

THE SOWER.

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"THE HEART LOST AND WON.
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"O H, who will show me any good?"
My weary spirit cried :
Phantoms I've long enough pursued ;
Labour'd I have, and earned no food,
Whatever path I tried.

A voice I heard—a still, small voice,
And yet all-powerful too,
That made my inmost soul rejoice,
As drawn by love, I fixed my choice
Its counsels to pursue.

Oh, weary one, to me draw nigh,
I've rest and peace to give,
Thou poor one, without money buy
Love's wine and milk in rich supply :
Only believe, and live.

"I am the Lamb for sinners slain ;
My blood shall purge thy sin :
My hands unloose each galling chain :
My life shall make thee live again,
The life of God within."

I turned, I saw that glorious sight,
The Father's only Son,
The Son of Man, all heaven's delight,
Fountain of grace, and life, and light ;
And then my heart was won.

"WHY AM I SO SAD?"

IT may be that some of the readers of these pages have often asked themselves the question, "Why am I so sad?" So long as they are busily occupied with the daily avocations of life, there is little time for serious reflection or soul-anxiety; but quiet moments do occur, or the stillness of the night-watches steal upon them, and then the perturbed conscience manifests itself, and solemn thoughts of death, judgment, and a never-ending eternity, produce many a sigh, and the deeply felt utterance of the heart is, "Why am I so sad?"

After all, death and judgment are dread realities to every reflecting mind; for it is written that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God." How, then, can any right-minded souls who have not peace with God be otherwise than sad, when they consider in how brief a period of time this brittle thread of life may snap, and land them for ever in eternity? Nor will false religiousness suffice to permanently console such perturbed consciences; for their minds being occupied as to how matters stand between them and God, nothing can really give them peace but the certain assurance that every question about sins has been set right between their souls and God. That many do go on year after year *trying by their own efforts* to find rest for their burdened consciences is, alas! most true; but never finding it either in the way of works, or in keeping

ordinances, religious duties or self-amendment, despondency and gloom so often possess them, that with deep sorrow of heart they exclaim, "Why am I so sad?"

Such persons little think that "salvation is of the Lord;" that "by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight;" and that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Hence it is that many sincere souls have not peace. They are looking for peace in almost every conceivably wrong way, instead of looking alone to the Lord Jesus Christ, who made peace by the blood of His cross, and is now in the presence of God in heaven, for righteousness, to every one that believeth. Like the Jews of old, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, they are going about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." No wonder then that they cry out, "Why am I so sad?"

Such cases are, with sorrow we state it, very common. One occurs to us while we write; it is this: Mrs. B. was a respectable farmer's wife, and every now and then much distressed about her soul's salvation. So miserable at times was she, that in deep heartfelt bitterness she would enquire within herself, "Why am I so sad?" She tried to be as moral and upright as possible; but again and again the distress of an evil conscience, and a sense of utter unfitness for the presence of an infinitely holy God, so seized her, that she became wild, and wondered if self-destruction would not put an end to her misery.

What can I do? naturally became her anxious enquiry; and knowing that a farmer in the neighborhood was noted for his piety, she occasionally repaired to him to pour out the doleful tale of her deep sense of sin, and intolerable fear of death and judgment. But he seemed to be very blind and self-deceived; for he told her that she could not be happier till she got better, that she ought not to expect to be happy while she was such a sinner; and after exhorting her to go home and try to lead a new life, and keep the commandments, she would return home, resolving again to persevere in a better and more religious life. This however, as might be expected, did not last long. Again a sense of God's eye being upon her, and of her responsibility to Him, would lay bare her conscience, and sometimes while feeling thus, she would run out of her house in a frantic state, and consider if there were no way of escape from her intolerable misery. Again she would take refuge in her religious friend, but always with the same result.

This continued for many years. At length she heard that a few Christians met together to read God's word in a village within two miles of her residence, and she determined on going. On her first entering the room, some one was reading the Saviour's precious words—"Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." In a moment she saw there was peace, not by doing, but "in believing," and at once looking to the Lord Jesus, she was relieved of her burden, and filled with joy and peace. Her delight was intense, and her decision for

the Lord most marked. Her husband was a very wicked man, and though he persecuted her most vigorously, her testimony for the Lord was so firm and unyielding that he soon turned to the Lord, and was enabled to openly confess Him before men; so that they walked happily together in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost. How true it is that, "being justified by faith, we *have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ." Surely this is the only cure for the wretchedness of a sin convicted soul, whose heart's utterance is, "Why am I so sad?"

