

The Sower

A GOSPEL MAGAZINE.

VOL. X.

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In the morning sow thy seed,
And in the evening withhold not thy hand :
For thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either
this or that
Or whether they both shall be alike good.

Eccl. xi. 6.

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THE SOWER.

LOVELY ART THOU TO ME.

JESUS, my Lord, who died on the cross,
Lovely art thou to me;
Silver and gold,—I count them but dross;
Nought can compare with thee.

What are earth's joys, so fleeting and vain,
Jesus, my Lord, to me!
Sweeter by far is the heavenly gain;
Lovely art thou to me.

Storms may assail, my bark may be tossed,
Voyaging o'er life's sea;
Thou, Lord, art near; I cannot be lost;
Refuge art thou to me.

Jesus, my Lord, 'twas sin's heavy load,
The curse, that was borne by thee;
Stroke upon stroke, as God's wrath awoke,
Fell upon thee for me.

Jesus, my Lord, what oceans of love
Stirred in thy heart for me!
Jesus, my Lord, in glory above,
Lovely art thou to me.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

I WAS at Rome with a friend. We visited together the Sistine chapel, and together we remained in admiration before the grand fresco of the last judgment by Michael Angelo. We were astonished at the power with which the painter had been able to represent the dead rising and taking their places before the tribunal of Christ, and from that, as a result of the judgment passed upon them, entering into glory or descending into hell.

Presently in the midst of this immense painting one person impressed us particularly. It was that of a man, seated, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands, and his fingers seemed to sink into his head. One of his eyes was concealed by his hand, and from the other he regarded us with a look, fixed, gloomy, glassy and desperate. We appeared to see this man descending! slowly sinking into the abyss; he seemed to be saying to himself: IT IS ALL OVER FOREVER! And to be saying to us: DO NOT AS I HAVE DONE! Long time we continued looking at this without saying a word. My companion at length broke the silence by saying:

"We too shall have to pass through that, and it is not a very pleasant reflection." "I do not believe," he continued, "that it is possible to be sure of being saved while in the world."

I remained silent. Although I had not thought

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upon such things for so long a time as my companion had, still I felt how important it was to have the assurance of salvation in this life. The period of youthful dreams had passed. The romance of youth had been succeeded by the realities of life; its struggles; its battles; its temptations; its falls and its remorse. My heart was surfeited and withered, and the passing years had only served to aggravate the unhappy state of my troubled conscience.

What could be done? Was it necessary to bear till the end of life this crushing burden; to drag forever this heavy ball and chain; and what would the end be? Death—the bar of God—the judgment—the condemnation, such as that of the man in the painting whose look of desperation had pierced me through and through. I remembered the scriptures which said: “But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable and murderers, and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev. xxi: 8).

It seemed to me that I had been born for a better fate than that. I needed pardon of my sins, but I knew not how to get it. A deliverance was necessary, but who could point out the way? Was it at all possible? And where could it be found?

We lingered a little longer before the picture and then we separated.

Years have passed since; the painting is still in its place; the unhappy condemned fixes still the same look upon every visitor to the Sistine chapel, and seems to say: "DO NOT AS I HAVE DONE!" But since then I have learned this, that there is here on earth the possibility of pardon, of absolute forgiveness. I have raised my eyes to Him who gave Himself as a Saviour to the world; I have seen Him dying on the cross, and I have understood that it was for me. I have believed it and have realised in myself something of the hitherto unknown. Those sins which bore so heavily upon me have been lifted off; that troubled conscience is now at peace, I am saved. I have understood the value of these words: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i: 15). "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed" (Is. liii: 5). For the one who has trusted in Christ, his salvation is a settled fact, he has an assurance of it that no one is able to take away because that assurance is God given. "THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS" (Rom. viii: 1).

JOHAN iii: 16-17.—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

"For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

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GOD'S DEALINGS WITH JOB.

HOW wonderful that our God should consider the *exercises* of a soul; that He should in pains-taking love meet all the questionings, all the hard problems, and at last satisfy that soul, and reveal Himself to it.

We find the book of Job occupied with this, forty-two chapters being taken up with the history of one man, in order that every one may know that God has a like interest in their history. We see that blessing is received through the conscience being exercised. Man acquired a conscience at the fall—the knowledge of good and evil—he partook of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Job had to learn, as each one of us has to learn, that there is no good, and only evil in our heart. The question was raised, “How should man be *just* before God” (chap. ix: 2). There was no rest until this question was answered. We find that Job justified himself, and found fault with God. In chapter x, Job says, “I will say unto God, Do not condemn me Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress? that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? Thou knowest that I am not wicked.” What patience is manifested towards Job!

Again the question comes into his soul: “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one” (chap. xiv: 4.)

