

# The Sower

A GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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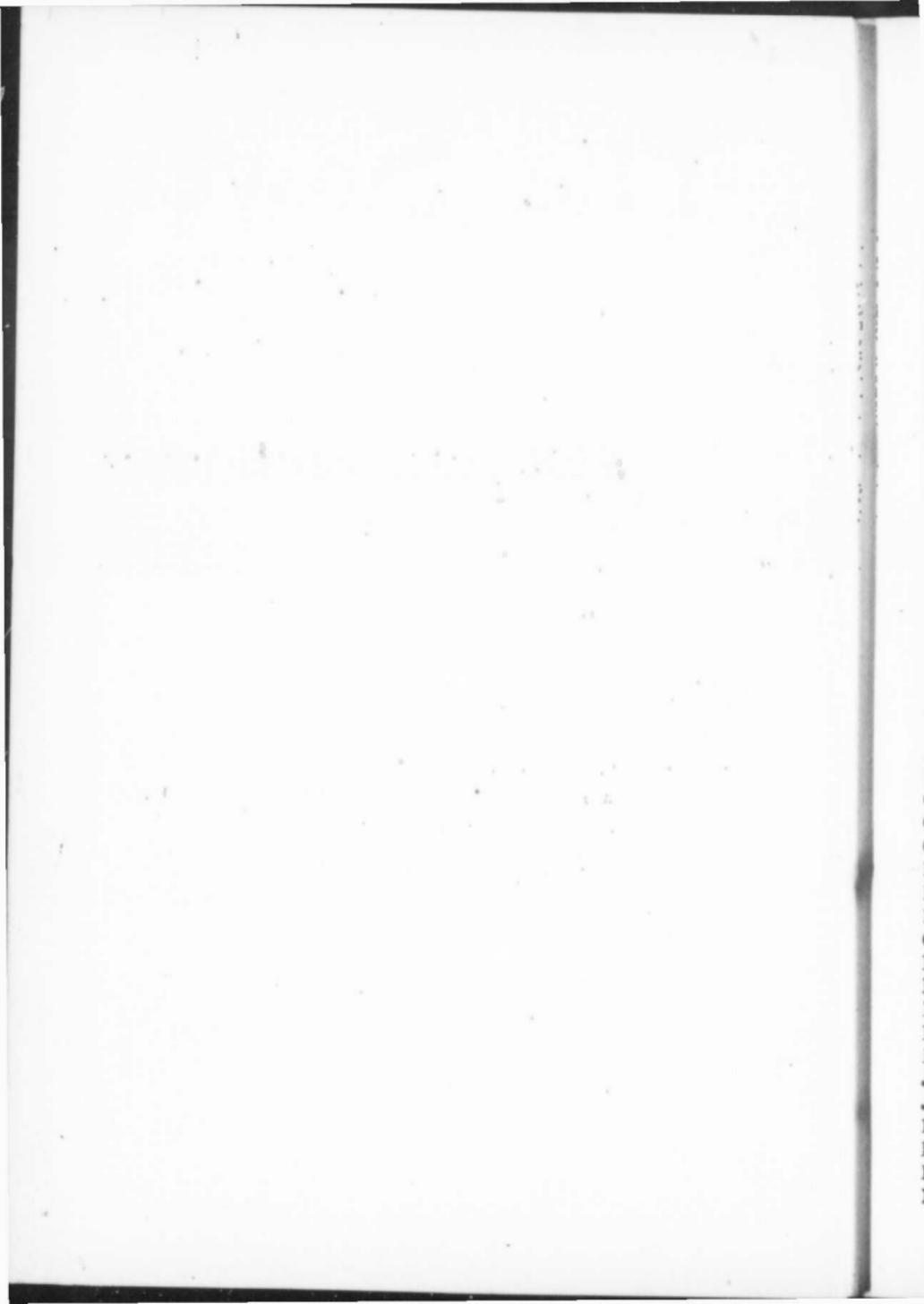
In the morning sow thy seed,  
And in the evening withhold not thy hand:  
For thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that  
Or whether they both shall be alike good.

