

OLD ANDREW'S AWAKENING

"IT is never too late to mend," says the proverb. But the trouble with old Andrew Scott was that he had no idea that he needed mending. Andrew was the son of good Christian parents, who had taught him everything good from the time that he was a toddling baby. He learnt to reverence the Bible, which he knew was the Word of God; he went to church and to Sunday-school regularly every Sunday; and he grew up a pleasant, well-behaved steady boy, liked and approved of by everybody. Time went on; Andrew went to work and got on well. The firm that employed him found him industrious and punctual and sensible, a man to be trusted in every way. He kept up his steady churchgoing habits, and at twenty-six, he became a regular communicant. In due time Andrew married a good wife. The children that were born were all brought up properly, and they followed in their father's footsteps. The Scotts were a most respectable family, without a black sheep among them. Andrew still continued to attend every service at his church; whatever the weather, you could count on Andrew's place being always filled. And now Andrew was eighty-six years old. His wife had died long since, but the old man lived contentedly in the home of a married grand-daughter, and still kept up his careful attendance at church. It was not surprising that when the new minister was appointed, Andrew was one of the first people whom he noticed. The old man was so vigorous and well that the minister was astonished to learn his age. All the church members were proud of old Andrew, and it was from them that the minister heard of his long association with the church. At the first opportunity, the new minister called on old Andrew and was most warmly welcomed. Andrew was naturally an authority on church affairs after so long a connection with the place of worship, and it was evident that he still took the liveliest interest in everything that concerned its welfare. The minister was eager to hear all that the old man had to say, and they got on very well together. But almost from the first moment of the visit, the minister felt that something was wanting. Andrew was very ready to talk, and his knowledge of ministers and churches was remarkable. But as soon as the visitor spoke of Christian experience and of spiritual things generally, the old man was silent. The pastor had expected to sit at Andrew's feet, hearing of all that the Lord had done for him during- the last sixty years. At first, he thought that possibly his reserve was due to shyness; but when all his attempts to turn the conversation to eternal things failed entirely, the minister concluded sadly that poor old Andrew, with all his privileges, had no personal interest in Christ at all. He came away chilled at the lack of response, and much concerned about the old man's state before God. A few weeks later, an evangelistic meeting- was held in the village, at which the minister was the speaker. Andrew was there, of course; he never missed a meeting or a service, even on a week-night. The subject of the address was "Redemption through the blood of Christ"-the message of the Gospel which the old man had heard hundreds of times before, and which had affected him as little as water does a duck's back. Why should it be different that evening? The only answer is that God's time had come! "None can stay His hand"; and at last the moment had arrived when His purpose of mercy was to be fulfilled, and old Andrew was to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to his heart. Andrew had settled himself comfortably to listen as usual. But as the preacher spoke of salvation, showing from the Scriptures that it depends entirely on what Christ has done, and not in the least on what the sinner tries to do, Andrew for the very first time in his life felt a sort of doubt stirring in his mind. The thought struck him that his

ideas of how to be saved were different from the minister's. "Either he's wrong, or I am!" thought the old man; "if it's true what he says, then I've been building on a false foundation all these years. Can it be possible that I've been an unconverted sinner the whole time?" Nobody knew Andrew's thoughts, and he went home as usual. But that night he could not sleep. His mind was greatly disturbed. The thought that the minister must be right filled him with fear and anxiety. But then looking back over his long life of good behaviour, of constant attendance at church-was all his goodness to count for nothing? The poor man was greatly distressed, and so occupied with his thoughts that he could not take his food, nor attend to anything. The next night was as bad as the first; he lay awake, pondering the great question as to whether he really was saved. More and more, he saw that Christ's was the only righteousness which God could accept, but it was tough to give up all his own righteousness and goodness. At last, however, he was led to see that he was just a poor lost sinner, with no hope but in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was midnight, but Andrew got out of bed and kneeling down, he "came to Jesus as he was, weary and worn and sad." He remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"; "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out"; and coming to Jesus, old Andrew found that His words were true indeed. He had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The old man went back to bed and slept peacefully. At breakfast time he came down looking so cheerful and alert, that his granddaughter remarked upon it, saying that she had been quite worried about him the last few days. Andrew at once told her what had been happening to him since the meeting. "And now," he said, "I must lose no time getting to work; I can't have long left now at my age, but I must use all the time I've got to make known the Lord's own way of salvation." He did indeed begin at once, first with his own children and grandchildren, and then with everybody he met. The whole village was astonished at the change in the old man and his zeal for the cause of God. The minister knew nothing of it until he made another call at the house two or three weeks after the meeting. Andrew rose eagerly to meet him, saying "Oh sir, I can look you in the face now! I've found the Lord-or rather, the Lord has found me! Last time you came I had nothing to say when you spoke of Christ-but, it's different now!" And Andrew poured out his story. During the next five months, Andrew spent all his time telling his friends what the Lord had done for his soul, and how He had had compassion on him. Then one morning in his usual vigorous health, he went out for a stroll in the garden; in a few minutes he fell suddenly stricken, and departed to be for ever with the Lord!