

THE HARBINGER.

UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES.

In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.—*St. Paul.*

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THE HEART OPENED.

MY READER, have you ever seen that beautiful but tender flower which, as if instinct with life, closes its delicate leaves and droops its head at sun-set;—but, at sun-rise, when it feels the first warm rays of the heavenly luminary, gently unfolds its beauties, and sends forth its sweet perfume. In the exquisite mechanism of that flower, and the manner of its operation, I have often admired the wondrous union of *gentleness and power*. Omnipotence alone could create, adjust, and preserve that mechanism—but how tenderly, how silently, how softly, if I may so speak, does the all powerful God move its component parts, open on each returning morning the beautiful valves, and spread the stamens and petals they enclose to the genial influence of the rising sun!—Just so was the heart of *Lydia* opened. She was a native of Thyatira, famed for its production of the royal purple, and had repaired to Philippi, to dispose of that article in traffic with the luxurious inhabitants of that colonial city. She had heard of the true God, she had renounced the service of idols, and finding a few females like herself disposed to the exercises of devotion, she retired with them, on the morning of a Jewish Sabbath, to the banks of a neighbouring stream, there to blend their supplications to the God of Abraham. Thither the spirit and providence of the Most High conducted the footsteps of the great Apostle of the gentiles. He embra-

ced the favourable opportunity of preaching Jesus, and God gave testimony to the word of his grace, and opened the heart of *Lydia* that she attended to the things spoken by Paul. Here was gentleness and power—the noiseless energy of omnipotence acting under the influence of love.

This is only one instance of what is far from being uncommon in the work of grace. There have been many *Lydias* in the church of God, and the writer has met with not a few illustrations of this wondrous union of tenderness and energy. Some years ago, he was preaching the gospel to a small congregation—in which, small though it was, there were some whose hearts were *closed*. He told his audience, with great simplicity, that they were sinners, guilty, polluted, condemned—unable to atone for their sins, to purify themselves from moral uncleanness, to avert the condemnation impending over them. He then told them of the son of God—his meritorious righteousness, his atoning sacrifice, his ability and willingness to save even the chief of sinners. In the course of his closing appeal, his eye rested unconsciously on a young person who listened most intently to the truth—and at that instant, these words escaped his lips—“Suffer me, my friend, to take you by the hand and lead you to the Saviour. He waiteth to be gracious—he will not cast you out—he invites, he urges you to come,—come then without hesitancy—with-