Eccl. xi. 6.

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## CONTENTS.

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	Page.
At Nine O'clock in the Morning You Die.....	3
A Solemn Warning.....	28
A Shining Light.....	35
A Word to Professors.....	60
An Old Man's Conversion.....	115
A Christian.....	121
After Death, What?.....	123
A Little Girl's Testimony.....	131
A Song in a Hospital.....	139
A Heart Lost and Won (Poetry).....	161
A Dream.....	190
Beyond the Brightness of the Sun (Poetry).....	81
Condemned Already.....	77
Comfort in a Dark Hour.....	158
Condemnation or Salvation.....	176
Divine Love (Poetry).....	33
From Darknss to Light (Poetry).....	1
Forgiveness.....	146
Gold and Silver.....	188
History of a Soul.....	41
Have You Peace With God.....	134
How is Peace Obtained?.....	142
I Have a Want in my Heart (Poetry).....	49
I Cannot Repent.....	83
Jesus at the Well of Samaria (Poetry).....	129
Just as I am.....	172
Light and Love.....	18
Lord in the Trophies (Poetry).....	65
Leave all.....	153
Not yet.....	24

	Page
Napoleon I. ....	63
None Too Bad for Jesus.....	73
No Time to be Lost.....	93
Once a Child, Always a Child.....	56
Riches.....	79
Rest.....	97
Sin, Love, Faith (Poetry).....	17
Sin Pardoned by Jesus Christ.....	66
Supper Time (Poetry).....	145
The Return of the Prodigal.....	5
Therefore They Say unto God.....	32
The Blood of Jesus only.....	51
The Shepherd.....	55
The Way of Life.....	70
The Gospel of our Salvation.....	82
The Blind Woman of B.....	91
The Way of Cain and the Way of Abel.....	108
The Death Rattle.....	163
The Thirst of God.....	177
The Lost One Found.....	178
The Cross of Christ.....	192
Vanity of Vanities (Poetry).....	113
What God is Doing.....	99
Who Will Wash my Heart?.....	127
Why am I so Sad?.....	162
Your Sing.....	46
Yes, Lord Jesus, Come.....	62



.....	63
.....	73
.....	93
.....	56
.....	79
.....	97
.....	17
.....	66
.....	145
.....	5
.....	32
.....	51
.....	55
.....	70
.....	82
.....	91
.....	108
.....	162
.....	177
.....	178
.....	192
.....	113
.....	99
.....	127
.....	162
.....	46
.....	62

# THE SOWER.

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“FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.”

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I cannot say *I* love that name,  
 It has no charm for me,  
 No value in His blood I own,  
 No beauty in Him see.

Oft have I heard of cleansing blood,  
 Of sorrow, wounds, and death,  
 Of judgment from a holy God,  
 Borne in His dying breath.

Nothing of Jesus *thus I* know,  
 Nothing I know of grace,  
 His call to me finds no response,  
 No, not a single trace.

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“Come, let us reason,” God thus speaks  
 In words of tender love,  
 For sinners such as you I sent  
 My Son from heaven above.

I know thy sins, they are not hid  
 From my all searching eye,  
 To purge away thy guilty stains  
 I gave my Son to die.

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Lord! I confess with sorrow, shame,  
 In thought and word and deed,  
 I've sinned; am guilty, lost, undone,  
 Wilt thou to me take heed?

Drawn by thy love, to Thee I come,  
 Thy blood, thy name, my plea  
 Confess Thee Lord, with heart believe,  
 Thus cast myself on Thee.

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Darkness is past, the light now shines  
 On me, from Jesus' face,  
 Jesus is mine *and I am His*  
 I know, I taste God's grace.

