Light After Darkness

MRS. GEORGE W. MATHEWS

From Aunt Annie

In the Fellowship of Prayer,

Mrs. George W. Mathews
To the Memory
of
Tryphena Moore Mathews
Beloved Mother
of
My Husband
FOREWORD

This is a tribute from a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law.

No one seeing this lady in her sheltered life in Georgia during the latter half of the nineteenth century would have dreamed of the cyclone of suffering that she had passed through in Texas before she became the wife of Dr. William Asbury Mathews, later my father-in-law.

But that story of tragedy was engraved indelibly on her mind. Twice I heard her tell it, and so impressed was I that notes were made at the time.

Now in my eighty-seventh year I am writing these remarkable experiences that future generations may see the overruling Providence that preserved the life of Tryphena Moore Mathews.

MRS. GEORGE W. MATHEWS.

September 1, 1950

Fort Valley, Georgia
EARLY DAYS IN GEORGIA

Her name was Tryphena, a Bible name, selected by her parents from Romans 16:12, where Paul gives the list of those whom he saluted in the church at Rome.

There the original "Tryphena" is described as one who "labored in the Lord." It was a fitting selection because this modern "Tryphena" was to become one who labored much in the Lord.

Her father was George Moore, Sr., a prosperous farmer who lived at Robley, near Roberta in Crawford County, Georgia, and her mother was Rachel, the daughter of John Bryan Williams.

Tryphena was the first-born of many children that came to the Moore home. She early developed a sense of responsibility as she helped her mother with the care of her ever-increasing family.

When Tryphena was about nineteen, she married Samuel Crute, a young planter who had moved to Georgia from Louisiana. She and her husband lived near the Moore home, and her efficiency was so great that even while her four children, three boys and a girl, were coming she found time to help her mother and father with their heavy responsibilities.

The Moore family were devout Primitive Baptists.

Tryphena's oldest brother, John Moore, married Repsa Dawson and settled at Hatcher's Station, Georgia. Her
sister, Martha, married Jonathan Dawson and settled at Montezuma, Georgia. Thus brother and sister married brother and sister, and two new homes were established away from the parental roof-tree.

HER FATHER'S DESIRE

Tryphena's father was a family man. Reluctantly he looked at the two couples who were newly-weds and realized that they were settled for life.

But what about his eight unmarried children? He felt that he could not let them marry and leave his neighborhood.

And Tryphena! What if she and her husband should move away? Oh, he could never do without Tryphena, for he depended on her judgment and often went to her for advice.

He looked out of the window at his thirteen hundred acres of land there in Crawford County. They were not enough! He must have more land so as to give a large tract to each of the children and thus induce them all to settle around him. But where could such a large tract of land be found? He thought of South Georgia but rejected the idea. And then he thought about Texas.

The newly opened sections there were beckoning to many people in the Carolinas and Georgia. Land out there was abundant and cheap. The government was anxious to have it settled. Why yes, that was the solution. They would all go to Texas, taking Tryphena and her family with them.
sold to Dr. Josiah Hilsman. The thirteen hundred acres of land went with the house.

The house, still standing, is now the property of Mr. Walter White of Robley, Crawford County, Georgia.

After many months spent in clearing and building, James Moore returned to Georgia to conduct the Moore family to Texas, while son George, Jr., remained in Anderson to receive them.

The only currency used in Texas at that time was gold. The record is that a false bottom was made in one of the wagons to conceal the astonishing sum of $30,000.00 in gold which the family took with them.

The party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. George Moore, Sr., six sons, and one unmarried daughter, together with Tryphena Moore Crute, her husband and four children, a total of fifteen white people.

With them they took a large number of negroes, such as were owned by every southern planter. There were domestic servants, seamstresses, cloggers, carpenters, farmers, bricklayers—fathers and mothers with their children—seventy-two in all.

THE EXODUS

This large party left Knoxville, Georgia, the latter part of January, 1854, traveling by caravan. And what a caravan it was—the carriages and other vehicles for the family, wagons for the negroes, other wagons filled with household furniture and farming implements—all that they would need in that wild country to which they were going. And somewhere in the long line of vehicles was the wagon with the false bottom—the one with the $30,000.00 in gold.

