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DIRECTORS.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Sowing and Reaping	603
The Effect of Christ's Death upon his Disciples	603
The Faith of Christ's Disciples the Proof of His Resurrection	603
A Dead Messiah	602
MISSIONARY—	
Waldensian Church Missions in Italy: II.	604
BRITISH AND FOREIGN NEWS	605
HOME NEWS	606
CORRESPONDENCE	608
CHURCH OF ENGLAND TEMPERANCE SOCIETY.	609
EDITORIAL—	
Editorial Note	610
The Revelations of the Risen Jesus	611
Natural Law in the Spiritual World	611
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL—	
Abstinence for the sake of others	612
BOOK REVIEWS	
CHILDREN'S CORNER—	
Pleasing not ourselves	613
Strange use for a Stool.	614

SOWING AND REAPING.

BY WILLIAM BRYANT.

The Master has broad, fair acres,
And harvesters many and strong,
Some are sowing the seed in the spring time,
Some are chanting the harvest song.
Some scatter the seeds of promise
With many a falling tear;
They sow, but they see no fruitage,
They may not be reapers here.
Some plant, and then leave their labors
For others to till and tend:
And they in turn cease toiling
And hope and labor end.
The Master has other gardens,
In a world beyond our own:
And often he calls earth's toilers,
To travel that way alone.
Here they were often weary,
Seeing no fruit of their toil:
Now they work in a larger harvest
And a nobler, richer soil.
What matter who does the planting?
What matter who tends the field?
What matter who gathers the harvest?
What matter who counts the yield?
Each works for the same great harvest,
Each is serving the self-same Lord:
And when the last sheaf is garnered
All will share in the great reward.
O we long for that sweet home-bringing,
When the sower and reaper shall stand,
With the ripened sheaves before them,
In the bright, immortal land.
There many a faithful toiler,
Who was little thought of here,
Shall be crowned with a harvest garland
By the Master standing near.

"Well done," both sower and reaper,
The work and reward are one:
The harvest is safely garnered,
Brave harvesters, "well done."

THE EFFECT OF CHRIST'S DEATH UPON HIS DISCIPLES.

The conduct of Christ's disciples after His death was exactly the opposite of what might have been expected. They held together. The natural thing for them to do would have been to disband; for the one bond was gone; and if they had acted according to the ordinary laws of human conduct they would have said to themselves, Let us go back to our fishing-boats and our tax-gathering, and seek safety in separation, and nurse our sorrow apart. A few lingering days might have been given to weep together at His grave, and to assuage the first bitterness of grief and disappointment; but when these were over nothing could have prevented Christianity and the Church from being buried in the same sepulchre with Jesus. As certainly as the stopping up of the fountain would empty the river's bed, so surely would Christ's death have scattered His disciples. And that strange fact, that it did not scatter them, needs to be looked well into and fairly accounted for in some plausible manner. When John the Baptist was martyred, his little band of disciples melted away. The end of John's school gives a parallel which brings the singularity of the conduct of Christ's disciples into stronger relief; and looking at these two groups as they stand before us in Matt. 14: 12, and 28: 8, the question is irresistibly suggested, Why did not the one fall away into its separate elements, as the other did? The keystone of the arch was in both cases withdrawn—why did the one structure topple into ruin while the other stood firm?

Not only did the disciples of Christ keep united, but their conceptions of Jesus underwent a remarkable change on His death. We might have expected indeed that, when memory began to work, and the disturbing influence of daily association was withdrawn, the same idealizing process would have begun on their image of Him, which reveals and ennoble the character of our dear ones who have gone away from us. Most men have to die before their true beauty is discerned. But no process of that sort will suffice to account for the change and heightening of the disciples' thoughts about their dead Lord. It was not merely that, as they remembered, they said, Did not our hearts burn within us by the way while He talked with us?—but that His death wrought exactly the opposite effect from what it might have been expected to do. It ought to have ended their hope that He was the Messiah, and we know that within forty-eight hours it was beginning to do so, as we learn from the plaintive words of disappointed and fading hope: "We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel." If, so early, the cold conviction was stealing over their hearts that their dearest expectation was proved by his death to have been a dream, what could have prevented its entire dominion over them, as the days grew into months and years? But somehow or other that process was arrested, and the opposite one set in. The death that should have shattered Messianic dreams confirmed them. The death that should have cast a deeper shadow of incomprehensibility over His strange and lofty claims poured a new light upon them, which made them all plain and clear. The very

parts of His teaching which His death would have made those who loved Him wish to forget, became the centre of His followers' faith. His cross became His throne. Whilst He lived with them they knew not what He said in His deepest words, but, by a strange paradox, His death convinced them that He was the Son of God, and that that which they had seen with their eyes, and their hands had handled, was the Eternal Life. The cross alone could never have done that. Something else there must have been, if the men were sane, to account for this paradox.

Nor is this all. Another equally unlikely sequel of the death of Jesus is the unmistakable transformation effected on the disciples. Timorous and tremulous before, something or other touched them into altogether new boldness and self-possession. Dependent on His presence before, and helpless when he was away from them for an hour, they became all at once strong and calm; they stand before the jury of a Jewish mob and the threatenings of the Sanhedrim, unmoved and victorious. And these brave confessors and saintly heroes are the men who, a few weeks before, had been petulant, self-willed, jealous, cowardly. What had lifted them suddenly so far above themselves? Their Master's death? That would more naturally have taken any heart or courage out of them, and left them indeed as sheep in the midst of wolves. Why, then, do they thus strangely blaze up into grandeur and heroism? Can any reasonable account be given of these paradoxes? Surely it is not too much to ask of people who profess to explain Christianity on naturalistic principles, that they shall make the process clear to us by which, Christ being dead and buried, His disciples were kept together, learned to think more loftily of Him, and sprang at once to a new grandeur of character. Why did they not do as John's disciples did, and disappear? Why was not the stream lost in the sand, when the head-waters were cut off?

THE FAITH OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES THE PROOF OF HIS RESURRECTION.

The disciples' immediate belief in the Resurrection furnishes a reasonable, and the only reasonable, explanation of the facts. There is no better historical evidence of a fact than the existence of an institution built upon it and coeval with it. The Christian Church is such evidence for the fact of the resurrection; or, to put the conclusion in the most moderate fashion, for the belief in the resurrection. For the natural effect of our Lord's death would have been to shatter the whole fabric: and if that effect were not produced, the only reasonable account of the force that hindered it is, that His followers believed that He rose again. Since that was their faith, one can understand how they were banded more closely together than ever. One can understand how their eyes were opened to know Him who was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." One can understand how, in the enthusiasm of these new thoughts of their Lord, and in the strength of His victory over death, they put aside their old fears and littlenesses, and clothed themselves in armour of light. "The Lord is risen indeed" was the belief which made the continuous existence of the Church possible. Any other explanation of that great outstanding fact is lame and hopelessly insufficient.

We know that that belief was the belief of the