by Captain Urquhart, in time to rescue the survivors of the shipwrecked *Ville du Havre* and the threatened *Lochearn* was held to be then and must still be considered one of the miracles of the sea.

Never shall I forget a day some years ago when my husband and I called on Mrs. Urquhart, widow of the *Trimountain's* captain, and her daughter in Brooklyn, New York, and were shown a sterling tea service engraved with a testimonial of gratitude that had been pre-

sented to the captain by the survivors of the *Ville du Havre*. I looked at the service as if it were a holy relic. The captain had died, and we were sad not to meet him, for he had been so kind to those he took from the sinking *Lochearn*.

Captain Urquhart told a strange story to the heartbroken people he saved.

An odd thought had occurred to him early on that voyage as the *Trimountain*, carrying a cargo of canned meats, was taking a northerly course from New York to Bristol, England. Through a miscalculation made by the charterer a vacant space of about seventy feet had been left in the upper between-decks. Never before had he had any space left by a charterer, and Captain Urquhart thought how useful the space would be if he met a wrecked ship with passengers to be cared for.

Another thought persisted in the skipper's mind as they left the banks of Newfoundland and he took his observations by the Pole Star. A few nights before, at port in New York, several captains from other ships had dined aboard the *Trimountain*. Captains frequently meet on one another's ships when in port to exchange yarns over a bottle or two.

An argument started as to the actual existence of certain rocks of early maritime legend laid down in ancient charts as having been sighted between America and Europe. One of the party, Captain Robinson, insisted that he had seen with his own eyes the fabulous Rock Barenetha.

His ship passed the rock on a clear day, Captain Robinson declared, so close he was able to take two good observations and mark them on his chart, and in proof the chart was aboard his ship, the *Patrick Henry*.

The other captains hooted this story, and insisted that Captain Robinson had sighted the back of a sleeping whale. Only Captain Urquhart was enough impressed to go aboard the *Patrick Henry* and examine the chart. The Rock was plainly marked, and he thought it might do no harm to chart it, which he did, carefully noting the exact position and transferring it to his own chart when he returned to his ship.

On the night of November 21 he chanced to look at his general chart and saw to his surprise that if his reckoning was correct they were heading straight for the Rock, only a few miles away.

He tried to tell himself the Rock was mere legend and that he was a fool for having been impressed by Robinson's story. He went to his cabin and could not sleep, rose, and looked at the chart again. The dot in the circle seemed to grow. The Rock, according to legend, was large and dangerous.

By this time it was one o'clock in the morning. Since he could not rest, he went on deck.

His first mate was much older and had spent his life in the North Atlantic trade. He ridiculed Captain Urquhart's rather diffident hints about a fabulous rock dead ahead. Captain Urquhart returned to his rest, but the Rock continued to keep him awake. The sea moved under the ship suddenly, and the ship gave a curious lurch, and for a moment the captain was convinced that they had struck the Rock. He waited, but nothing else happened; at last he made up his mind, went on deck again, and ordered the course of the *Trimountain* changed. Only then was he able to fall asleep. He was still fully dressed, for his night had been spent in apparently unreasonable apprehension.

He was not surprised when he was called on deck within the hour and saw the *Lochearn* flying the distress flag, and knew at once there had been a terrible collision.

Where was the other ship, he wondered? Only a few spars drifted on the rising sea.

Captain Urquhart later calculated the time he had felt the *Trimountain* lurch in the sea and thought they had struck the Rock with the sinking of the *Ville du Havre*. His little vessel had rocked to the ocean's surge caused by a great steamer going down miles away.

Needless to say, no such rock ever existed.

Captain Urquhart remained convinced that a divine power had linked the apparently trivial circumstances that drew his small but adequate ship directly to the scene of disaster. As he himself expressed it:

"I believe I was under some supernatural control that night."

It took more than three hours to transport the forty-seven survivors and the *Lochearn's* crew through the rough sea to the tiny *Trimountain*.

Pastor Blanc was too ill to be moved, so Pastor Cook volunteered to stay with him aboard the endangered *Lochearn* and share whatever fate might overtake the ship. From its deck Pastor Cook watched the others being carried in smallboats through the mounting seas to the rescue ship. Captain Surmount attended to the embarkation of his crew. He was obliged to leave a fireman aboard who was even more seriously injured than Pastor Blanc.

These three men, left behind on a sinking vessel, were tossed by every kind of weather, had to pump continuously to keep the ship afloat, abandoned it finally, and were eventually picked up by another vessel, the *British Queen*, and landed in England only four days after those who had been rescued by the *Trimountain*.

Pastor Blanc recovered, but Pastor Cook did not long survive the effects of exposure and the terrible fatigue of continually manning the pumps. He lived long enough to see his family again in Paris. Two months after the shipwreck he was dead.

The *Trimountain* was small, but the between-decks space held the rescued, and there were plenty of provisions. Captain Urquhart broke into his canned-meat cargo and fed the survivors, but drinking water was very scarce.