They started on Monday morning, January 23, 1854, their first objective being Montgomery, Alabama. From there on the following Sunday, the 29th of January, they took a river steamer for Mobile, all their stock, vehicles and furniture being taken with them on board. At Mobile they embarked on a larger boat for Galveston, Texas.

Sunday, the 5th of February, was spent in Galveston, and while walking around that afternoon the Moores came to the cemetery. There they were amazed to see many newly made graves, but they did not learn until afterward that an epidemic of Asiatic cholera had been raging in that port.

On Monday the party hastened on toward Anderson, traveling again by caravan.

The first night out they came to a camping place. In a vacant house articles of clothing were found, presumably discarded by other campers.

Before leaving Georgia, George Moore had outfitted the whole company of negroes with two new suits each as well as shoes and other articles of wearing apparel. But their used things had been left behind to lighten baggage. To see articles of clothing without an owner was too much for the negroes. They appropriated the garments without a thought as to why they had been left.

Twenty-four hours later cholera broke out among the negroes.
Feeling the importance of getting as many of his party as possible away from the contagion, George Moore, Sr. left his wife with two sons, James and Julius Caesar, to care for the sick, while he took the rest of the party on toward Anderson.

But soon the cholera struck the family. Mrs. Moore, with the two sons left behind, was attempting to overtake her husband when her strong son, Julius Caesar, twenty years old, died in the carriage. That was February 10th, and the place was somewhere between Houston and Anderson.

When Mrs. Moore caught up with the advance party, she was appalled to find that cholera had broken out among them also, and that they had been forced to make a camp, three miles south of Anderson.

A vacant house had been secured, but so great and rapid were the ravages of the disease that beds could not be put up fast enough to receive the sick, and pallets were hastily laid on the floor.

Death and destruction came in like a flood. William Simpson Moore, age 14, died February 12th, two days after Julius Caesar, and on the same day, the record reads, Rachel, the young daughter of fifteen years, also passed away.

The next day, February 13th, George Moore, Sr., while sitting in the doorway of the temporary home, discovered that his finger-nails were turning purple. He recognized the ominous sign and sent at once to Anderson for a lawyer. He dictated his will, but his hand had to be held to sign it.

Meantime little Bobby was stricken with the disease and in a few hours died. As his father saw him go, he knew that there was nothing more he could do.

The strong man who was bringing his family to Texas breathed his last. This was February 13th.

The next day Rachel Moore, the heart broken and now widowed mother, who had helped so valiantly by nursing both white and black, was stricken.

All the nursing was now the task of Tryphena, who was fast becoming exhausted. Rachel Moore saw her daughter’s condition and said, “You must lie down and rest. I will call you when I need you.”

Tryphena, worn with nursing and anxiety, did as she was told. She dropped down on the pallet on which her mother was lying. How long she slept she did not know, but when she awoke, the mother’s hand was on the daughter’s breast, as if to keep her from rising. The mother was dead.

That was February 14th, and before night James Moore, who had supervised the building of the house at Anderson and who had returned to Georgia with high hopes to bring the family to that desired haven, died also.

The very next day, February 15th, Tryphena saw her eighteen-year-old brother Sylvanus die, and three days afterwards an eleven-year-old brother Augustus passed away.
And then came the tragedy of tragedies. Sometime during these days of agony—the record does not say when—Tryphena saw her strong young husband, Samuel Crute, and their three boys, George Moore and William and Allen, all stricken with the dread disease. The three boys died, but their father rallied and said that he was all right.

Meantime the mortality was great among the negroes. Some died every day until thirty-two had passed away. Of the seventy-two who had left Georgia, only forty were left.

One cannot visualize the suffering and distress which must have existed under an environment so crude and harrowing.

It was said that the disease ran its course in some cases in three hours; in others, in three days.

On February 19th Tryphena and her weakened husband with their only remaining child, a little girl of one year, left for Anderson three miles away.

The sun was just up when the sorrowing couple reached the house that James and George Moore had spent months in preparing to receive them all.

Seeing Samuel, her husband, put his hand to his head, Tryphena asked if he felt sick, and he replied, "No."

After taking a bath that morning he went down town and bought a full suit of clothes, but on returning to the house he had to acknowledge that he was ill. The dangerous after-effects of cholera were upon him, and he died that day, February 19th.

