

THE SOWER.

NOW AND TO-MORROW.

Now is the accepted time, 'tis even now,
And now too is salvation's blessed day,
Oh sinner! to the Saviour meekly bow
And give to Him thy heart without delay.

Why linger? say, what hope'st thou to obtain
By such a course, an hour may seal thy fate;
Death comes! he strikes! then where is all thy gain?
'Tis all contained in these sad words, "Too late!"

To-morrow means delay; our Saviour God
Says "Come just now," No hurry, says the devil,
Tarry awhile, rough is salvation's road;
Beware dear friend, he counsels thee for evil.

To-morrow! there is no such point of time!
'Tis a deceit, an ever bursting bubble,
Surely 'tis folly, and not seldom crime,
To trust in that which oft brings sorest trouble.

Upon the week's first day you give your word
That on the morrow thou wilt bow thy head,
And own the blessed Saviour as thy Lord—
Morn dawns; but lo to-morrow's still ahead!

'Tis a mere will-o-th-wisp, o'er bog and fen,
It glances lightly on, away, away,
Always ahead, deceiving thoughtless men,
Always behind, now is salvation's day.

"I CAME TO JESUS AS I WAS."

"I CANNOT believe what I cannot understand."

And he was passing out of the world of reason and sense. Day by day his feet were drawing nearer to the bourne where God's thoughts, not man's, should be everything. What could his prayerful mother do but pray? what could his preaching father do but tell out the love of God to a sinful world, and leave his loved one to Him? He had wandered far in the world of science. Nature had opened her treasures to him, and his strong intellect had eagerly accepted and delighted in her gifts. Astronomy had filled his mind with wonder and delight; the laws of nature had been weighed and pondered over—the marvels of her wealth, whether of rock, or sea, or sky, whether bird, or bush, or tree, had been poured out at his feet, and yet when we met him he stood facing death alone,—*One* unknown, amid all his loved and loving ones, and he "*could not believe unless he could understand.*"

It was summertime. A Cape summer when the hot sun beat fiercely down on the dusty roads, and nature often seemed too parched to utter a sound; when the trees seemed too lazy to wave under the blue sky, and many looked longingly up at the deep ravine shadows of Table Mountain, and longed to be sitting within their cool shelter.

Nothing seemed to help him. One after another spoke with him, but he could not believe what his

reason could not fathom. It was terrible for those belonging to him to watch him day by day—so young, so clever, so affectionate, passing on toward eternity without one ray of hope, without one glimpse of the crucified One. Death, in itself, is a solemn thing, dear friends, although to the Christian there is no "sting" in it, and he is led and pillowed by One who came up out of death. He tarried here in that resurrection body forty days and bade the feeble-hearted one, "Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side." (John xx. 27). Yet even so, there is the parting of body and soul, the passing out from the world of sight and sense. But what is it to one who knows not what is before him? Who goes on in a sort of dumb despair, seeing only darkness, and deeper darkness, as he treads onward, knowing that inch by inch his tabernacle is being taken down, and that every night as he lays his head again upon his sleepless pillow, and every morning as he rises to another day of doubt and conflict, that he is so many hours nearer—what?

What indeed, dear friends? And you are passing onward thus, though life may seem to hold many long happy years for you, yet if you are not in Christ your feet are standing just as surely upon the brink of a fiery abyss as his were, your soul is just as unsheltered as his was; there is not one spot or stain blotted out or covered beneath the eye of a holy, sin-hating God if He sees not the precious blood of Christ sheltering you.

All the eloquent sermons from his father's lips—and

he was earnest, and he was eloquent—could not show him Christ, all the love of his devoted Christian mother could not bring peace to the troubled heart, nor the care and desires of his loving young sisters, nor the sweet prattle from the little ones could reveal Jesus to his burdened soul. No! He stood surrounded by all that Christlike affection could give and do, and yet he stood alone looking death in the face, his head uncovered to the sword, his breast unsheltered to the stroke. No helmet of salvation touched his brow, no breastplate of righteousness covered his throbbing heart, no shield of faith was in his hand as he steadily advanced to meet the foe. Death, like another Goliath was crying “Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.” But there was no triumphant “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts,” as with David.

No Christian love can give us life, dear reader. It can only come from one who said “I give unto them eternal life.” And Satan perhaps felt sure of his prey! He could laugh, perchance, at the father’s anguished prayers, and the mother’s tears. Oh! dear ones, does he watch *you* thus to-day. Death is not behind us, remember—our feet, too, are pressing onward—to what?— If a mother’s tears should fall on your cold still face to-morrow where would *you be*?— . . .