He put everything the ship possessed at the disposal of the shipwrecked people. In his wardrobe there happened to be many articles of clothing belonging to his wife, who sometimes made the crossing with him, and these he distributed among the women. Thanks to the captain and the generosity of the sailors of both the *Trimountain* and *Lochearn*, everyone had something to wear, although the attire was often peculiar. One stout lady was wrapped in a woolen table cover.

That first night on the *Trimountain* was fearful. Captain Urquhart asked Pastor Lorriaux to conduct a simple service. Sleep came at last to the survivors only because of exhaustion.

Each day the realization of loss seemed more acute. The companions in grief, living under crowded, almost intolerable conditions, showed calmness and courage. They organized themselves for their mutual benefit and each had some duty to perform that drew forth their spirit of ingenuity and helped make life bearable on the tiny ship.

Pastor Weiss, in his report on the journey, states that as the days went by Mother became quieter and outwardly more reconciled. He quotes her as saying:

"God gave me four little daughters. Now they have been taken from me. Someday I will understand why."

Nine days after the shipwreck, on December 1, 1873, the *Trimountain* reached Cardiff, Wales.

Captain Urquhart was not expected to touch Wales, and by cutting the journey short for his sad passengers he ran the risk of forfeiting the insurance, and I believe he was censured for it.

As soon as the survivors of the *Ville du Havre* were landed they were able to send dispatches. Mother's cable to Father consisted of two words: "Saved Alone."

On the other side of the Atlantic, Father was waiting for news of his family. A curtain of silence descended upon the *Ville du Havre* after she left American waters. Father quieted his anxiety with the hope that "no news was good news."

On the night the ship went down there was a brilliant wedding in Lake View. Father was present, and to the many inquiries about his

family he smilingly replied that they must be nearing the other side and he hoped to receive word soon.

He wrote Mother a gay account of the wedding three nights after the shipwreck:

Lake View, Tuesday evening
November 25, 1873

Day after tomorrow will be Thanksgiving Day. I will not say how I shall miss you and the dear children. But I will not think too much about that. Let us instead strive to profit by the separation. I think this separation has touched me more deeply than anything else which has ever occurred in my life. . . .

I feel more and more that the absorbing pursuit of anything earthly is not well for one's spiritual life. I scarcely know what to do about the Park matters. If I should withdraw altogether from taking an interest in things, it is very possible that great injury might be the result, not only to my own, but other interests, and yet I feel half inclined to do so, so harassing, so vexatious, so even dangerous to one's spiritual peace do I esteem these selfish contests about money, money, money.

Oh, but it is a long distance across the ocean! But, never mind, my heart. If the Lord keeps us, we hope before many months to be all together again, better understanding than ever before the greatness of His mercy in the many years of the past.

When you write, tell me all about the children. How thankful I am to God for them! May He make us faithful parents, having an eye single to His glory. Annie and Maggie and Bessie and Tanetta—it is a sweet consolation even to write their names. May the dear Lord keep and sustain and strengthen you. . . .

It was weeks before Mother received that letter in France. When Father wrote the names of his children, he had no idea that they were no longer on earth.

Then the blow fell; the cable arrived, not from France, from Wales. All that night, with Major Whittle and another devoted friend beside him, Father walked the floor in anguish.

Major Whittle said that toward morning Father turned to him.

"I am glad to trust the Lord when it will cost me something," he said.

He cabled Mother that she should proceed to Paris with Pastor Lorriaux, where she had friends, and where he would join her as soon as he could cross the Atlantic.

The steamship company of the ill-fated *Ville du Havre* conducted the survivors to London and provided clothes for them. They were taken to the best shops specializing in mourning. As Mother stood before their somber wares, black dresses, black bonnets and hats, black veiling, black everywhere, she felt her little daughters' reproof.

She had taught them to believe in heaven. She could almost hear their voices, "Heaven is lovely; it is a happy place." The familiar quotations rushed through her thoughts, "We shall see Him face to face." "We shall know as we are known." "Pearly gates . . . golden streets . . . no sorrow . . . no tears . . . no night there. . . ."

She thought: "I have not lost my children. We are only separated for a little time." So she invested in a simple black-and-white costume, in keeping with her thoughts, but not what her companions in sorrow thought suitable for a mother who had lost all her children. She saw their glances and sensed their disapproval but she did not explain.

She felt closer to her little girls after she had made this choice. It helped her to bear her sorrow inconspicuously and alone.

CHAPTER FOUR

RECENTLY I read a novel that interested me greatly, *All This and Heaven Too* by Rachel Field. When the heroine, accused of murder in France, is finally acquitted, she goes to the home of the Rev. and Mrs. Frédéric Monod, and their ten-year-old son Theodore comes to her room and talks with her.

This same lad, Theodore Monod, grown and taking his father's place, was among the first to reach Mother with comforting words when she arrived lonely and bereaved in France.

He had met Father and Mother on a trip to the United States and visited them at Lake View. At this time he was pastor of the Eglise Reformée Evangélique de Paris, which made him, I understand, the most famous Protestant clergyman in France.