Thus nine members of the Moore family and four of the Crute family had died of Asiatic cholera in ten days.

No one of the Moore family in Texas was left to Tryphena save her brother George, Jr., the one who had remained in Anderson while James went to Georgia to conduct the party. And of the Crute family there was only the baby girl, who like herself, had escaped the cholera.

But alas! measles were going around in Anderson, and the nursing baby, weakened by the ordeal through which her mother had passed, took the disease, and within a month she too was dead. This was the last blow in the amazing chapter of calamities.

But new friends were raised up to help Tryphena. The Episcopal rector of Anderson visited her, and the ladies of his church ministered to her in her sorrow and desolation. Tryphena always spoke most gratefully of their kindness.

News traveled slowly in 1854. John Moore, the married son who had remained in Georgia, was in his front yard one afternoon when he saw Mrs. Pittman, a neighbor who lived four miles away, riding toward him on horseback. As she reached him, she spread out a county weekly which contained news of the tragedy which had overtaken the Moore and Crute families in Texas.

John Moore made hurried preparations and left the next day for Anderson. It was all too true. He found his sister Tryphena with George, Jr.—two of them alone. He remained several months, helping to adjust affairs, and then returned to Georgia by stage-coach, bringing Tryphena with him.

Some years after this, John Moore, Jr. met a salesman on Lookout Mountain, who lived fifty miles from Anderson, Texas. Speaking of the family history connected
with that place, John Moore asked this gentleman if, when in Anderson, he would inquire about the graves of the Moore family, as George Moore, Sr., had provided in his will, on the day of his death, an adequate sum for funeral expenses and markers for the graves.

A most courteous letter was received later from this friend, containing four pictures of the lot and the graves. A tall monument in the center bore the names of the Moores, seven buried in one grave. Another monument and individual markers recorded the deaths of the Crute family.

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FROM FAMILY BIBLE OF GEORGE MOORE, SR.

Record of Deaths from Asiatic Cholera
February 10-19, 1854
Near Anderson, Grimes County, Texas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julius Caesar Moore</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>February 10, 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Simpson Moore</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>February 12, 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Moore</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>February 12, 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Moore, Sr.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>February 13, 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby Moore</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>February 13, 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Rachel Moore</td>
<td></td>
<td>February 14, 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Moore</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>February 14, 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvanus Moore</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>February 15, 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustus Moore</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>February 18, 1854</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the Bible belonged to the Moore family, it did not contain the records of the Crute family, but this much is surmised:

George Moore Crute
William Crute
Allen Crute
These boys died between February 14-February 18

Samuel Crute—died in Anderson, February 19, 1854.
Crute infant girl, 1 year, died March 27, 1854.
George Moore, Jr., had cholera but recovered and remained in Anderson in charge of property there.
LIFE BEGINS AGAIN

When Tryphena Moore Crute returned to Georgia, she made her home with her sister, Mrs. Jonathan Dawson of Montezuma, Georgia.

Bereft was she of father, mother, six brothers, one sister, her husband and three children, who died with Asiatic cholera in ten days (her remaining child dying one month later with measles). Who can describe the loneliness of this sole survivor of the family which left Georgia with high hopes for their new home in Texas?

What could life hold for her now? She might have said with Naomi:

“I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty.”

There are few parallels to this tragedy. One is reminded of the annals of Job in Holy Writ. But Thomas Moore in his hymn, “Come, Ye Disconsolate,” gives the triumph of faith when he says,

“Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.”

So it was in the case of Tryphena.

Long ago the prophet Isaiah recorded this gift of God:

“Beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

This was truly verified in Tryphena’s life.

In the course of time Tryphena Moore became the wife of Dr. William Asbury Mathews of Fort Valley, Georgia, who was himself a lonely widower.

God gave her a happy Christian home, from which arose daily the incense of family prayer.

Dr. Mathews, as the name Asbury would indicate, came of well-grounded Methodist ancestry. His children recalled hearing him speak often of a visit made to his father’s home by Bishop Asbury, and how this visit became to young William Asbury a treasured memory.

Being an active practitioner, his attendance upon church services was necessarily irregular, but his Christian experience burned with a steady warmth and found expression in untold deeds of compassionate ministry.