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HOW is it that thousands lose their souls? They are kept by Satan in their ruin, in their degradation, by putting off the solemn consideration as to how they stand at this moment before God. They ignore their real condition. And let me entreat you, my readers, to take care that this may not be the case with your own hearts now. Take care, on the contrary, that you are applying the standard of God to your souls. It is an unspeaking criterion. It leaves you nothing to stand on as a man, for you are a *sinful* man; and you may boast of being a *man*, but who can boast of being a *sinner*? The truth that God solemnly presses is that sin is come into the world. "So He drove out the man"—drove him out of Paradise.

"AT NINE O'CLOCK TO-MORROW MORNING,  
YOU DIE!"

"I had a contract to build a section of a railway through an unsettled part of one of the Western States," said a man to me one day, in whose adventures I had more than a passing interest, "and in the remote part where my work lay, far from civilization, I had a gang of about three hundred men. Most of them, if not all, were of the desperate character which at that time largely prevailed in that country. There had been many instances of contractors defrauding their laborers by leaving without paying their wages, and all of us were looked upon with suspicion. However, my payments for wages had been regularly made and up to a certain time all went on without any special disturbance, until through the failure of the company which was building the road to send me money for payments, I could do nothing but promise and hope from day to day. At length the storm broke; an indignation meeting was held, and in the belief that I had the money, it was resolved that I should be hung unless payment were made. A deputation came to me with the decision, and said:

"If we do not get our pay, remember this, at nine o'clock to-morrow morning you die."

There was no question whatever but that the threat would be executed; there was no possible way of escape; and death by hanging was before me as the inevitable result of the hopeless situation.

The night passed, the morning dragged slowly by.

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I noticed that it was eight o'clock and that I had but one hour more to live, but some how when one has become accustomed to seeing human life lightly esteemed one's own death seems less alarming.

However, within an hour of the time, when my life was to have paid the forfeit, a man was seen coming on horse-back through the woods; he rode into the camp and handing me a package, alighted. It was the money for my pay roll, and I was safe, delivered almost at the last moment."

If this man had been hung, anyone can see that it would have been unjust; a foul murder, and if the incident had so terminated, the reader would doubtless have had some feeling of indignation against the murderers; but what of another murder of a far worse character than this would have been, and you perhaps identifying yourself with the murderers?—It is useless to say you would have been no party to the death of Christ, the question is, are you with those who killed Him?

Six people were hung for the murder of President Lincoln, some of whom were "accessory after the fact." They knew nothing about it before, but they became part of the company, and suffered in consequence.

He that is not with Me is against Me the Lord says: With whom are you?

It is a saying in the world: "You cannot hunt with the hounds, and run with the hare." This is a day for decision. That which is lukewarm and neither hot nor cold Christ will spue out of His mouth.

Believe in Him—fall into line—be ready to march.

## THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL.

MADAM W. lived with her son Charles in a small house in a quiet, pretty village, situated a short distance from a large town. At the time at which our narrative opens she was only thirty years of age, and had been a widow for about two years.

Charles was a fine child, full of life and spirits, but he had from an early age manifested stubbornness of character. His mother was deeply attached to him, he was the only visible tie between herself and the happy past—the days when she had lived with a husband whom she cherished—and she earnestly asked the Lord that her son might follow the path of uprightness, of faithfulness to God and of peace, in which his father had walked.

She therefore carefully watched over his moral development. But, with a tenderness very natural in a mother, she was sometimes too much inclined to admire the good qualities, which, in her son, were mixed with evil tendencies. She endeavoured, it is true, to overcome them, and to develop in him a moral energy that would enable him to resist the surrounding temptations, in which she saw his weakness lay, and which, if he yielded to them, would one day cause his ruin.

But above all, she placed her much loved child before God. Every day, or rather, every hour, she pleaded with the giver of all good, to work in the heart of her son, to lead him to Himself, and guide

him through his life; very often on her knees, and with tears, she interceded thus for him.