He wrote:

Paris, 114 Place Lafayette
December 6, 1873

MY DEAR MRS. SPAFFORD,

On my return from Havre, where the fearful news reached me, I find a letter from Mrs. Sims enclosing one for you. It seems cold and hard to forward it without a line, but oh! what words can express what is in my heart, as a friend, as a father; and what voice, except the voice of Jesus himself, can bring the least degree of comfort to your desolate heart.

I will not, dare not, cannot speak of you nor them nor of your husband. I had tried to hope the name did not, could not, mean *you*, until one item of information after another left no room for doubt. We cry to God on your behalf.

Mother was waiting for Father's arrival in the village of Bertry near Paris, where she had gone with Pastor Lorriaux. Mme. Lorriaux, practical and kind, did not overlook Mother's heartbreak in the joy of having her husband safe. She nursed Mother for two weeks until she was strong enough to go to Paris and to her friend Mrs. Bertha Johnson.

I have a scrap of paper with a sentence in Mother's handwriting, dated December 6, 1873,

Oh, how sad my heart is without my birds. How little I thought when I left my happy home that I should set my foot first upon foreign soil alone!

She was overwhelmed by kindness. Letters came from friends all over the continent, offering money, a home, help of every kind. Friends surrounded her: Mme. Demougeot, Mme. Ribot, Pastor Monod, and many others. Letters began pouring in from America.

Margaret Morse has written me that her mother, Mrs. Ely, "described vividly to me the darling and beautiful children, so gifted and wonderfully trained in love of God and knowledge of the Bible, and in obedience. The news of the disaster was overwhelming to all who loved your mother."

In Chicago, Father searched his life for explanation. Until now it had flowed gently as a river. Spiritual peace and worldly security had sustained his early years, his family life, and his home. Then had come one terrible event upon another. The Chicago Fire with its losses, the failure of his real estate venture, now the loss of all his children, all had come within the space of two years.

The important thing was not to lose faith. He must wrestle until he could say all was well.

Added to his grief was spiritual conflict.

The Puritan foundation of the Protestant churches had carried into the United States many of the harsh Old Testament tenets. It was universally accepted by all Christians then that sickness or sorrow was the result of sin. One was the just retribution of the other.

What had Father done, what had his young wife done, that they should be so afflicted? He felt that eyes were looking askance at him, wondering.

All around him people were asking the unvoiced question, What guilt had brought this sweeping tragedy to Anna and Horatio Spafford?

Father wrestled with the question on the sad train trip to New York with Mr. Goodwin, whose wife and children had also been lost in the shipwreck.

Search the Bible teachings as he might, Father could not reconcile this harsh Puritan tenet with his concept of Christian teachings. He had to have a deeper faith in the goodness of God. Father remembered Christ's answer to the disciples when they asked whose sin it was, the parents' or the man's, that caused him to be born blind;

Jesus answered it was neither the man's nor his parents' sin that had caused the blindness, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Father became convinced that God was kind, and that he would see his children again in heaven.

This principle, accepted now by all Christians, calmed his heart, but it was to bring Father into open conflict with what was then the Christian world.

On the train he wrote Aunt Maggie of this conviction, and in a letter to Aunt Rachel he asked that she go to the Lake View home and see that all the children's things were put carefully away.

On the way across the Atlantic the captain called Mr. Goodwin and Father into his private cabin.

"A careful reckoning has been made," he told them, "and I believe we are now passing the place where the *Ville du Havre* was wrecked."

Father wrote to Aunt Rachel:

On Thursday last we passed over the spot where she went down, in mid-ocean, the water three miles deep. But I do not think of our dear ones there. They are safe, folded, the dear lambs, and there, before very long, shall we be too. In the meantime, thanks to God, we have an opportunity to serve and praise Him for His love and mercy to us and ours. "I will praise Him while I have my being." May we each one arise, leave all, and follow Him.

To Father this was a passing through the "valley of the shadow of death," but his faith came through triumphant and strong. On the high seas, near the place where his children perished, he wrote the hymn that was to give comfort to so many:

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say;
"It is well, it is well with my soul."*

*Tho' Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.*

*My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin—not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh, my soul!*

*And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend—
“Even so—it is well with my soul.”*

*For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.*

That he could write such words at such a time was made possible by the fierceness of his struggle and the completeness of the victory.

P. P. Bliss, the predecessor of Sankey with Mr. Moody, wrote the music for this hymn. “It Is Well with My Soul” became very famous and appeared in many hymnbooks; it is still sung in many Protestant churches.

Hymns that are the fruit of anguish victoriously overcome are bound to bring blessing. I have sat by the bedside of a woman dying of cancer and, holding her limp and clammy hand, have quietly sung this hymn over and over again. I have sung it by other bedsides as war after war came to Jerusalem; once, by the bed of a private from the Argyle and Sutherland Regiment, taken prisoner by the Turks before Jerusalem was delivered by Allenby’s army in 1917. Blood poisoning was in an advanced stage, and we had very little medicine and no narcotics to alleviate his suffering. He was doomed, and his agony was great. I sat by him hour upon hour and sang softly, “It is well with my soul.” Just before the end he looked up into my face. “Sister, you have fought half this battle.”