But “God *so* loved the world.”—His eye was not closed, His heart was not sleeping.

One hot summer’s night, wearied and worn with

mental conflict and physical suffering our young friend fell asleep. He dreamed that he was walking along a hot, dry, dusty road. The fierce, burning sun was beating down upon him and there was no shelter and no shade for his weary frame. Tired and worn he dragged himself along, longing, oh! how greatly, for a draught of water for his parched throat and lips.

One cup of cold, clear water, and he could face the rest. Could he but quench his thirst he could go on strengthened and sustained. But no water lay before his tired eyes, only the heat and the dust and the terrible longing within. There was no "shadow of a great rock in a weary land" for him; there was no fountain of living waters for his fainting spirit. When suddenly, as he turned the road, he saw a broad, clear river lying before him. Calmly its pure waters were sparkling beneath the blue sky and the hot sun. Nothing was soiling its purity, nothing disturbing its even flow. Without one moment's hesitation, without one questioning thought—no "how" or "why" tortured his thirsty spirit—he *stooped down* and *drank*.

And then clear as a living voice came:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say

Behold I freely give,

The living water, thirsty one,

Stoop down, and drink, and live."

And he awoke. Awoke to see it all. He was questioning and reasoning instead of accepting. He was wanting proofs *about Him*, when the living water was lying at his feet, and the loving Saviour stood before him saying, "Come unto *Me*"

He saw Jesus. He heard His voice. He did not analyse the water in his dream, he *drank it*. And now he knew *Him*; his thirst was quenched, his soul revived; and he passed away full of triumph and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The living water lies at your feet, dear friends. Will you drink and live? A loving Saviour speaks. Will you listen? He calls, will you come?

“*Whosoever* drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst (shall in no wise thirst for ever); but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John iv. 14).

Do you believe, dear reader, that Jesus Christ was delivered for *your* offences—the offensive thought, look, word, and deed? that He was bound about with your sins on the cross, and suffered for them there?

“He gave Himself for our sins.” This was the only way sins could be disposed of. God made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Three blessed results flow from Christ giving Himself for our sins. and being made sin for us to all who believe: *sins are gone, sin is judged, and righteousness is conferred.*

Dear reader, are you satisfied with what Christ did once for all on the cross? God grant that you by faith may be able to look up to where Jesus is in heaven and say, with an adoring heart, “I AM,”

G R A C E.

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JOHN III.
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THE great testimony of the gospel is that God has visited the world in grace. This was evidently something new ; especially when we remember that Jesus died, and had to die. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish," etc. Why does He say, "Should not perish"? Because they were perishing, and God is visiting a lost world all in grace. This is what opens anyone's mouth—God's working in love. He can tell of a remedy, for he is cured ; and of the perfect love of God to poor sinners. Now, it is this grace that will open a man's heart, other things will make a man hide and cloak his sin, and seek to get away out of God's presence. Not but that God can awaken by terror. Yet what opens the heart is that God has come to save us in grace. When we speak of being saved, we do not speak of mere deliverance from wrath, but of being brought to God. Now if you are to be brought to God, you must have hearts to enjoy God ; for it is dreadful to be with one in whose presence we have no delight. Look at the case of a sinner. He dare not be in God's presence, and it is misery to be out of it. Therefore do men like annihilation. Can your souls reckon on divine favour? God visits us to give us the knowledge of His favour, we do not

get this by speculating over our hearts. Christ did not come to set us speculating whether He would be love or not; He came to be it. Now when a man believes this, he has peace with God.

In the last three verses of chapter ii, we see Christ's judgment of man. There we read that "many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did." I will suppose that you have done what these persons did; you have read of Christ and believed in His name, "But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men." Here we get the faith that is in the world, but the Lord does not trust it. Why? Because although they have acknowledged Christ to be the Messiah, there is not one bit of their hearts changed. Is there one thing done on their hearts or on their consciences by such an acknowledgement of the Messiah? Have they said what terrible sinners we must be, since Christ came to die? Christ did not charge them with insincerity, yet their consciences were like mill-stones. That is what I call the basest form of depravity—acknowledging love unparalleled, and yet not feeling one spark of affection. Do you believe that Christ died for your sins, and do you still go on in sin? That is why Christ did not commit Himself to them. He knew all men. Do you think He does not know you? Is it any wonder that God says, "You must be born again?" It will not do to say, you must mend; you need something *new*, you need God to give you a new heart, will, conscience? You do not need to *learn* about Christ, you need a nature that can be *affected* by what you have learned.

