

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

At the house of a nobleman, where a large party was assembled, I conversed with a captain in the navy, and a surgeon; the conversation was extremely painful to me, as they argued and cavilled angrily; I answered them from the Bible, which I held in my hand. Our host having listened to us for some time, said, "It appears to me necessary, before answering these gentlemen from the Word of God, that you should declare to them what it really is, because I am aware that your antagonists are not convinced of the divinity of that book." "What! my Lord," replied I, "if I were to draw the captain's sword, and wound him therewith, would it be requisite to make him sensible that he was wounded, that this gentleman (the surgeon) should testify; 1st, That the sword is of good steel; 2nd, That the blade has a keen edge; 3rd, That the muscles and veins being cut, this gentleman is obliged to feel? Is not the proof of the sword being a sword, demonstrated by its point and edge? And, think you, that the everlasting God, who has spoken this word, which He declares to be sharper than any two-edged sword, has not given to it a sufficient efficacy to strike and penetrate the conscience of one of His creatures! a man! a sinner? No, gentlemen," continued I firmly (several of the rest of the company were now around us, and listened with apparent interest), "no; I do not believe that the truths contained in this holy volume require, that, to be recognized as such, man must affix the seal of his approbation, or, that the true and living light cannot enlighten the understanding of a mortal, until the fetid and vacillating flame of the lamp of reason is united thereto."

Upon this, the captain withdrew to the recess of the window: whilst I answered several questions concerning faith, and its consequent peace. The captain appeared agitated; after some minutes had elapsed, he returned to us, and said to me, with visible emotion, "Pray, tell me, if the habitual joy and security which you now possess are the results of the principles which you hold?" "Sir," replied I, affectionately, "whenever I expose myself to the rays of the sun, I receive not only light, but heat therefrom. In like manner, whenever I read or meditate on the word of truth and life, I experience the same effect in my soul, because it is impossible to contemplate by faith, Jesus, the Son of the Father, and the brightness of His glory, without having a deep sense of the vivifying light which emanates from, and beams in, Him."

"Upon my honour!" exclaimed the captain, "I begin to believe that you are in the right. I never so earnestly desired, as I now do, to know that happiness which you possess. Indeed, sir, I deem you the happiest of men, and I would give the half of my fortune to think as you do." I smiled, and replied, "Your honour is only that of a poor sinner; make it not then your stay. As to the happiness which I possess, it costs me nothing, and God will not sell it dearer to you than He has done to me." "What, then, must I do to obtain it?" rejoined the captain, in a tone of vexation. "You must lend a willing ear, and apply your heart," replied I, "to the words of the Apostle James: 'Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness and ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls.' (James i. 20.) 'We must confess,' said our host, "that the means are easy, and the doctrine which we have just heard, powerfully attractive." "And do you not now believe," said I to him, in a whisper, "that the word of God testifies to us, that it is a sword which pierces as deeply as that which the hand of man can whet and polish?"

I am ignorant in what measure my auditors really believed; but I have always felt persuaded, that the testimony of God was on that day powerfully brought home to the heart of one, to whom every argument, and every evidence that human reason could advance, had proved unavailing. The heart of this man was undoubtedly moved by the voice of the Almighty, speaking in His Word; and this logician, who doubtless had often endeavoured, by the subtlety of logic, to argue against others, found himself vanquished before the wisdom of the Omnipotent Saviour, who destroys the wisdom of the wise, and by the preaching of the Gospel makes foolish the wisdom of the world. (Cor. i. 20, 21.)—*Rev. Casar Malan, D.D.*