Innumerable letters have told me the same story in different ways, as the hymn affected and helped the despondent and despairing. I turned on the radio once at random and heard a faint voice coming from a remote station telling the story of the writing of the hymn. Another time I was standing in a snowstorm on Riverside Drive, in New York, waiting for a bus, when I heard the carillon in the tower of Riverside Church send forth its lovely message in music, “It is well with my soul.” I stood transfixed with joy and wonder; tears rolled down my cheeks. I let one bus after another pass, and was late for my luncheon engagement, but I could not tear myself away from the spot until the hymn was finished.

On Christmas Eve Father and Mother were in Paris. Of their meeting Mother never spoke. Some things are too sacred to mention.

This had always been their happiest season, with candles and tinsel on the tree, and evergreen, holly, and mistletoe decorating the cottage “joyous with the merriment of children,” as one friend wrote.

In Paris, where they had planned so much of happiness, memories of other years must have crushed them. What did they do at this time of almost unbearable depression?

A letter from the Rev. Theodore Monod holds the answer:

Christmas Eve, 1873

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

Our Christmas tree is over; the hymns are sung, the addresses are among the things of the past; the many brilliant lights have burned themselves away or have been extinguished, as all earthly joys must be.

Mr. Weiss was with us and spoke, as you might expect him to do, of his recent experience, alluding also to the dear children who, on the Sunday November 17th sang, "I want to be an angel," and before the week was over were singing in heaven. I was not at all surprised that you, my dear friends, should have both kept away and spent the evening quietly, prayerfully, tearfully, hopefully, one with another, but I *was* surprised when I got home and found that parcel. At first we could not tell where it had come from; then the handwriting (I once received a letter from you), the remembrance of your taking down those five names on Saturday, and—I shall add, the sweet sad words "from the children," told us from what hand, no, from what heart came the pretty presents, so thoughtfully chosen, so well adapted to each. But ah! with such tender memories clinging to them, such brotherly affection, such truly Christian fellowship of your sorrows with our joys, as made us look upon those playthings with tears in our eyes. Oh, may "the Father mercies and the God of all comfort" continue to uphold you, to pour into your stricken hearts the fullness of his love, and to make that love and power visible to others through you.

Thursday evening—Christmas Day

The children are in possession of their treasures, highly delighted and thankful. Marcel, who never yet had a plaything given him, smiled at the bright little doll. I fear I shall not be able to go and shake hands with you today, but we are with you in spirit, nor do we forget your friend Major Goodwin.

THEO MONOD.

On Christmas Eve Mother wrote her friend Mary Miller in Chicago who had taken refuge with her during the Great Fire:

Paris, December 24, 1873

MY DEAR MARY,

I received your letter this morning. It was very sweet of you to remember me in this time of sadness for me—but joy to my dear children.

Yes, Mary—all are gone Home—so early. How thankful I am that their little lives were so early dedicated to their Master. Now He has

called them to Himself. I thought I was going, too, but my work is not yet finished. May the dear Lord give me strength to do His will. The dear children were so brave. They died praying. Annie said to Maggie and me just before we were swept off the steamer, "Don't be frightened Maggie, God will take care of us, we can trust Him; and you know, Mama, 'The sea is His and He made it.'" These were her last words. Maggie and Bessie prayed very sweetly. I have much to comfort me, Mary; they are not lost, only separated for a season. I will go to them—only a few years at the longest.

Dear little Tanetta sang all the day before we were wrecked "The sweet bye and bye" . . . If I never believed in religion before, I have had strong proof of it now. We have been so sustained, so comforted. God has sent peace in our hearts. He has answered our prayers. His will be done. I would not have my children back again in this wicked world. . . .

Shortly after this my parents left for England on their way home. Before leaving Paris a telegram came from Mr. Moody saying he would meet them in London. He and Mr. Sankey were conducting the revival meetings in Edinburgh that were making them world-famous.

Mother told me that when Mr. Moody met them, in the hotel in London, his sorrow was so great over the loss of the children that she had to comfort him.

I can well imagine this meeting, for I remember Mr. Moody's coming to the American Colony in Jerusalem after Father's death. He was a thickset, short, and highly emotional man, who always wore long frock coats. With my sister Grace on his knee, he wept unashamed for the loss of his friend until two pools of water were formed on the floor by his tears. I met Mr. Sankey, too, in Jerusalem, the same year the Kaiser visited the Holy City. I was eighteen and had been to Jericho and had "Jericho boils" on my face and a swollen nose, caused, we now know, by the bite of an insect. Mr. Sankey had called on Mother, and Mother insisted that I go to see him. So I did, and Mr. Sankey seemed astonished by my appearance, but he did not say anything. He was not so demonstrative as Mr. Moody.

With an understanding few could give, Mr. Moody divined my parents' struggle against their natural inclinations to indulge in sorrow. He also realized that a disastrous reaction might follow this high resolve when they reached their empty house, unless a power stronger than their grief upheld them. He knew their present state of trust and faith must be sustained. He begged Mother not to stay at home, where every room, silenced by the absence of her children, would remind her of what had been.

"Annie, you must go into my work," Mr. Moody told my mother. "You must be so busy helping those who have gone into the depths

of despair that you will overcome your own affliction by bringing comfort and salvation to others."

