

THE SOWER.

“VANITY OF VANITIES!”

“NOTHING BUT BLANK.”

Lines in answer to a poetic lamentation in an album, that “All was a blank, nothing but blank.”

HAVE you found life a blank? What!
All nothing but blank,
I'm sorry my friend, at your fate:
But perhaps in your ear, if you're willing to hear,
The cause of your “blanks” I'll relate.

Suppose you should go, to the regions of snow,
To raise there the fruits of the sun,
In vain would you sow, not a seed there would
grow,
Nought but “blanks” when your labours were
done.

Suppose you should toil, to win harvests and spoil,
From Afric's hot deserts of sand;
Would you wonder, I trow, if the shares of your
plough
Were bootless, worn out on such land?

In the lottery of life, with its turmoil and strife,
After pleasure, and riches, and rank,
'Tis no wonder to find, that an earth-grov'ling mind
Has found every ticket a “blank.”

Let me ask you to look into Solomon's book.
 At the lesson he teaches so plain ;
 That though all else is blank, wisdom, riches,
 and rank,
 There are still richest prizes to gain.

For "the fear of the Lord," as revealed in His
 word,
 Is "beginning of wisdom" below ;
 When this you have tried, though all "blanks"
 beside,
 A prize beyond rubies you'll know.

I once groaned like you, while proving how true
 That all without God was a "blank,"
 Now I sing with delight, both by day and by
 night,
 Since these living waters I drank.

Oh, attend to His voice, and your heart shall
 rejoice,
 It will meet all your troubles so rife ;
 "Ye hungry ones, come ; at my table there's
 room,
 And partake of the banquet of life."

Then lift up your eyes, to a home in the skies,
 All else with corruption is rank ;
 And then you'll agree, my dear poet, with me,
 His favour's a prize, not a "blank."

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AN OLD MAN'S CONVERSION.

A RICH villager; respected in his locality, industrious, prudent, and wise in a worldly way, had never had an opportunity of hearing the gospel of the grace of God preached, or if he had ever heard it, he had closed his heart to the reception of it. He was not, however, an irreligious man or a declared infidel. No, he had, like the most of those who made up the population of his village, a traditional religion which permitted him to serve at the same time two different and opposed masters—God and Mammon. This religion, which at the bottom was after all no religion, left him in the most profound ignorance of his true moral state, and deprived him of the real knowledge of the Saviour God revealed in the scriptures. Of what value then had it been to him? Absolutely none except to conceal his real condition before God, like a brilliant coat of varnish over a worm-eaten piece of furniture. Thus his life passed up to the time when a painful illness arrested the routine of his daily labors.

This illness, from which he never recovered, did not at first keep him in the house but allowed him to be still occupied, though painfully, with the work of his fields, but his powers were failing, he felt that his course of life on the earth was drawing to a close, and this thought, added to the consciousness of the incurable character of his disease made him sad and thoughtful.

The end of the year was approaching, cold weather had come, and snow covered the ground. Nature,

which for a brief period had been in smiles, now assumed a sombre sadness, according well with the state of the man whose history we are recounting, and who now had become unable to leave his room, with nothing to divert his thoughts except an occasional visit from one of his neighbors.

In his isolation he now found himself face to face with the dark future so mysterious to a soul who is ignorant of divine life.

His wife, seeing with anxiety that the state of her husband's health was gradually growing worse, and knowing too that he was without hope for eternity, spoke seriously to him as well as she could of the Saviour in whom she had for some years believed. She also invited a young christian of the village, to come and see her husband, in order to speak to him about the salvation of his soul. He came willingly; and taking his bible, that powerful weapon by which God accomplishes His work of grace in the conscience and in the hearts of wandering sinners, he entered the room of the sick man and asked permission to read with him, which was thankfully accorded. He read from the gospel of Luke, the sixteenth chapter—19th to 31st verse.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously, every day * * * The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of

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his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said: Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things."

The sick man was very attentive; they were new things to him; he listened seriously and interestedly to this solemn portion of the word of God.

"You see," said the visitor, "that this rich man left the world as he had lived, that is to say without conversion and without repentance, in a word without God. And where did he fall? The word of God informs us: into torment, far from happiness, far from God and for *eternity*."