It is remarkable that two of Job's friends take up the question. "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? (chap. xv: 14). And again in chapter xxv: 4, and yet they have no answer for their own souls nor for Job. In chapter xxxii, Elihu comes upon the scene, whose name signifies, "Whose God is He." His wrath was kindled against Job, "because he justified himself rather than God." Also against his three friends, "because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job." Blessed be God there is an answer, it is given in chapter xxxiii. "Behold I am according to thy wish in *God's stead* . . . I will answer thee, that *God is greater than man.*" "If there be a messenger with Him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness: then He is gracious unto him, and saith, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: *I have found a Ransom.*" His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: he shall pray unto God, and He will be favorable unto him: and he shall see His face with joy; *for* He will render unto man his righteousness. He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." What a blessed answer! A messenger has come

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from God, to justify the sinner that condemns himself. "If any say I have sinned," here is the turning point; the Interpreter has brought God and man together, for God has found a *Ransom*. "For there is one God, and one Mediator, between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii; 5-6). "That He (God) might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." The problem is solved: Man can be just before God. The ransom has been found. God renders unto man His righteousness. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

In Luke xv we read of one who has come to the end of himself. "Father, I have sinned." But Oh! the haste of love and grace. "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him."

"He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew *no sin*; that we might be made the *righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor. v: 21). No wonder we read, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv: 10). From the moment this answer was made known to Job, he makes no more attempts to justify himself. "The Lord answered Job and said: Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it. Then Job answered the Lord and said: behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth . . . I have heard

of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Blessed and full confession. "I am vile, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job owned he deserved death. "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. iii: 19).

What a contrast is Job's confession to his estimate of himself in chap. xxxiii: 9.

"I am clean without transgression; neither is there iniquity in me." "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live" (chap. xxvii: 5.)

Job's longing desire was fulfilled. "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay His hand upon us both" (chap. ix: 33).

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (chap. xix: 25).

It is very precious to find that when Job ceased to justify himself, God justified him. And he said to his three friends, "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (chap. xlii). "The Lord also accepted Job." "Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

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CAN YOU UNDO ?

A MAN, still young, but upon whom diseases, the result of a wicked life, had marked their imprint of shame, was taken to a hospital. The chaplain, making his rounds, came where he was and noticed his pinched face, a picture of despair.

"What can I do for you, my friend?" said he, taking his hand.

"Ah! sir," said the sick man, "it is not a question of doing, but of undoing. Oh! if I could but undo what I have done.

* * * * *

A similar conversation with another had occurred some years before this, during the American civil war. It was on the field of battle, the evening of a sanguinary engagement, when a lady who had devoted herself to the care of the wounded, entered a tent where many had been lain. Bending over one of these, she said: "Can I do anything for you?"

The wounded man maintained a gloomy silence, his eyes disclosing the agony he was suffering. At length he said in a hoarse voice:

"Do anything for me? Say, can you undo the past, the terrible past? Tell me, can you undo it?"

And at the same time his face assumed an ex-

pression of grief and remorse impossible to describe.

Then notwithstanding the blood which flowed from his mouth, coming from internal wounds, he related his history.

"And now," said he, "can you *undo*, UNDO, UNDO the past.

* * * * *

How to undo, is the cry of multitudes of souls, rent and tormented with remorse.

"My past, my past, Oh! deliver me from my past?"

How many people deliberately destroy their strength, their health, their soul; seeming to pursue systematically a course, the end of which is their destruction! How many begin life under the most favorable and promising circumstances, and in a little time are miserable wrecks. How many people hate every thing good which they see in others, and are only satisfied when they fall down to their own level? How many people have a dark blot on their lives, some irreparable act they have committed in a moment of folly or madness, which they would give the world to undo? Without God, man can only work the works of destruction, he is a murderer of others and of himself.

But man cannot sin with impunity; sooner or later, the law of God, in one form or another, asserts its demands.

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All these ruins and wrecks are witnesses against you, reader. They are all about you; in your own family; in your own heart! You have set your life to do them. Who will be able to *undo* them? Who can come in to repair and reconcile; to pour into the bruised and broken hearts the balm of consolation; to bring to the bed of death the word of life; to change hatred into love, tears to joy, condemnation to pardon? Will it be yourself or your companions in pleasure? No, traverse the entire world and you will not find one, but look above and you will see the One whom you have despised and scorned, Jesus Christ, of whom it is written that, "He taketh away the sin of the world" (Jno. ii : 9).

But in order to be pardoned, you must lay down your arms. You must own what you are, and you must accept God's judgment upon you. Then the Saviour who has been delivered for your offences, and who upon the cross has redeemed all who believe in Him, who came "to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jno. iii : 8), takes in His arms His poor creature, all bruised and soiled, but repentant, and says :

"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. ix : 2).

"I have blotted out as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins."

"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

IT'S FOR THEE.

THE commission of prison inspection for one of the United States, recommended the annual liberation of five prisoners as a reward for good conduct. The recommendation was acted upon, and it was decided that no intimation should be given to the prisoners as to who would be freed, merely that at the end of the year five would be released for good conduct if found deserving, whatsoever may have been their past history.