The well-known Martin Boos also passed through much misery. He thus relates his conversion to God from Roman Catholicism: "I lay for years together upon the cold ground, though my bed stood near me. I scourged myself till the blood came, and clothed my body with a hair shirt; I hungered, and gave my bread to the poor; I spent my every leisure moment in the precincts of the church; I confessed and communicated every week." He "gave himself an immense deal of trouble to lead a holy life;" and was unanimously elected a saint; but the saint was miserable, and cried out, "*Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?*" Going to see a pious old woman on her death-bed, he said wistfully. "Ah! you may well die in peace!" "Why?" "You have lived such a godly life." "What a miserable comforter!" she said, and smiled; "If Christ had not died for me, I would have perished for ever, with all my good works and piety. Trusting in Him,

I die in peace," And from this time the light fell in upon his soul; the dying woman had answered his miserable cry—"O wretched man that I am!"

Let the reader observe that both these instances of long and bitter distress of soul were greatly owing to false teaching. No doubt, God overrules it, and, through all the distress, gives souls to learn experimentally that in them, that is in their flesh, dwells no good thing; and thus they become more thoroughly settled in the grace of God in Christ, rest more simply on His written word, and consequently have great peace. Still, such distress is not necessary, nor could it be known if God's word were listened to instead of the opinions of men. Surely, it may still be said of many, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." (Mark vii 9). Happy indeed are those who have so heard the voice of the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, as to have turned to Him, and received Him as their only way of peace, and thus know what it is to be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Such are "in Christ Jesus," and can triumphantly exclaim—

"He raised me from the depths of sin,
The gates of gaping hell;
And fixed my standing more secure
Than 'twas before I fell.

"Satan may vent his sharpest spite,
And all his legions roar;
Almighty mercy guards my life,
And bounds his raging power."

Dear reader! what say you to these things? Has ever the secret utterance of your heart been, "Why am I so sad?" Do you reply, No? What! is it possible you have never felt the terrible solemnity of having to give account of yourself to God? Has your conscience never owned its guilt to God? Has your heart never been melted under a sense of the amazing love of God in giving His beloved Son to die for sinners? Only think what it must be to be before the eye of an all-seeing, heart-searching God!

IT is the height of folly for men to attempt to lay down a rule as to the amount or duration of the punishment due to sin. God alone can settle this. And, after all, what was it that produced all the misery and wretchedness, the sickness and sorrow, the death and desolation of well nigh six thousand years? Just one act of disobedience, the eating of a little fruit. Can man explain this? He cannot. Can human reason explain how one act produced such an overwhelming amount of misery? Well, then, if it cannot do this, how can it be trusted when it attempts to decide the question as to what is due to sin?

THE DEATH-RATTLE.

“IF I can't believe, I can't.” Such were the last words which the writer ever had the opportunity of hearing from the lips of a man who was an avowed infidel, and with whom he had frequently discussed the question of the divine authenticity of the scriptures, which however is *no question* at all but a *fact*. At the moment of uttering these words he was lying on his sofa, suffering, though not very severely, from bronchitis, which at that time (some twenty years ago) was epidemic in some parts and had been remarkably fatal in several instances. They had been speaking together on the old subject, and the infidel finding all his arguments worthless, and having had all his objections met, fell back upon what afterwards proved to be a direct falsehood—“If I *can't* believe, I can't.” Meaning that he could not believe the bible to be God's word, although he could bring forward no reason or ground for his opinions than what had been already proved fallacious. After some further attempts to convince him of his folly, his visitor left, but warned him of the dangerous nature of his disease, which had carried off several, both young and old in that neighborhood.

About a week or ten days afterwards, the writer learned one morning that a woman had called between eleven and twelve o'clock the night before at a house where he was known, to enquire for him, saying that her husband was dying, and earnestly wished to

see him. She was told that he resided too far off to be sent for at that time of night, and was advised to go and get someone else. But some time after midnight, she came again, saying that her husband had insisted on her doing so, and after describing a terrible death-bed scene, she added—“*The death-rattle is in his throat, but he dare not die as he is.*”

“If that is the case,” was the reply “it is *too late*—too late to fetch any one to him, especially from such a distance”