Charles did not follow the path which would have made him happy. In spite of all the warnings; of all the careful watching; the reprimands, and exhortations of his mother; as the years rolled on, he gave himself up more and more to a spirit of disobedience and self-will, and his conduct caused his mother increasing anxiety. He would never apply himself to study, so his education was very imperfect. On the other hand, he refused to take up manual labour, as not being in keeping with the way in which he had been brought up. As a child he had tried as much as possible to escape going to Sunday School; later, he refused to attend religious services for fear of the raillery of his bad companions. In vain his mother had pleaded with him to give up the company of mockers, he had refused. He trampled under foot the wishes of the one whom he ought to have cherished and respected. (Ps. i, 1., Prov. i, 8, 10).

Poor mother! What could she do but once more put this ungrateful son into God's hands, and wait upon Him with patience, till He should put an end to her sad trial? That is what she did. She had passed through much sorrow, but she had always been able to own that the grace of God never fails, and that none wait on Him in vain. The trial for her, however, had not yet reached its climax.

One day Charles rushed into the house, crying: "I've had enough of this life; I am going to sea."

His mother was greatly moved, grief filled her soul. She cast herself in tears upon her son's neck, pleading with him not to follow such a heart-breaking resolution. She knew too well into what dangers he would be led, not so much as to his body; as to his soul. She prayed for him. But he remained insensible to the tears and prayers of his mother. He despised her warnings, and declared he would not be preached to; that his resolution was taken, and nothing should make him renounce it. God's direct intervention, alone, could break that heart, but what a terrible thing to oblige God, so to speak, to act, and to expose himself to fall into the hands of the One who is a consuming fire. (Heb. x, 31. xii, 29.)

Yet, though Charles had only shown insensibility and obstinacy to the supplications and tears of his mother, his conscience had not been untouched, and he did not wish to face fresh solicitations on her part. In the middle of the night he went out secretly from his little bedroom, and prepared to leave the home of his childhood, and to leave his mother to her solitude. As he noiselessly descended the stairs he heard his mother's voice. An irresistible feeling forced him to stop and listen. "O, God," she said between her sobs, "wherever he goes, whatever he does, do Thou keep very near to him. May Thy love, in answer to my prayers, draw him at last to Thyself."

A supreme struggle between good and evil arose in Charles' breast. The evil gained the day; his pride would not allow him to renounce a resolution so

strongly affirmed, and he fled from his paternal home, leaving his mother there with her tears, forgetting that God would follow him, and that chastisement awaited him, for man reaps what he sows, and there is no peace for the wicked.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ten years thus passed away, the mother not ceasing to pray for her son, and he in the midst of an adventurous life, giving himself up to all the excesses in which he was carried away by his impetuous character, his unrestrained passions, and the society of corrupt men. His health could not stand this, and becoming seriously ill, he found himself at last obliged to go into a hospital at Alexandria. There, without anything to distract him, he had leisure to think about his past life, and to contemplate the position to which he had brought himself. The brilliant dreams of his childhood had not been realized; he had obtained nothing that he had hoped for in life, he had wasted his youth and energies in folly. He found himself face to face with bitter deception. During the years in which he had given himself up to all the errors of his own will he had sought to stifle the voice of conscience, and to dismiss from his mind the thought of his mother. He had not written her a single line, for fear of receiving a reprimand from her. She had been quite ignorant of his whereabouts. Besides, what could he have told her? Own his errors, confess his folly? He was too proud to do that. But now, in the solitude of a ward in a hospital, without a friend, feeling his strength dimin-

ishing as the disease took its course, the remembrances of his mother, and the tenderness with which she had surrounded him, came back to his heart with the recollection of the peaceful, happy days of his childhood. When, after being some time in the hospital, he saw he was not improving, but rather growing more feeble, and that the doctor, when seeing him, shook his head, with an air that showed he had small hope of recovery for him, he determined to try and go back to his paternal home. He asked and obtained leave to be sent home.