Mother promised to follow his advice.

The anguish of their homecoming cannot be visualized. Aunt Sims was first to greet them, convulsed in tears on the doorstep. Well-meaning friends, in the custom of the period, had had the latest photographs of the four little girls enlarged, and they were on easels in the living room, the sweet faces surrounded by festoons of smilax. Upstairs four little beds stood empty and four dressers filled with garments that would never be worn by them again. Toys, books, lesson papers were reminders of all that had been.

Saddest of all was the attic, where four rows of little rubber boots and all the paraphernalia of winter sports bespoke the merriment that once had filled this house and grounds. Last of all, the childish scrawled letters were found in the play post office in the elm tree.

Only Rob, Father's nephew, was left, and he was away at school.

Mother followed Mr. Moody's advice and plunged into his relief work.

She had not taken much active part in charitable or philanthropic work before. "Charity began at home," and she believed her duty lay in making an agreeable home for Father and bringing up four small children in Christian ideals. Only a brief period spent on the board of the Home of the Friendless and the months of relief activity following the Chicago Fire had prepared her for the extensive and important work she now took on. Mr. Moody put her in charge of all women's activities for Chicago. Mother realized she was handicapped by inexperience, and remonstrated with Mr. Moody, but he would not take no.

Mother did not like serving as the impersonal executive of an ever-growing organization. She preferred coming in actual contact with the women and doing the real work. She appointed her friend Miss Emma Dryer, one of Mr. Moody's workers, to act as her advisor. It proved a happy choice, for Miss Dryer served first as a shadow executive and later took over and held the official position.

Mother's approach to the women's work and her theories in aiding them were original and her experiences many and varied. She saw a seamy side of Chicago life far removed from the placid existence at Lake View.

A friend wrote of this period in Mother's life

. . . she devoted almost her entire time to Christian and philanthropic work. She was the first woman, I believe, who in Chicago encouraged mothers' meetings. They met once a week in the church parlors, and there she taught many a mother to pray. In the meantime your father led the noon prayer meeting at Farwell Hall.

Mother told me that the women who attended her mothers' meetings were of many nationalities and some were especially vocal in complaining about their lot. Frequently their complaints were about their husbands who used most of their earnings for drink. In a state of intoxication the husband would return home with little or no money left, to find hungry children crying, a harried wife infuriated by his conduct, and no supper. Unpleasant words would end in a violent quarrel; more often than not the wife got a beating. The poor woman would then complain to Mother about her husband, and black-and-blue marks would be proof of her story.

Mother, incensed, would get Father to prosecute the guilty man. But when the time came to take evidence against her husband the wife would invariably take her husband's part, and the case would be dropped. Mother learned by experience that the best way was to let them "worry it through" and settle their quarrels themselves.

But she was a sympathetic listener and gave sensible advice. Because she put her life and soul into the work, she was successful.

I remember Mother telling of a predicament she found herself in when in following Mr. Moody's work she was put in charge of the rescue work for fallen women. One meeting affected a girl so much that she wanted to leave her degraded life. Mother knew she should be taken out of it at once, but where could the girl go? Mother applied to one home and institution after another, none of which was prepared to accept a girl straight from a "house of ill fame." Mother was like the little girl who went to the prayer meeting for rain carrying an umbrella—she expected results.

She felt with keen indignation this defect in the rescue work, that there was no new environment ready in which these poor derelicts could be fitted once they were saved.

There was nothing to do but take on the girl's support for a period of years. She married happily at last and raised a family of healthy children.

In this pioneer welfare work I do not think Mother was so much shocked by what she saw as by the complacency of the rich who permitted such things to be.

The years following the shipwreck were anxious ones, but also rich in spiritual experience to my parents. In Father's letter to Mother, written before he knew of the loss of his children, he spoke of his growing distaste for giving so much of his life to the struggle after money. The struggle even seemed dangerous to his spiritual peace; and this feeling must have increased as the months passed into years. Possessions seemed unimportant in the light of his recent experience, which gave him a feeling that everything was transient.

His letters and notes at this time are revealing, as are the poems and hymns he composed. Studying both sides in legal fashion, he pondered the question of future punishment. "I was . . . surprised to find how many devout and learned men, in every age, had believed in the final universal triumph of God's love." "Who is there who would not wish to believe if the Word will permit it, in the eventual restoration of all?" A hymn, inspired by one of the Psalms, begins:

*There's darkness all round in my earthly affairs,
Wave following wave, tribulation and cares;
My way is shut up on the left and the right;
And yet, I've a mind for a song in the night,
A song in the night—a song in the night,
My heart, canst thou give Him a song in the night?*

A little book of his poetry, *Waiting for the Morning*, was printed privately for distribution among his friends, and met with so much more appreciation than had been expected that it was reprinted for public sale.