As on each occasion of calling she had forgotten in her distress to say whence she came, while the house-keeper aroused from his bed in the dead of the night, forgot to enquire, some weeks passed away before the writer knew who it was that had sent such urgent messages. But, one day, wishing to learn how the infidel was, and whether he had yet seen the folly and wickedness of his *pretended* disbelief of the authenticity of the scriptures, he called at his house. On knocking at the door, it was opened by a woman *in a widow's cap*, whom at a glance the writer knew as the wife of the infidel. He was dead! It was he that in his dying agony had sent for the writer, because in his inmost soul he knew the bible to be God's holy word, and vainly hoped that something could be done or said that would save him from “the judgment to come,” just as the poor benighted Romanist sends for the priest to administer “extreme unction” in his last moments. And now the true ground of his infidelity came out. The poor widow had a sad tale to tell of long years of cruel neglect

from her husband, who, having taken up with another woman, adopted infidel views by way of quieting conscience, and persuading himself that it was *not* true that "It is appointed unto men once to die, and AFTER DEATH THE JUDGMENT." And so long as any chance of hope remained of being able still to go on in his iniquity, he persisted in clinging to, and asserting, what after all he felt in his own soul to be false. But when all hope of life was past, when death and judgment stared him in the face, when the last moment was come, and he was *sure* he could not live, when "the death-rattle was in his throat," and not before, he let go the wretched prop with which he had sustained himself in evil, and *wanted to be saved in his sins.*

But the unhappy man had gone too far. He had been convinced again and again of the authenticity of scripture, had wilfully belied his own convictions, had persisted in that which even natural conscience told him was sin, had mocked God, and despised his offers of mercy until it was *too late.*

Reader, have you accepted the gracious message declared by the Holy Ghost, sent down from a risen and glorified Christ—"Be it known unto you * * * that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things?" Or are you still neglecting and deferring the subject on various pretences to some future time, that you may still "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?" Oh, be persuaded before it is *too late!* Let that midnight message

sink into your ears, and touch your heart with a sense of the terrible consequences of procrastination from *any* cause! "The death-rattle is in his throat, but he *dare* not die as he is."

I WAS thinking the other morning of the many far advanced in years, who were, doubtless, on the very brink of the grave, and who had lived all their long lives to sin and Satan, yet, if even now they own their lost condition before God, and believe in Christ, they will be saved. Oh how this thought magnified the God of all grace in my sight! Any but He would spurn them from Him, saying "You have served Satan all your days, you may continue doing so, now you are old and infirm." But our God could not act so. His heart of love is open to all who trust in the blood of Jesus. "Where sin abounded grace does much more abound." Yes, if one has lived sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety years, indeed all their lives far off from God, His grace can reach them and bring them nigh, washed whiter than snow in the precious blood of Christ.

Was ever love like this! ever grace so magnificent! All God's holiness, righteousness, justice, truth and majesty, vindicated in His thus acting.

Oh to know more of such a God—of the amazing depths of His loving heart: and of the death of Jesus which enables Him thus to act. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"JUST AS I AM."

ALL day long on the rocks, or the sands, with the basket of flowers shining in the bright sunshine, Jeanne lived a sort of bird's life, her rosy cheeks and bright eyes telling of energy and happiness. Sometimes with her elder sister, sometimes alone, sometimes with the little Marie, the youngest sister, but always after we had given her a book or two, finding us out wherever we went to enjoy the winter sunshine and the grand sea on that southern coast.

At last she began to come to the house every day, so I asked her and one or two others to come up and hear a few verses and sing some of the French hymns. Jeanne first appeared with a friend, and two baskets of flowers were put down in my room, and two expectant faces looked for something—they knew not what. So I had a word of prayer, and after repeated crossings they rose from their knees and said it was good. Then Jeanne brought all her sisters, and day by day they learnt the hymns. Jeanne's favourites were, "Tel que je suis," (Just as I am) and, "Tell me the old, old story." They used to go home, swinging their baskets and singing these at the top of their voices. They knew nothing of the scriptures. Their flowers came from Cannes, so when we read of Canaan, they thought that was Cannes. They knew that Christ died, but they knew nothing of the sinfulness of sin. They had an

idea that the saint Vierge (holy Virgin) was everything, that she knew and cared for them. But day by day Jeanne's pattering feet came up the stairs, day by day her eager face looked into mine. Sometimes we read a few verses together, sometimes we sang, sometimes we only had a chat. Sometimes she told me how she and her two sisters read the little testaments together at night that I had given them. A bad mother and father, these poor girls seemed to drink in the love, of which they knew so little. Jeanne was just fourteen, with no life before her but that of a flower-girl, a sort of tramp, gipsy life, though not so degraded in its poverty as in some of our towns.