Such had been the just lot of Charles W. But God had not forgotten his mother's prayers. It is true that in thinking of returning to her, he had not yet truly repented, like the prodigal son in the gospel. (Luke xv.) He knew that his days were numbered, that he had only a few months, perhaps only a few weeks to live, and he trembled at the thought of dying alone and unknown in a hospital, in the midst of strangers, in a foreign land. Do you not feel, my friend, how poignant that would be, when one did not know God, and had no consolation, and could only say to one's self; "It is my fault if I am come to this!" It was not then the conviction of sin, the thought of the wrong he had committed against God, and against his mother, that urged Charles to return to her, and to seek shelter under the roof where she lived. It was more a natural feeling. But the Lord, unknown to him, used this feeling as the means of taking him back there, and thus answering his mother's prayers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charles embarked for Liverpool, where he arrived after some days. From there he got to the town, near to which his own village was situated, and although it was late, and he felt as if his strength was almost gone, he started to walk. The night was far advanced when he arrived at his mother's little home. He had not thought before of this moment. What awaited him? He stopped a moment. Ten years of dissipation; sin of all kinds; followed by sufferings which had almost reduced him to despair, had passed away, since, in the obscurity of midnight, he had fled from that peaceful retreat. Nothing seemed changed. He has returned, but oh, how different! All the recollection of his infancy and early youth rushed into his heart, as with tottering steps he walked up the little garden in front of the house. Arriving at the door, he did not need to ask himself if his mother was still there. A lamp was burning in the window, and as if prompted by habit, he raised the latch, pushed open the door, which was not otherwise fastened, and entered.

With what emotion he found himself in that humble room, modestly furnished, which he knew so well, and where everything was placed just as it used to be! There was no one there. The fire was nearly out, and the clock over the mantel-piece pointed to the hour of eleven. On the table, where the lamp was burning, he saw a plate, and bread and butter, and a cup of milk. That was the supper his mother had prepared for him every evening in the former happy days. How his heart was moved at such a

sight! He knew his mother was accustomed to retire early. He sat down in her armchair and thought for a moment, whether he should pass the night where he was, without saying anything, or should he call his mother. But the weakness, and excessive fatigue which he felt, overpowered him and he fell into an uneasy slumber, from which he suddenly awakened, crying out, "Mother, mother, forgive, oh! forgive me!"

A few moments after, a light step was heard on the stairs. He looked up, it was his mother. What a meeting! "Charles, my Charles! Blessed be God who has brought you back at last!" and, sobbing with joy, she fell into the open arms of her long lost son. What love is that of a mother? She had not one reproach for that son who had forgotten her so long. What infinitely greater love is found in the heart of God welcoming the sinner who comes to Him.

The heart of the wandering child was melted before such evidence of his mother's unchanged love. He softly caressed her hair as he used to long ago, but broken by the remembrance of the long years far from her, passed in sin, he could only say: "No, mother, do not thank God for my return, for I bring with me a curse."

"My son," replied the pious mother, "God can change the curse into a blessing. I render Him thanks with all my heart."

The mother's eyes rested upon the face of her child. One look sufficed to tell her the sorrowful truth. The imprint of death was on those features

formerly so brilliant with life and health. A groan escaped from her lips, the groan of a mother who sees one of her treasures on the point of being taken from her. But when the moment of anguish was passed, she reproached herself for having allowed a thought of ingratitude toward God. She had asked Him to bring back her son, and he had come! She fell upon her knees and poured out to God all that filled her own soul. Oh! what a prayer that was! Great tears ran down the pale and emaciated cheeks of the sailor while the fervent thanks addressed to God for his return fell from his mother's lips.

A long silence followed, then she said: "Charles, though I have never had any news from you, God put it in my heart to wait for your return. Every evening for the last ten years I have left the door only on the latch, and have placed on the table the lighted lamp and the little supper. Now, the promises of God are fulfilled. Blessed be His holy name for having thus answered the prayers of your poor mother."