When, in 1876, Mr. Moody rebuilt his tabernacle on the north side of Chicago, Father found means to help him financially, and wrote the dedication hymn beginning:

*Our Father, God, Eternal one!
And Thou, the living cornerstone!
And Holy Spirit—one and three—
We dedicate this house to Thee!*

*Take for Thine own, and write in power,
Thy name on wall and shaft and tower;
And make it, by Thy blessing given,
A house of God—a gate of heaven.*

I find it difficult to interpret to this modern generation Father's and Mother's attitude toward life at this time and throughout the following years without making them seem impractical, fanatical, narrow, and visionary. They were none of these things. The world has so changed in its outlook, its conceptions, its manners, and its vocabulary in the last threescore years that the problems which were important to them then seem almost unintelligible and meaningless now. Therefore it is hard to do them justice.

This period must have been difficult for my parents in every way. Their religious life was undergoing a transition—nothing was quite clear.

On November 16, 1876, a little boy came to the childless home at Lake View.

He was my parents' first and only son, and was named Horatio, after Father and Grandfather. Also he was named Goertner, for Goertner Goodwin, my sisters' playmate who had gone down with them on the *Ville du Havre*.

Little Horatio was a healthy baby, and his birth must have seemed like a renewal of life to Father and Mother.

In a letter written by a friend in 1876, Father is described as "walking up and down in the living room at Lake View, holding his baby son and talking about his Heavenly Father and heaven in the most intimate and homelike fashion. . . ."

In another letter written by Miss Dryer from Mr. Moody's home in Northfield:

Mr. and Mrs. Moody talk of you affectionately. He, I think, has a deep interest in your financial troubles. In talking about them one evening he said that he thought Mr. Spafford would do well to resume his practice of law until this hard time is passed. He spoke of Mr. S's success in the past and that he was in a fair position to succeed again. . . .

I get no comfort except from *the promises*. How glad I am to know that they cannot fail.

I think these last words expressed Father's sentiments as well. He had found the things people strove after in this world as sinking sand under his feet, and he longed now only to build "on the rock," where the rain could descend, the floods beat, and the winds blow, but his house would stand.

In this rather difficult period, on March 24, 1878, I was born, and named for Mrs. Bertha Johnson, who had been so kind to Mother in Paris. It proves how near and dear our family doctor had become, for I was also given his family name, and became Bertha Hedges Spafford.

In February of 1880 Mother was taking little Horatio and me away for a visit. I am not sure where we were going, but it must have been some distance from Chicago, for we were on a train when she noticed we both had fever. Before we reached our destination she left the train and caught the next train back to Chicago. Her one idea was to be near Dr. Hedges. She had to wait in a stuffy waiting room with two sick babies, then came the long journey back, when she could see we were growing more ill with every passing mile; then the scramble to catch "The Dummy" to Lake View.

Peter, who had been telegraphed to, met us with the horse and buggy. Father was away on business. It was snowing, and the flakes swirled in the driving wind and settled on us in the open buggy. The

air was bitterly cold, and cold, too, was the house, for the furnace had been allowed to go out with the family away.

Dr. Hedges diagnosed our malady as scarlet fever. Horatio had also taken a bad cold and was dropping off into a coma. Father was telegraphed to, but reached home only in time to witness the death of his little son on February 11, 1880.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOTHER never spoke of little Horatio's death. It was a blow that time never softened.

She could not go to the cemetery. She had to take care of me. Also, she had a horror of the grave. She wanted to think of her little boy with her four daughters in heaven.

Our house was in quarantine and only a few learned of this new sorrow and came unsummoned to the funeral. The tiny white coffin was taken to the family plot in Graceland Cemetery and Father read the funeral service.

Many wondered at his doing this. Gossip filled in gaps and distorted facts.

Among my treasures is a little cardboard box found in Father's desk after his death in Jerusalem. In it are some faded flowers bound with white ribbon and the words: "Flowers from little Horatio's funeral." He brought this with him to Jerusalem when so little was taken. No one knew how deep was the grief he and Mother shared in losing their four-year-old son.

Mother's letters to friends after my brother died show perfect faith and trust. They would shock some people, who would have understood her mourning better with a touch of self-pity. People love to pity others, but pity was the last thing my parents wanted.

After Horatio's death Father wrote the hymn, "A Song in the Night," which, set to music by Mr. George C. Stebbins, was sung by our choir when the American Colony celebrated its jubilee in 1931, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of my parents and their group of friends in Jerusalem.

*Long time I dared not say to Thee
O Lord, work Thou Thy will with me,
But now so plain Thy love I see
I shrink no more from sorrow.*

Refrain:

*So true, true and faithful is He,
Kind is my Savior;
Alike in gladness and in woe,
I thank Him who hath loved me so. . . .*

Today's Illustration: The Story Of — “It Is Well With My Soul,” as told by their daughter Bertha Spafford

 wordpress.com/read/feeds/89930062/posts/3156923783

“Bertha Spafford Vester ” was born to Anna Spafford on March 24, 1878, after the loss of her daughters in 1873.

She Authored A Book Titled — “Our Jerusalem”

◆◆◆◆ ◆◆◆◆ ◆◆◆◆

“***The original manuscript has only four verses***, but Spafford’s daughter, Bertha Spafford Vester, who was born after the tragedy, said an additional verse was later added and the last line of the original song was modified. The music, written by Philip Bliss, was named after the ship on which Spafford’s daughters died, *Ville du Havre*.”