This word *eternity*, upon which man hardly puts his wandering thoughts for a moment, touched like a flash the conscience of the invalid. From that moment this word sounded unceasingly in his ears, and pursued him every where without intermission.

"Eternity, eternity, what wilt thou be for me?" he would say. "I am like the man in the parable; for I also have forgotten God during my life, have neglected the salvation of my soul, and have walked in the broad way. I am going, I know assuredly, to the same place with him, and for eternity!"

These solemn truths had the effect of deepening his distress still more, but this time it was a sorrow according to God which led to salvation. He remained for some time under this necessary exercise during which the young man continued to visit him, but there was another who assuredly never forgot him, it was He who had begun a good work in his soul. He would also finish it.

One day his friend read to him the following passage: "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying: If thou be Christ save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying: Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him: Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke xxiii, 39-43.)

Then the young man said to him: "You see that these two men entered into eternity, but in a manner how different. One of them had been made sensible of his state before God; his conscience justified the condemnation under which he found himself, he openly confessed that it was a righteous judgment, and he publicly rebuked his companion. There was with him repentance and conversion. Affirming before all, the perfect innocence of Jesus, he turned in faith to Him, acknowledging Him as Lord, and the One who should one day reign; 'remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.'" "

"What a marvellous work was wrought in the dying malefactor! He saw himself in divine light, and discovered also in Jesus Him to whom he could look and in whom he could confide. Grace had touched his heart to salvation. If the Lord was able to give the response which we have read, it was because that at that moment when condemned by the

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civil and religious authorities, by the Jews, and by the Roman governor, He accomplished the wonderful work of redemption. His holy soul was made an offering for sin. And if in His death He laid the foundation of the kingdom which was to be established, He also opened up the way to God for the vilest and most culpable sinner. His expiatory death is the only means of salvation for the thief on the cross, condemned for his crimes, as well as for the aged and pious Simon of whom the scriptures speak. It is the only name given unto men whereby we may be saved, for salvation is in no other."

This was an appropriate subject for the old man. He also saw himself justly condemned; on the point of entering eternity; and unsaved. What should he do? Ah, he should turn without delay to the same Saviour who received with open arms the dying thief. And that is just what he did. He trusted as a poor sinner, lost and guilty, to the Lord Jesus, and to His perfect work accomplished on the cross, and thus found peace and rest. He believed and was saved.

The winter drew to a close, as well as the days of the sick man, who had now become, according to scripture, "a new creature." Old things for him had passed away, and all things had become new. The poor sick one had found peace for his conscience, and rest for his heart, in the work and person of the Saviour whom he came to know truly for the first time.

This man, formerly so attached to the perishable things of the world, and almost wholly occupied with

the things of this present life, was now detached from them, having heavenly things in prospect, and as a present possession a new object for his heart in the person of the Lord Jesus in whom he had believed.

His faith was as simple as a child's; he believed what the word of God said, and proved the effects

But Satan, who had held this soul in darkness and in death for so many years, could not allow him to enjoy peaceably the new blessing which grace had given him. He used a person of influence to provoke doubts in the heart of this babe in Christ as to the salvation which he possessed; but happily they did not long continue; they disappeared as mist before the rays of the sun.

The spring opened, but another spring had opened before the happy old man; he had left this world to be with the Saviour, in His rest. His young friend had come to him for the last time to say good bye, and to read a few more verses from the precious word of God, which they had so often enjoyed together. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (Jno. xiv, 1-3.) Shortly after, the old man peaceably fell asleep in the arms of his Saviour, who had washed him from his sins in His precious blood. "Absent from the body," he was "present with the Lord."

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"A CHRISTIAN."

THE table d'hote was a lovely one. The President of the French had arrived that day escorted by the French fleet, and every body was discussing the great doings, the glory, and the pomp put forth to greet him. The President of all France had met with a royal reception. All the warships at Villefranche were gay with flags and all the soldiers were shewing forth their martial power and their gay trappings to do him honor. The guns were booming gloriously, and the whole place was alive with excitement and rejoicing. And now the people who sat at dinner were discussing his proud position and his grand reception. At the table sat a fair little English boy, only just over six years of age. He had been to see the great man and the brilliant greeting bestowed upon him, and he was very enthusiastic over it all. Suddenly one of the French gentlemen turned towards him and said, "And what are you going to be when you grow up"? would he aspire to be a president, or an admiral, or be satisfied to be simply an officer or captain of the army or navy? What effect had all the show had upon the little Englishman? The little fellow squared himself, and his fair face flushed a little as he said quickly and determinedly, "Oh! I! I! am going to be a christian." More glorious to the child was a humble follower of the Lord in glory, the One who framed the world and was king of heaven and

