

## THE REMARKABLE CONVERSION OF A JEW.

[From Hilmer's Christian Journal; a German Periodical.]

"Be sure your sin will find you out."—Num. xxxii. 23.

A respectable innkeeper in a village in Germany, had a very depraved, ungodly son. One day, an old sickly Jew, Eliezer, arrived in the inn, which stood at some distance from the village; and feeling himself very ill, begged to go to bed. While he was fast asleep, the young profligate conceived the hellish idea to murder him, and to rob him of his money; for the innkeeper, his father, with his mother, and all the servants were gone to the fair in the market-town. He inflicted upon him several stabs with a knife, whereby he lost his senses.— Though he was still breathing, yet the murderer thought he was going to die; took a ring from his finger, and the little money he found in his pockets, and threw the body on a dry dunghill behind the house; with the design to cover it as soon as possible. But he had scarcely gone back into the room, before he was seized with dreadful terrors. In a state of distraction, he ran out of the house, without minding either the body of the murdered Jew, left uncovered, or the deserted house, determined to travel with the utmost speed to the nearest seaport, a day's journey from his village, and there to engage as a sailor. Meanwhile the stabbed Jew, whose wounds were not mortal, recovered so far as to be able to move, with slow steps, to the village. He could not give any clear account how he had met with his accident, both from weakness, and because he had neither seen his murderer, nor the instrument by which he had received his wounds; for he had not recovered his senses till he had lain some time on the dunghill. He died on the following day; and the surgeon who examined the corpse declared, that though his wounds were not in themselves absolutely mortal, yet, in the present case, they had been the means of hastening his death.

The murderer, pushed on by tormenting fears, proceeded on his way. In a wood he found, on the edge of the road, a young Jew fast asleep. Suddenly another horrible idea came into his mind. He drew the knife, with which he had committed the murder, out of his own pocket; put it gently into the pocket of the sleeping Jew, and rapidly pursued his journey on a bye-path through the wood. He reached the seaport P. In the inn where he took up his lodging, his youthful appearance and handsome figure struck the daughter of the house; the affection soon became mutual; and when the father had given his consent, they were married, and remained in the house to assist the father in his business.

It so happened, that two soldiers were walking in the same road where the murderer had been. They found there a good looking young man sleeping; whom, from his dress and countenance, they supposed to be a Jew; it was no same who has been mentioned. "Why," said one of the soldiers to his companion, "we are both of us hungry and thirsty; may we not apply to the pocket of the sleeping Jew for a little money? As he is asleep, he will not refuse it." "The hint is good," (returned the other,) "for I am almost fainting from thirst, and I have not a farthing in my pocket." They now put a hand into the coat-pocket of drowsy Nathan (this was the name of the Jew) for money; but instead of a purse, they found and drew forth a large knife; and were terrified when they found it covered with gore; but soon recovered from their terror, by the hope of earning the reward, given to those who deliver into the hands of justice a man suspected of murder; they awakened the Jew, bound him; and, deaf to his questions and intreaties, conducted him into the town, where he was put into prison.

Here he remained in confinement for more than a year. In the first month, the state of idleness became quite a burden to him. He asked the jailor whether he could not give him books to read? "There is," (replied he,) "in the who's house but one book, probably left behind by a former prisoner." "What book?" asked the Jew. "I do not know it," was the answer of the ignorant jailor. "I never have read it; but on looking into it, I have found, that it contains, some histories, and also letters." "O!" cried the Jew, "give me that book; any book is better than this weariness." He gave it to him. The Jew was almost struck with horror,

when he read the title-page of the book; it was, *The New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He was about to return it; but he said to himself,—"What harm can it do me, if for once with my own eyes, I see what the Christians relate of their Jesus? I shall thereby be enabled to argue with Christians." He now began reading; he first read with secret reluctance; but the longer he read, the more his reluctance changed into alarm and distress of mind, which he could not account for.

The sermons of Jesus in the Gospels, seemed to him so full of wisdom; his actions so wonderful; his views so pure; his sayings so noble and so holy; that he felt himself struck with reverence for him, and was convinced, that not one of all the men that have lived here on earth, not even Moses or Abraham, was equal to him. From his early infancy he had heard his parents and teachers speak of Jesus of Nazareth, as an impostor. He now was amazed to see in every page, the humblest and meekest of all the sons of Abraham; nay, of all the children of Adam. He read the sermon on the mount; the last prayer of the divine high priest; and his last words with his disciples, overflowing with the most tender parting love. With silent tears in his eyes, he read the history of the passion and death of Jesus; and at his last words upon the cross, chiefly at that prayer, "Father, forgive them!" he began to weep bitterly. He could scarcely proceed; but his desire to know the conduct of the disciples after the death of their master, led him to read the Acts of the Apostles also: here the events of the day of Pentecost, and the effects of the sermon of that day, struck him with great power. But the conversion of a Saul into a Paul made the deepest impression upon his soul: this wonderful event was decisive: he exclaimed, with a loud voice, "As truly as the God of Abraham lives in heaven, Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of the living God!" And in the same state, he lifted up his hands, and prayed. "As truly as thou, O Jesus of Nazareth, art the true Prophet and Messiah, I will be thy disciple! Have mercy upon me! have mercy, as thou showedst mercy to the thief at thy right hand! pray for me, as thou prayedst for thy murderers—Father, forgive him!"