But one day they were all forbidden to come any more either Sunday afternoons, or for any reading and singing. The others had taken alarm, and Jeanne came to me on her way every morning to the little chapel, to put flowers before the figure of the Virgin. One day she startled me by repeating the whole of "Tel que je suis," and two other hymns without the book, and a verse or two of scripture. I had not asked her to learn them, and she said, "We sing them together of an evening." I visited the mother and found she could not read, had a heart like stone, and was utterly bad and godless, but it was a pleasant little cottage, clean and comfortable, with bowls full of flowers about, and cupboards full of old china behind glass cases. She would not listen to any plan for giving Jeanne a better occupation in life, no chance for poor Jeanne to step out of

the vagrant ways, and start for something better, "They were hers, and she would do as she liked with them," she said. But Jeanne had some of the Basque in her, and the Spanish blood shewed itself in the action, ways, and the strength of energy in her character. Nothing kept her from me. Sometimes with a full basket, sometimes with an empty one, sometimes I would buy a few flowers, sometimes she would give me some, but always books taken, and a talk of Christ looked for. When I left I promised to send her a book by post, and this was hailed with great joy. Have you ever seen a thirsty plant drink up the rain, and the water sinking into the hard ground. The young heart saw beauty in Jesus—Dear friends, have you seen it, she saw *love*, she saw *pardon*, she saw *friendship*, she saw *help*, she saw *deliverance*. I do not mean that she appreciated all His work, or fully understood Him, she did not become a christian that one could vaunt in a missionary report—but the heart in its heathen darkness saw glimpses of Him, and she *longed after Him* with the longing of a young strong soul.

I knew no more, but a book was sent her every month—and then I heard Jeanne's mother had been put in prison, and poor Jeanne had died of a broken heart. The trouble told upon her, and her heart became affected, and God took her out of the atmosphere of sin, and suffering, to Himself.

The little "Irregular" as I called her had gone. Do you think He would stoop to seek a poor flower-child of fourteen? Do you think *He* would find

anything precious from that poor ignorant heart's little conception of *Him*. Try Him, dear readers— Prove Him, dear hearts, see if He will not treasure every thought you bestow upon Him. Find out if He will not welcome you. Test if He has a Father's heart. The busy world turns on its wheels; money, and fashion, and society fill up the moments. All the big people of the earth to be thought of, and courted. All means, lawful or unlawful, to be used to climb the ladder that self holds up; until man has reached some pinnacle, and touched some poor goal that is not worthy any race, much less the feverish one that has been run. But the Lord stoops to ask, and seeking delight in the untutored love of a child, whose only home was a cottage, and whose only position was that of a poor tramping flower girl. He thirsts for your heart. He longs for your love. Can such grace be refused?

UNSAVED reader, what are you waiting for? Why do you delay? Shall I tell you? You are waiting for damnation! You are delaying till the storm of eternal judgment overtakes you. Now the mighty hand of God has stayed the tide of resistless judgment, swept it back while the sweet words of His grace are told out, while men are persuaded to accept salvation! Salvation is pressed on you, and there is nothing kept back from you but judgment!

CONDEMNATION OR SALVATION.

THERE is no such thing as an open question in the matter of either condemnation or salvation ; God has made an end of all such. If the side of condemnation be taken up, God proclaims man to be a guilty, ruined lost sinner ; no man could deliver his fellow, for all were alike, not only ungodly, but without strength. On the side of condemnation, therefore, there is no open question ; the unbeliever is condemned—condemned already. (John iii. 18)

But we find that, when such was the state of things—such the case of man—the Son of God Himself became a man—came down into this world, where God had been dishonoured by sin ; came with the purpose in His heart of glorifying God with regard to this very question of sin, and saving poor sinners, and that by offering an atonement to God. In His life here below He perfectly glorified God, but in and by death alone could atonement be accomplished, could God be fully glorified as to sin. To death, the death of the cross, the Lord Jesus went in His grace. There He offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice to God, shedding His blood. There He bore the sins of every soul, that, through grace believes on Him. But in so doing He died. But God on the third day raised from the dead the Lord Jesus, thereby signifying His perfect acceptance, and satisfaction, and glory in the work which Christ had accomplished in death.