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There must be a radical change in principle otherwise what will you do when you come to God? When will you come to God, at the judgment? What will you do then? If you were the fairest character in the world, you know as a fact that you do not like to meet God. If it was to-day you would put it off till to-morrow, and if you could, forever.

The conscience of Nicodemus was at work, the others continued as they were. There we see the horrible indifference of nominal Christianity. Nicodemus is rather ashamed of being seen with Jesus. Let a man's conscience be touched, and he is ashamed to be seen with Christians. Why? Because the very instant that conscience is touched and we get to Christ, there is an instinct to tell us that the world is against us. And of whom was Nicodemus ashamed? Of the Son of God. And this is what man is, and what the world is. Therefore Jesus, who knew the trial said, "Whosoever shall confess Me *before men*," etc.

Now we get the answer of God. He tells them that "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" worthless, and worse than worthless. It is not the sins that prove it the most, it is what it shows itself to be when it has to do with Christ, the Son of God.

Christ says you must have a new nature. He says that you are *só* bad that you cannot be trusted, that you must be changed, "You must be born again."

Nicodemus answered and said, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said, "Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?" You

ought to have known from your own prophets that under the new covenant such a change was needed. (See Ezek. xxxvi). If you do not believe earthly things which the prophets declared, that you must be renewed and have a heart of flesh, etc, how shall you believe heavenly things? But who can tell you of heavenly things, if not Him who came from heaven?

We have had the necessity of man's being renewed, now we get another thing—the goodness of God to us as we are—unrenewed. It is the truth that I need regeneration, but that is not grace. Grace is what God is for me from heaven. When was it that Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? When the Israelites were bitten by the serpent, when the power of death had come in. So has it come to you—you are ruined, lost, stung; and where is your help? You have sin on you. Can you undo the sins you have done? Can you take guilt off your conscience? Never. Once sin, you can never become innocent. You are guilty and you know it, though you do not feel it, you know you dare not meet God and talk of sin. No, you would be talking of mercy. When? At the day of judgment? Mercy! It is the day of righteousness; of glory to the saints, not mercy; and of destruction to the world. *Now*, is the day of mercy. God treats you as a sinner—you must be treated as a sinner—He cannot agree to the lie you think of yourself. He says, there is none righteous. He cannot say, I have made a mistake. The only question is, whether He will treat you as a sinner now or then. He came from heaven. Why? To make

light of sin? To talk of sin? He could not do so. He knew that there could not be happiness where there was sin. He came to be lifted up. "For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up," etc. He must take on Himself the consequences of sin to put it away from you. In the 53rd of Isaiah God does not overlook the sins, He cannot. What does He do with them? He laid them on Jesus. As to those who do not believe in Jesus, either they or sins must be put away. In the case of the believer, sins are put away, because Christ took them upon Him. God saw the sins and visited them on Christ. Why did Christ die? For sins. What has He done with the sins? Put them away. There we get peace, for we know the Son of man has been lifted up, and that instead of perishing, we have everlasting life. Christ says, "That whosoever believeth should not perish." If I believe then in Jesus, owning that I was perishing, He says, I have died that you should have eternal life. There is so much reasoning in our hearts (and no wonder when we find ourselves in such a labyrinth!) Therefore the Lord comes in, in such perfect simplicity. Believe and have life. And why? Because it is believing in One who has put sins away.

Sins could not be borne by us, and God is righteous; therefore Christ came to put away sin. That is however but half of the truth, for in the cross I not only see that this dreadful necessity was met, but that even when I was in my sins God loved me; that touches my conscience and gives me peace. But be-

sides this, how came Christ to do this? Because "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," etc. When we were at enmity with God, He so loved us that He would have us understand that while the world hated Him He loved it all the while, and gave that which was nearest to His heart for its reconciliation. Hence, whilst conscience gets peace through the blood of the cross, the testimony of the perfect love of God—and of this the cross is the proof—sets the heart at rest. Now the sinner knows God. Not only has he got the new nature, but an object to love. It is miserable to have affections and nothing to love. So now we have God to love, all the affections become centered in Christ. Our souls know what God is and what He has done for us, and our hearts go out to this God. How it knits the heart and God together! He has loved me—loved me so, and will love me for ever. O what bliss! We shall have trouble, but we have the certainty of the perfect love of Christ—No matter what the trouble may be, I now know that Christ having gone through all for me; neither death, nor life, nor any creature can separate me from His love.

Now that is the way that God makes Himself known. If you meet Christ in judgment, it is not merely that you have broken the law—that is bad enough; but the goodness of God is leading you to repentance. Therefore it is not judgment now, but God commending His love, and if you are untouched by that, you are despising a dying Saviour! That is a terrible thing and you know it.