earth as well as Redeemer of all who trust Him—than all the tinsel and the show of nations in their strength and greatness. The army and navy of France was a fair sight, and the President, a great man, set up by the people, to rule a large, if not a great nation; but the child's heart had pierced beyond; his boyish faith had touched the greater thing. He had seen One all glorious, the other side of earth, with the marks of death and suffering still upon Him; and his little heart leapt to the certainty that there was nothing so great or grand on earth as to be a christian.

Dear Reader—Do you like the show and the glories of earth, for all feel a thrill I suppose at any exhibition of a nation's power and enthusiasm, but have you ever thought of the glories to be revealed in Him, the wondrous Son of God, highly exalted, and to whom every knee shall bow of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth.

This glorious One is offering you to be a christian To accept His royal gift—everlasting life—Himself. To take His place an exile here for a little space bearing His glorious message of sins forgiven, guilt blotted out, and all the riches of grace and glory your own until you see Him as He is, and there all His power and glory and honour as the glorified, exalted, crucified Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you.

“Enduring the grief and the shame,
And bearing our sin on the cross,
Oh! Who would not boast of His love,
And count the world's glory but loss?”

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AFTER DEATH, WHAT?

TO the merely *natural man*, who knows he is unpardoned—unsaved—death must be a fearful thing. If he thinks at all about it, and is intelligent and honest, the very thought of it must be dreadful. Death and judgment, the fruit of sin, are the two great objects of men's fears. And so they may be. Terrible indeed, to an immortal soul, must be the consequences and judgment. And how *humbling* too, is death to the natural man. He must succumb. The strong man must bow to it—the proud man must humble himself to it. The wise and the rich are alike unable to avoid it, or resist it. It is an implacable enemy that cannot be appeased or turned aside—that cannot be guarded against—that will not be sent away—that is relentless, rapacious, insatiable.

Can I prevail on my reader, if this be his, or her state, to give this subject a serious thought? And, oh, let it be now, just now. Delay not! Time is on the wing—thy days are flying fast—already they may be few. And what then? the eternal ages—an eternity of unmingled blessedness, or unutterable woe.

In the whole field of fallen human nature, there is nothing to be found more awful than death. For as in the forest, so in this field, "As the tree falls so it lies." How solemn—how eternally solemn! As death finds the soul, so will the judgment-seat; and so will a long, long, eternity. Beyond death there is no repentance. As the breath leaves the body, the state is unalterably fixed. This is man's last change—a

change which admits of no succeeding one forever. Oh, then, my dear reader, listen to the affectionate entreaties of one who loves thy soul, and would earnestly warn thee against neglecting its salvation! "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The whole material world, in the Saviour's estimation, is of less value than one human soul. And, it may be, that the well-being of thy precious soul has never cost thee a serious thought. The most ordinary things of this life or some ornament for thy person, may have cost thee more thought than thy soul's eternal destinies, or the suffering and death of Christ, by which alone it can be saved.

Do think, I pray thee, my fellow-sinner, on this all-important subject! At all costs yield to its pressing claims. If it should involve the breaking of many engagements as to this life, and the blasting of all thy prospects therein, care not; suffer not such considerations to detain thee on the world's enchanted ground, or hinder thy decision for Christ. Remember this--and this is plain--that he who sides not with Christ, sides with Satan, and must share with him the lake of fire. This is the second death. Oh, dreadful thought! What shall I say unto thee? How shall I plead with thee? Shall I fall down at thy feet and shed the beseeching tear? Shall I be as a fool in thy sight? Shall my loud and bitter cry be to thee as the noise of some fanatic--or of one who is righteous overmuch? Well, be it so, all these and more. I speak from feeling, not by rule. I am con-

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tent if only thou wilt bethink thyself, and flee at once to Jesus, who has paid the ransom price of the sinner's redemption. To see thee at last as a jewel in the Saviour's crown, or as a monument of grace on the plains of eternal glory, would be a rich compensation for being reckoned fool or madman, in this world. But, soberly, tears of blood, could I shed them, would not be too much to shed over a soul that refuses the provision God has made, for His own glory in our eternal happiness.