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

(Refrain:) It is well (it is well),
with my soul (with my soul),
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
(Refrain)

My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to His cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
(Refrain)

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pain shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.
(Refrain)

And Lord haste the day, when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.
(Refrain)

[PDF Link to Her Book.](#)

Beginning on page 30 — the story behind the hymn is shared, as told to her by her mother,
Also the [Link To](#) video presentation of that story.



Photo added by [julia&keld](#)

Bertha *Spafford* Vester

BIRTH 24 Mar 1879
Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, USA

DEATH 27 Jun 1968 (aged 89)
Jerusalem, Jerusalem District, Israel

BURIAL [American Colony Cemetery](#)
Jerusalem, Jerusalem District, Israel

MEMORIAL ID 52262341 · [View Source](#)

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Added by [julia&keld](#)

Leader of the American Colony in Jerusalem, involved in social service work for girls in Jerusalem. She was awarded the Jordanian Star by King Hussein, in "praiseworthy qualities," as His Majesty's citation read. She is the only Christian to have received the award (1963).

Family Members

Parents



Horatio Gates Spafford
1828–1888



Anna Tobine Larsen Øglende Spafford
1842–1923

Spouse



Frederick E. Vester
1869–1942

Siblings



Anna Spafford
1862–1873



Margaret Lee Spafford
1864–1873



Jacob Eliahu Spafford
1864–1932



Elizabeth Spafford
1868–1873



Tanetta Spafford
1871–1873



Horatio Goertner Spafford
1875–1880

Children



Horatio F. Vester
1906–1985



Photo added by [julia&keld](#)

Anna Tobine Larsen Øglende Spafford

BIRTH 16 Mar 1842
Stavanger, Stavanger kommune, Rogaland fylke, Norway

DEATH 17 Apr 1923 (aged 81)
Jerusalem, Jerusalem District, Israel

BURIAL [American Colony Cemetery](#)
Jerusalem, Jerusalem District, Israel

MEMORIAL ID 52261460 · [View Source](#)

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Added by: [julia&keld](#) on 11 May 2010



Anna Spafford (far L) with Major Storrs and General Allenby and Colony ...

Added by: [Tom Powers](#) on 21 Nov 2019



Photo taken May 2010

Added by: [julia&keld](#) on 11 May 2010



Bertha Spafford (left) with Jacob Eliyahu (upper L) and the Vester and ...

Added by: [Tom Powers](#) on 21 Nov 2019



Photo added by [Laura](#)

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Added by [julia&keld](#)



Added by [Dr. Greg Behle](#)

Horatio Gates Spafford

BIRTH 20 Oct 1828
Troy, Rensselaer County, New York, USA

DEATH 16 Oct 1888 (aged 59)
Jerusalem, Jerusalem District, Israel

BURIAL [Jerusalem Protestant Cemetery](#)
Jerusalem, Jerusalem District, Israel

MEMORIAL ID 13842045 · [View Source](#)

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[PHOTOS](#) **3**

[FLOWERS](#) **111**

Hymn Writer, Religious Figure. He was a successful businessman in Chicago, Illinois in the late 1800s who lost a great deal of real estate in the Chicago Fire. He penned the famous hymn "It Is Well" after receiving word of the death of his four daughters in an accident at sea on November 22, 1873. Eventually having two more daughters, his family moved to Jerusalem, Israel and established "The American Colony", which was dedicated to helping the poor. In 1888 Spafford succumbed to malaria just short of his 60th birthday. "The American Colony" still exists today.

Bio by: [Stone Stories](#)

Family Members

Parents

- [Horatio Gates Spafford](#)
1778–1832
- [Hannah Bristol Spafford](#)
1779–1837

Spouse

- [Anna Tobine Larsen Øglende Spafford](#)
1842–1923 (m. 1861)

Children

- [Anna Spafford](#)
1862–1873
- [Margaret Lee Spafford](#)
1864–1873
- [Jacob Eliahu Spafford](#)
1864–1932
- [Elizabeth Spafford](#)
1868–1873
- [Tanetta Spafford](#)
1871–1873
- [Horatio Goertner Spafford](#)
1875–1880
- [Bertha Spafford Vester](#)



Photo added by [Laura](#)

Elizabeth "Bessie" Spafford

BIRTH 19 Jun 1868
DEATH 22 Nov 1873 (aged 5)
BURIAL Body lost at sea, Specifically: Shipwreck in Atlantic Ocean
MEMORIAL ID 25912402 · [View Source](#)

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[FLOWERS](#) **27**

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Added by [D. Fritz](#)

Lost at sea in the sinking of the "Ville Du Harve", an immigrant ship. Midway through the trans-Atlantic voyage, S.S. Ville du Harve was struck by the Loch Earn, sinking in 12 minutes.

She was the daughter of Horatio G. Spafford. She was 7 years old, and was sister of [Maggie](#), [Anna](#) & [Tanetta](#), all of whom died with her. Their mother was one of the survivors.