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THE SINGING COBBLER.

ONE fine summer's evening, whilst crowds of people passed through the streets on their way to hear the music, a shoemaker, sitting under a shade before his shop door, was busily engaged with a shoe. He rested from his work, singing one of the most beautiful psalms, scarcely lifting his eyes from the sole, which occupied his whole attention, and quite indifferent to the crowd that passed before him, when a young man stopped suddenly and addressed him: "Well my friend, you seem quite happy and contented!" The speaker was a student. His marked features, his black eyes, his high nose, and his dark complexion, showed that he belonged to the Hebrew race. The cobbler lifted his eyes and answered cheerfully,—

"Happy and contented I am, in truth, sir; why should I not be so?"

"I don't know; but all are not as you. Your poverty might distress you. I suppose you have only to provide for yourself?"

"You are mistaken there, sir," he answered; "I have to feed a wife and seven children with the work of these hands. I am a poor man, it is true; but I can sing and do my work."

"I must confess," said the young man, "that I am very much surprised to see a poor fellow like you so contented with his lot."

"Stranger," said the cobbler, putting down his

work, and taking hold of his arm with a serious expression. "I am a son of the King."

The student turned his head and went away, saying to himself, "the poor man is evidently mad! It is his madness that makes him so happy. I thought I should hear from him the secret of his happiness, but I have lost my time."

A week passed by, and the student having again occasion to pass down the same street, found the cobbler sitting in the same place, singing as cheerfully as before. The young man, in passing, lifted his cap with a sneering salutation, exclaiming, "Good morning, Mr. Prince."

"Stop, my friend," said the cobbler, putting down his work; "a word of explanation, if you please. You only left me so suddenly the other evening because you thought I was mad."

"I must say I believed it," answered the other.

"Well, my friend, I am not mad. What I said I said in earnest. I am a son of the King. Would you like to hear a song on my royalty? I will just sing one."

The young man did not doubt that to accept the offer would afford him some amusement and great satisfaction to the poor man, and he therefore asked him to sing. The cobbler began to sing a hymn on this verse: "Thy kingdom come." When he finished he asked the young man if he understood it; but he seemed still to be under his old impression.

"I must, then," said the old cobbler, "explain to you in detail concerning the kingdom of Christ and the glory of the King."

He began, then, with the divine word pronounced in the beginning, at the banishment from paradise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. He showed him this assurance, increasing in light from age to age throughout the prophecies, revealing always with clearer evidence the Redeemer's kingdom. He showed him how all things which are written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms, about Jesus Christ, have been fulfilled—how it behoved Christ to suffer these things and enter into glory—how all power in heaven and earth was committed to Him, and how He actually established a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and uniting in holy fellowship Jews and Gentiles. And, with eyes glistening with hope and love, he showed the young man, in language which the depth of his feelings made eloquent, how the subject of this glorious kingdom is a child of God, an heir, a joint-heir with Christ, the King; and how he shall reign with Him for ever and ever.

“Now,” said the cobbler, taking the hand of the young Jewish student who sat beside him, and whose whole mind was filled with things he had heard for the first time in his life, about the old promises made to his forefathers; “Now don't you see how I could say, ‘*I am a son of the King,*’ and why I am happy and contented? It is because I believe in Jesus, and love Him. And it is the sacred scriptures which tell me that all things are mine, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come; all are mine, because I am Christ's.”

Then looking the young Israelite in the face, the old Christian said, —

“Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou dost; because I see by thy features that thou art descended from those who believed in the prophets. Then, my son if you believe in the prophets, you must believe in Him about whom the prophets have spoken.” The young man listened in silence. Strange thoughts crossed his mind. At length he timidly asked this question, —

“Where may I learn more of these things, because I see that you *believe* and that you have *peace*? Oh, that I might have it also! for as yet I do not possess it.”

“Here,” said the old man, handing him a volume of the holy scriptures: “this book you must read attentively at home; and whilst you are learning from it the way of escape from the enemy of your soul, I shall, as Moses on the mount, pray for you without ceasing, commending you to One who knows you; who is greater than Moses; who is above all.”

The young Jew took the book, and pressing with gratitude the old man’s hand, took off his cap; and saluted him with respect.

“Oh, that the Lord Jesus,” said the old man, lifting his eyes towards heaven, and taking to his work again, “may also graft this one in His own olive-tree!”

The story does not end here. The old shoemaker’s prayer was heard.

The young Jew was converted to Christianity, and has since distinguished himself by his zeal and success as a missionary amongst his own people.