Jesus, God's blessed Son, "was made a little lower than the angels . . . that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. ii 9). Here all is plain. Scripture never exaggerates, if preachers do. What does this text teach us? This truth, plainly, that sin, unrepented of, brings the sinner to the place that the grace of God brought Christ. In grace and love, He took the sinner's place—the place of the curse—the forsaken place where it was not possible that the cup of wrath should pass from Him. Now we see, in the cross, where sin leads to—what sin deserves—and how God deals with it. Doubtless sin was measured and dealt with in the holy person of Jesus, in a way that can never be done even in the lake of fire. God's hatred of sin was *perfectly* expressed on the cross. One drop of that cup which He drained—one stroke of that judgment which He exhausted, would sink a world of rebellious sinners in the depths of woe. But there, alas, the cup will never be drained—the judgment never exhausted.

Truly may we not say—if such things were done in the green tree what must it be in the dry? If the true and living tree so felt the fires of holy justice, what must become of the dry and rotten tree? If He who had not a particle of sin in Himself, was thus dealt with, when sin was imputed to Him, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? What, my friend, would the rotten branch of thy good deeds avail thee, in the swellings of Jordan? One thing seems perfectly plain—he who rejects God's green-tree now, can have nothing to say at last, when God rejects the dry.

But, oh, the Lord grant that this may never be the case with thee, my reader, or with any soul who has ever read, or heard, that beautiful text, "Jesus was made a little lower than the angels . . . that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." What a revelation of the heart of God for us! "*By the grace of God.*" And what a blessed work by the Son! He tasted death that we might never taste it. O, believe it—rest in Jesus—trust all to His finished work! glory in the fact that the God of all grace loves thee—that He spared from His bosom, His well-beloved Son, that He might taste death for thee a sinner. And, now, can I hear thee saying, "Bless the Lord— He has tasted death for me a sinner. Now I believe it—the bitterness of death is past—had I a hundred hearts He should have them all."

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"WHO WILL WASH MY HEART."

A MOTHER who wished to impress upon the heart of her little girl, early in life, that sin was an impure thing, adopted the strange custom of making the child carefully wash her mouth every time she told a lie or said a naughty word. At the same time she told her that these bad things which came out of her mouth, came from her evil heart which needed to be purified.

One day when the child had again committed a fault, and her mouth had been washed, she remained a long time sorrowful and silent. At last, with tears in her eyes, she came to her mother, and said to her: "Mamma, you have made me wash my mouth, but who will wash my heart?" Her mother then told her, that the water with which she had washed her mouth could not indeed reach her heart, and could not cleanse it from evil, but that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. She added that her little girl must go to the Lord Jesus, who alone could help her, and who died to take away her sins, and that she must tell all to Him.

The little one did as her mother told her. She fell on her knees, and begged the Lord Jesus to wash away her sins, and to cleanse her heart.

She then arose, with the joy of knowing that the Lord had pardoned her. From that moment the child experienced a love for Jesus, which time but strengthened and made more real.

She knew she was one of the Good Shepherd's lambs. She could now tell him all that occupied her, and He kept her with His powerful arm. She had only to listen to His voice, to follow Him, and all went well.

Dear young reader, will you not do as she did?

“THE carnal mind (or mind of the flesh, *marg.*) is enmity against God.” Romans, viii., 7.

We see how true this is during the thirty-three years, Jesus, God's dear Son, walked this earth. All the love He manifested in going about doing good, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, raising the dead, etc., did not, could not, alter man's heart of hatred to him. Yea, the more his love flowed out, the greater the hatred manifested. Psalm cix. 4, 5. And on the other hand, all the hatred and enmity displayed by man to Jesus in seeking His life--trying to take hold of His words--watching Him to find occasion to accuse Him, etc., did not, could not alter that heart of love. Neither would give way; and so, good and evil, love and hatred, met at the cross. Man had his way of hatred in crucifying Jesus, God's beloved Son: God had His way of love in saving the sinner.

Dear reader, have you learnt *your* heart is enmity against God? Yet, notwithstanding this, God's heart is full of love to you. God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans v. 8.