At the close of the year the prisoners were brought into the room where the commissioners were assembled, and the chief commissioner rising said: "*I have here letters of release for five of you.*" The silence which followed was profound, and anxiety was stamped on every face. It seemed as though their hearts had ceased to beat.

The commissioner then taking up a paper and opening it, said: "**ROBERT JOHNSON** *here is your pardon,*" and he held up the paper that all might see it. The silence thereafter was unbroken. "Are all the prisoners present?" asked one of the commissioners as he looked over the company. On receiving a reply in the affirmative, he repeated: "**ROBERT JOHNSON!** *You are free, here is your pardon written and signed by the governor himself.*" Still no response.

Imprisoned for nineteen years Johnson was known to all the prisoners, so that all eyes were fixed on him with astonishment, but he was

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thinking about himself and trying to discover what there had been in him to merit such favor, of which the commissioner had spoken. In vain the chaplain repeated to him: "*It is you ROBERT, whose name has been called.*" This third appeal had to reach his ears before the import of the words began to be apprehended, then rising slowly, and advancing with trembling he grasped the paper, examined it, returned to his place, then burying his face in his hands began sobbing.

When the governor of the prison gave the signal for the prisoners to file out, Robert took his place according to custom in the long sad line of convicts. "JOHNSON!" cried out the chaplain again, "*Go out, you are free.*" Then, and only then the poor man fully comprehended the good news of his deliverance which he had long given up hopes of. HE WAS FREE.

Is not this history an illustration of the way we receive the warnings and promises of God? How often, instead of applying these things to ourselves we apply them to others, to our friends and acquaintances and to all the world, apparently without even thinking that they concern ourselves! If Jesus came as a propitiation for all, let us not forget that we are of that number, and that to know there is a pardon for us there must be a personal response to the appeal. When God says: "There is none good, no not one" (Rom. iii: 10). Think; yes that is me! When

it is said: "Repent and be converted" (Acts. iii: 19). Think again: that is for me! When it says: "Christ died for all—by grace ye are saved—it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii: 4). Think again: it is for me! and accept the offered grace.

Let us remember that whatever our past may have been, the letter of pardon is there sealed with the precious blood of Christ. It is for us to believe that our sins are forgiven, and that we are free indeed.

PEOPLE talk strangely of going to heaven when they die; but what gratification could it afford a man whose enjoyments are of a sensuous or sensual nature—who has no pleasure but in worldly objects? You hope to go to heaven! I hope you will—but unless your heart is sanctified, what were heaven to you? A vacuum, an abhorrent vacuum. The day that took you there would end all enjoyment and throw you, a castaway, on a solitude more lonely than a desert island. Neither angels nor saints would seek your company, nor would you seek theirs. Unable to join in their hallowed employment, to sympathize with or even to understand their holy joys, you would feel more desolate in heaven than in the heart of a great city, amid crowds who spoke a language which you did not understand, aliens in dress and manners, in language, blood, and faith.

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THE DAY OF THE LORD COMETH AS
A THIEF IN THE NIGHT!

I WAS fast asleep in my bed in the barracks at W—— some twelve years ago; the latch was down, the light was out, and everything apparently quiet and secure. when all at once I was made sensible of a light suddenly going out, my door was open, and a sudden fear came over me. I lay still for a few moments, then rose, lit a match and my lamp with it, found the door wide open, went part of the way down stairs, and seeing no one, returned to my room, secured the door, and went to sleep again. In the morning the sergeant came up to my room with my desk in his hand, which had been found just inside the wall of the barracks; the thief in his haste had dropped it in making his escape. I found by this that a thief had actually been in my room; who might have murdered me if he liked; who had taken what he could and made off. The Lord in His mercy preserved me from hurt, and from having much stolen.

But, my reader, this is an illustration of the way the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return to this world. He is coming as a THIEF IN THE NIGHT. Men will be sleeping, thinking themselves secure, buying, selling, marrying, giving in marriage, when suddenly, as the lightning shines from the east to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

And now, my reader, are you ready for such a sudden appearing? Are you ready to meet your Lord? Or are you fast asleep in your sins? Are you fascinated like Eve with the old serpent's allurements, and occupied with some pretty, lovely thing of the earth, like botany, a flower, a dress, a pleasure, a dance, or any other object, and your eye turned away from God and the Lord Jesus Christ who is coming quickly. O man and woman with an immortal soul, God's offspring, God's creature, did God create you for this, to be taken up with the things of earth, and forget Himself and your everlasting interests. Drunkard, did thy Creator make thee for this—to abuse thy mind, heart, intellect, by filling thy belly with the burning liquid of whiskey, rum, brandy, etc. O sleeper, awake! the Lord, thy Lord cometh as a thief in the night. 'Meats for the belly and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them.'

The Lord is going to treat this rejecting world as it treated Him. It treated Him as a thief in the night. He is coming upon it in that character. The thief comes to steal, to kill and to destroy. O sinner, think of it. If you do not repent, the Lord is coming quickly, not to steal, but to take His own goods and property out of the hands of the usurper! and in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.