For his children one of childhood’s vivid memories is the picture of his kneeling form at the family altar and the sound of his voice in prayer.

The epitaph upon his tomb is still his most fitting eulogy:

“A Gentleman, A Philanthropist, A Christian.”

After her marriage Tryphena united with the Methodist Church.

She devoted herself unstintedly to the work of the Kingdom and was unsparing in her ministries in the church and the community.

When she was growing old, it was said of her, “Beyond the deep stillness of the midnight, even when the snow of seventy winters lay upon her saintly head, in the cabin of the negro, in the cottage of the white man—wherever
human beings were languishing in sickness, or human hearts were athirst for the waters of salvation, there her radiant presence turned their gloom into comfort and joy." So much for her ministry in the community.

But what did God give her to make up for the children she had lost? Ah! here was her crowning blessing, for He gave her exactly what she had lost; namely, three sons and a daughter, actually born in the same order as the children of her former marriage.

But these children lived to grow up, and under a godly father and mother they were trained in childhood, given a college education and sent out to bless the world.

They were Henry Asbury Mathews, George William Mathews, Samuel Moore Mathews, Helen Mathews Wright.

Here are brief sketches of each of them:

HENRY ASBURY MATHEWS

After a happy childhood this son graduated from Emory College. He studied law and soon became a jurist of distinction and was elected by his section, first, to the legislature and then to the state senate.

Later he was elected Judge of the Superior Courts of Bibb County Circuit, which consisted of Peach County, Houston County and Crawford County.

Because of his keen mind, his deep sincerity and high sense of justice, he was held in great esteem by all the people of his section.

With a real spiritual background it was not strange that he was known as a man of the highest Christian integrity. For many years he was a steward in the Methodist Church and was also superintendent of the Sunday School.

A pastor of his said, "Fort Valley thought of Judge Mathews not so much as a man of good report, but as God's man, full of faith and the Holy Ghost."

His death came suddenly on Monday morning in Macon just after he had taken his seat on the bench. Stricken with a heart attack, he was carried into an adjoining room, where in a few minutes he passed away.

It was said of him, "This servant of the people while in his place on the bench and engaged in the discharge of his duty, was at work up to the last moment of his life."

A short time before his death, when advised by some medical friends to slow down in his activities, he had replied: "You need not be disturbed. I have long ago set my house in order." He was survived by his wife, the former Lulu Murphy of Ellaville and two sons, Samuel Moore Mathews and Henry Asbury Mathews, Jr.

GEORGE WILLIAM MATHEWS

And what shall I say of my husband, Tryphena's second son? He became a minister of the gospel in the Methodist Church of the South Georgia Conference, where he served for forty-seven years. He was also a pioneer in the Holiness Movement in Georgia, for he was one of the group of four, who, with Rev. W. A. Dodge, selected the site for the Indian Springs Holiness Camp Ground.
He followed Brother Dodge as President of the Board of Trustees of the Camp Ground and served in that office for twenty-one years.

George Mathews is remembered for his zeal in missions. The three burning themes of his ministry were:

"Holiness of Heart and Life"
"The Stewardship of Money and Property"
"The Evangelization of the World"

Bishop W. N. Ainsworth, who officiated at his funeral, paid this tribute: "George Mathews believed in the Methodist doctrine of holiness and exemplified in his own life all of its beauty and charm."

Of his ministry in the Conference the Bishop said: "George Mathews was a missionary. He studied missions, he prayed missions and preached missions. It is doubtful if any man in Georgia Methodism contributed more than he to the creation of a missionary spirit in his day and generation."

In writing of him Bishop Warren Candler, a beloved classmate and friend, said: "He was an Israelite in whom there was no guile."

Death came to him as the result of an automobile accident. He lived nineteen days and died at the age of sixty-eight.

When told that his end was approaching, George Mathews lifted his arm and waved his hand and with a clear voice said:

"FOR THE HONOR AND GLORY OF THE KINGDOM!" These were his last words.

This precious standard he left for me, his wife, and the children and grandchildren.

He left two sons and two daughters, Alex M. Mathews, Helen Mathews Luce, George W. Mathews, Jr. and Lucy Mathews Shepard.