This son of Abraham, now in his heart a believer, longed with an increased desire for the day of his acquittal; of which, being conscious of his innocence, he had not the least doubt. This desire was not so much owing to his natural love of liberty, as to a wish to confess publicly, with the mouth, what he believed with his heart; and to be added, by baptism, to the followers of Jesus Christ. He spent his time every day in reading the New Testament, which now had become his dearest treasure; and he often perused from the beginning to the end, with increasing interest and joy. When examined before the court of justice, he defended himself with freedom, but modesty: even his judges confessed, that his conduct bespoke innocence: and the calmness he showed, when the bloody knife, found in his pocket, was produced, and his modest statement staggered the judges. As to the issue of the trial, the prisoner had no fear; quietly waiting for the day, when God himself would be pleased to make his innocence appear in some way or other. After having been in prison fifteen months, he received his sentence; by which he was condemned to be whipped publicly before the town-hall, on three successive days; and then to one year's hard labour. A tear dropped from his eyes when he heard the sentence; but he returned calm and resigned into prison.

The day of execution arrived: the prisoner had already been brought into the town-hall, to be undressed for the first whipping; when a message arrived from the court of magistrates at P., by which notice was given, that the real murderer of the Jew Eliezer had there been detected and brought into prison; and he had already confessed his crime.

Our prisoner was now sent back into prison, but shown into a better room; and in a week, he was restored to full liberty. The most respectable inhabitants of the town expressed their concern for his undeserved imprisonment, and their joy on his release. He replied, "Your interest in my case affects my heart; but I cannot accept your compassion, for by my imprisonment I have lost but little, and gained much." He inquired after a pious minister of the Gospel; the Rev. Mr. B. was recom-

mended to him as a holy man: to him he opened his heart; and related to him all that had befallen both in his outward and inner man, and most earnestly begged to be baptised, and admitted to the Lord's supper. Some weeks after, he was publicly baptised in the parish church, and then admitted to the holy sacrament.

The real murderer, who lived, under a false name, with his father in law at P., to assist in the care of the inn, had, by some unguarded words, already excited some suspicion; when an event happened, in which he fully betrayed himself. Two strangers who had put up at the inn, talked about the murder, and all that since had followed, in the presence of a member of the court of magistrates. They mentioned the son of the innkeeper at M. as the supposed criminal; and just at the moment, the son-in-law of the man of the house entered into the room, one of the strangers in a jocose manner, and without the least meaning, said, "That person is said to be in appearance exactly like this our young landlord." At these words, the young man turned pale; he trembled, attempted to speak and stammered. The magistrate, whose suspicion was roused, went out; and after consulting his friends, resolved to watch the young man during the day, and in the evening confine him, which was done.

At the first stage of his trial, the wretch contrived to evade the skill of his cross-examiners; but at last, the inward judge brought about, what his human judges had been unable to effect. Inward torments were so pictured in his face and in his whole conduct, that the judges had the courage to address him in these words; "Villain, dost thou dare longer to defy the heart-searching eyes of the Almighty? Thou standest before an open gulf; before it swallow thee up, in honour of truth, say, 'Yes!'" Trembling in every limb, he said, "Yes;" and after having made an open confession of his crime, and every particular, he was sentenced to be whipped in the market-place on eight successive days, and to six years' hard labour.

Our convert Nathan had no sooner heard what had happened, than his heart was filled with sorrow and compassion for the criminal. He was not rejoiced to see the author of his past trouble brought to punishment; he only felt a strong desire after the salvation of his soul. He resolved to go to C—, and there to take lodgings for six years; in order to see the culprit every day, to bring him into the way of life, and to do him good for soul and body. For this he begged leave of the commandor; which was granted to him, when he had explained his reasons. He got better food for the criminal, and aided in his cure and nursing, during an illness which befel him. On that occasion, he made his spiritual cure, the conversion of his soul, his chief concern. He instructed, he warned, he entreated the sick man to save his poor soul, by turning with a penitent heart to him, who pardoned and saved the murderer on the cross. His tears and entreaties were blest. It pleased the Lord, who receiveth sinners, to touch the hardened heart of the culprit; he sought for mercy, and found it. He melted in tears of the deepest repentance, under a prayer, offered up by his kind friend, and prayed afterwards himself with affecting fervour and devotion. The Lord answered the prayers of the contrite sinner, and spoke peace to his soul. He got well, and his conduct proved the sincerity of his conversion. His change into a new man was even observed by the commandor; who more and more esteemed him for his peaceable, industrious, and obedient behaviour; and strove to make his condition as easy as he could. After the years of his punishment were over, he was set at liberty. His kind friend took him into his own lodging; where they staid together for some months, improving themselves by the word of truth, and strengthening themselves, by daily prayers, in faith, in love, and in perseverance in the grace they both had obtained. After having partaken together of the holy sacrament, Nathan went with his friend to the place where he before lived, and hastened to his wife, who presented to him his first-born son, whom she had brought into the world, during the first year of his confinement. The next day Nathan left them, and returned to his own home; where, after three or four months, he fell sick, and was removed into the kingdom of everlasting bliss and joy. On his sick bed, he often mentioned the name of his friend, with gratitude, fervently prayed, that the Lord would make him faithful unto the end, and