He father wrote the hymn "It is Well With My Soul" in their memory. They had two other sisters, one was [Bertha Spafford Vester](#).

Family Members

Parents



[Horatio Gates Spafford](#)
1828–1888



[Anna Tobine Larsen Øglende Spafford](#)
1842–1923

Siblings



[Anna Spafford](#)
1862–1873



[Margaret Lee Spafford](#)
1864–1873



[Jacob Eliahu Spafford](#)
1864–1932



[Tanetta Spafford](#)
1871–1873



[Horatio Goertner Spafford](#)
1875–1880



[Bertha Spafford Vester](#)
1879–1968



Margaret Lee "Maggie" Spafford

BIRTH 31 May 1864
DEATH 22 Nov 1873 (aged 9)
BURIAL Body lost at sea, Specifically: Shipwreck in Atlantic Ocean
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Photo added by [Laura](#)

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Lost at sea in the sinking of the "Ville Du Harve", an immigrant ship. Midway through the trans-Atlantic voyage, S.S. Ville du Harve was struck by the Loch Earn, sinking in 12 minutes.

She was the daughter of Horatio G. Spafford . She was 9 years old, and was sister of Anna, [Bessie](#) & Tanetta, all of whom died with her. Their mother was one of the survivors.

He father wrote the hymn "It is Well With My Soul" in their memory. They had two other sisters, one was [Bertha Spafford Vester](#).

Family Members

Parents



[Horatio Gates Spafford](#)
1828–1888



[Anna Tobine Larsen Øglende Spafford](#)
1842–1923

Siblings



[Anna Spafford](#)
1862–1873



[Jacob Eliahu Spafford](#)
1864–1932



[Elizabeth Spafford](#)
1868–1873



[Tanetta Spafford](#)
1871–1873



[Horatio Goertner Spafford](#)
1875–1880



[Bertha Spafford Vester](#)
1879–1968



Photo added by [Laura](#)

Anna "Annie" Spafford

BIRTH 11 Jun 1862
DEATH 22 Nov 1873 (aged 11)
BURIAL Body lost at sea, Specifically: shipwreck in Atlantic
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Lost at sea in the "Ville Du Harve", an immigrant ship. Midway through the trans-Atlantic voyage, S.S. Ville du Harve was struck by the Loch Earn, sinking in 12 minutes.

She was the daughter of Horatio G. Spafford. She was 11 years old, and was sister of [Maggie](#), [Bessie](#) & [Tanetta](#), all of whom died with her. Their mother was one of the survivors.

He father wrote the hymn "It is Well With My Soul" in their memory.

They had two other sisters, one was [Bertha Spafford Vester](#).

Family Members

Parents



Horatio Gates Spafford
1828–1888



Anna Tobine Larsen Øglende Spafford
1842–1923

Siblings



Margaret Lee Spafford
1864–1873



Jacob Eliahu Spafford
1864–1932



Elizabeth Spafford
1868–1873



Tanetta Spafford
1871–1873



Horatio Goertner Spafford
1875–1880



Bertha Spafford Vester
1879–1968



Tanetta Spafford

BIRTH 21 Jul 1871
DEATH 22 Nov 1873 (aged 2)
BURIAL Body lost at sea, Specifically: Shipwreck in Atlantic Ocean
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My parents were trying to practice what they had come to believe since the shipwreck through heart-searching wrestling with doubt and fear. It was not easy to see wisdom in affliction, or reconcile God's dealing with God's love. Since the church held sorrow to be retribution for sin, the tone of conversations with friends and acquaintances after Horatio's death stressed again the question raised when the four little girls died:

"What have the Spaffords done to be so afflicted?"

The Spaffords had long asked themselves the same question. Now they could only pray for endurance and strength. Father wrote to a friend: "There is just one thing in these days has become magnificently clear—I must not lose faith."

The most eloquent proof of their struggle was in Mother's saying "I will say God is love until I believe it!"

The first shock of total misunderstanding came when one of the leaders of the evangelist group that had met so often in our home in Lake View, and a friend they had trusted to understand their motives, came to Father and Mother to ask if they would like him to adopt me.

Why this offer was made I do not know. I was two years old and the only child left to my parents out of a family of six.

The request opened a wound that only by the grace of God could Father and Mother forgive. It was the first crushing blow of many that culminated in their decision to leave Chicago, for a time at least. The hitherto vague idea that someday they would go to Jerusalem to watch the fulfillment of prophecy on the spot, and perhaps find refreshment of the body, soul, and spirit there, became resolute.

From the day of that offer they began to make definite plans for the journey.

A year after Horatio's death there is an entry in Father's notebook: "Little Grace was born this morning at 6:30, Jan. 18th, 1881."

Mother was very ill when Grace was born. She lay in her bed exhausted and weak, wondering what to name this baby who had come as a godsend after her little son's death. She went over in her mind the names of the four little girls who romped no more through the house—no, they were not lost, she could not name this baby after one of them.

Her eyes rested on an illuminated text hanging on the wall.

"My grace is sufficient for thee."

So my sister became Grace Spafford, without any addition of a middle name.

She was born while Father and Mother were completing their plans to go to Jerusalem.