SAMUEL MOORE MATHEWS

This third son chose his father's profession and became a physician. He always remembered one incident in his life as a medical student.

While in Louisville, Kentucky, he heard one of his professors who was lecturing on epidemics relate the experience of a Georgia family which emigrated to Texas in 1854. The professor said, "This is one of the most remarkable cases on record, for unwittingly they came in contact with Asiatic cholera. Of the fifteen in the family which left Georgia for Texas, thirteen died with this disease in ten days. Thirty-two negroes who were taken to Texas with the party also died during that period."

After the class young Sam went forward and said, "You have told the story of my own people, for my mother, Tryphena Moore Mathews, was the sole survivor of that family which was wiped out."

After his graduation Dr. Samuel Moore Mathews was a beloved physician in Quitman, Georgia. Following a major operation he was a great sufferer. He died in the faith, leaving a wife, formerly Hannah Mabbett of Quitman, and a little daughter, Ida Helen, who in later years became the wife of Pomeroy Nichols.
HELEN MATHEWS WRIGHT

This was Tryphena's only girl—a worthy daughter of a great mother. One loves to trace to its source the springs of her life. There was the godly home with its family altar, with the daily life of Tryphena, her mother, as a constant reminder of the abounding grace of God. In childhood Helen was converted and joined the church.

But there was an epochal experience in her life, when, as a young graduate home from college, she knelt at the altar during a revival in the old Methodist church and made a wholehearted consecration of herself to God.

The message that day was,

"Reckon ye also yourselves to be
dead indeed unto sin and alive unto
God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Rom. 6:11

In the strength of that command, she lived a singularly devoted life, and through the years which followed she was a witness to the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

For twenty-five years she was the teacher of the Woman's Bible Class of the Methodist Church, and for a number of years she was the president of the Woman's Missionary Society. She was a devoted wife and mother.

Her husband, W. C. Wright, was a faithful steward of the church.

She passed away at the age seventy-three, leaving two sons, William Mathews Wright and George Osgood Wright.

A beautiful window in the church at Fort Valley is dedicated to the memory of this splendid woman.

The words of George Herbert, which she loved and often quoted, might fittingly be called Helen's "Psalm of Life."

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see.
And what I do in anything
To do it all for Thee.

If done to obey thy laws
E'en servile labors shine.
Hallowed is toil, if this the cause,
The meanest work divine.
But to go back to Tryphena herself—who became my dear "Mother Mathews." Her last years were spent in the home of Judge and Mrs. Henry A. Mathews.

Time fails to tell of the happy years she spent in Fort Valley. But mention must be made of the closing time of her life, for then, as a result of a fractured hip, she became a shut-in for a number of years.

At that time her room became a shrine where troubled hearts sought comfort and advice. Young wives and mothers came frequently to talk about the problems of their lives.

Especially was this true of her preacher son, George Mathews. On the eve of a meeting in his church, it was his habit to make a pilgrimage to her bedside. There he enlisted the interest and prayers of his mother and gathered strength and faith for the days to follow.

When she died in 1905 at the age of eighty-two, her pastor, Reverend T. L. Lang, said:

"She was an epistle known and read of all men," and "her works do follow her... In the group yesterday morn during the hour of her translation, with the children of her own blood and the friends of her family, there were representatives of the progeny of Ham—a black man and a black woman. This was not a coincidence. It was an unconscious tribute to the universality of her beneficence. Her long suffering was the crowning glory of her years."

The stone that marks her last resting place bears the inscription:

TRYPHEN
Wife of Dr. William A. Mathews
Jan. 19 - 1823
Nov. 16 - 1905

Her children arise up, and call her blessed.

Faithful unto death, she has received a crown of life, and has entered into an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for her.

The following words of Frances Ridley Havergal are to me, her daughter-in-law, an epitome of the life of Tryphena Moore Mathews:

Light after darkness,
Gain after loss,
Strength after weakness,
Crown after cross,
Sweet after bitter,
Hope after fears,
Home after wandering,
Praise after tears.

Sheaves after sowing,
Sun after rain.
Sight after mystery,
Peace after pain,
Joy after sorrow,
Calm after blast,
Rest after weariness,
Sweet rest at last.