For more than an hour the reunited mother and son related to each other the history, so different, of their two lives. The one had walked with God, in intimacy with her heavenly Father; confiding in Him in spite of all. The other had chosen his path far from God, in the satisfaction of his guilty inclination. But whatever he did, and wherever he went, as his mother had prayed the night he left, God had followed him and brought him back to his home. The young man at last went to rest in the little bed

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which he had occupied before abandoning the paternal home. His mother had kept everything ready to receive him as soon as her prayers should be granted.

He never left that bed. The disease had nearly reached the last stage before he arrived at his mother's. The morning following his return the doctor was called in. The only consolation that he could give was that the sick man had a few months to live; he did not see any immediate danger. The mother, full of anxiety for the eternal salvation of her well beloved child, turned to God, and in an ardent prayer, pleaded with Him to intervene. And there, at the moment while she was praying, God was sending the answer.

\* \* \* \* \*

The doctor, J., who had visited Charles, was a pious man. His life had been entirely devoted to the practice of his profession and to the service of God. After a tiring day he returned home late, and in the evening, was resting for a while in his surgery. His thoughts went back to the different patients he had visited, and particularly to the young sailor. He knew that he had lived a disorderly and sinful life, and that the days that were left him to repent were numbered. Then it seemed as if God spoke to him. In the silence he seemed to hear a voice saying to him: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." He could thank God that he had had that happy experience, but on asking

himself why those words were presented to him just at that moment, he said to himself: "It is the message that God wants that poor sick young man to hear." That thought took possession of his mind, and he understood that God was calling him to carry to Charles W. the precious message of peace.

The widow's house was quite a distance from his own; it was late, and the snow was falling heavily. The doctor said to himself: "The case is not pressing; the young man has at least a month to live what need is there to go at so late an hour and in such bad weather?" And he tried to rest. But the divine words presented themselves again to him with fresh force, and, getting up, full of faith and hope, he went out to go and tell the prodigal son the message from God.

Arriving at the house, he found the mother watching by the bedside of her son, who, however, was not apparently worse.

She left the room, and as soon as they were alone, the doctor said: "Charles W., God has sent me with a message to you."

The patient did not answer a word.

"I felt myself obliged to bring you this night a message from God. I could not rest until I had done it."

Still no answer.

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," said the doctor. "That is the message from God to you."

The christian doctor had fulfilled the mission with which God had charged him. He put again into His hands the message, and the one to whom it was addressed, and retired.

When Mrs. W. entered the room again, she found her son with his head leaning on his hands as though deep in thought. After a long silence, "Mother," he said, "the doctor ought to have been a minister."

"He is a minister of God, my son, since he accomplishes His service. But what did he say to you, my child?"

"He told me he had brought me a message from God."

"And what was that message?"

"It was that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. Is it true mother?" added the invalid with emotion.

"Yes, my son, it is true, perfectly true, by God's grace. Repeat it after me." In a trembling voice, choked with sobs, Charles repeated: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." When suddenly he cried out: "Oh! blessed be God! blessed be God! There is pardon for my sins. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me . . . ."

He could say no more. A violent crisis followed, but the mother's prayers had been fully answered. Charles W., the wandering sinner, the son who had followed his own will in the ways of sin, was by the marvellous grace of God cleansed from all sin, washed in the blood of Christ.

If these lines meet the eyes of a sinner who sees with sorrow and horror his life of sin, who doubts whether he can be pardoned, may he receive this blessed message: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin."

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**O**H! unconverted, thoughtless, careless, reader—should this paper fall into the hands of such—hear the warning voice! Flee for thy life! Tarry not, we entreat thee! Delay is madness. Every moment is precious. You know not the hour in which you may be cut down, and consigned to that place in which a single ray of hope, not even the faintest glimmer can ever visit you—the place of eternal night, eternal woe, eternal torment—the place of a deathless worm and an unquenchable flame. O! friend, do let us entreat thee in these few lines, to come now, just as thou art, to Jesus, who stands with open arms and loving heart, ready to receive thee, to shelter, to save, and to bless, according to all the love of His heart, and the perfect efficacy of His name and His sacrifice. May God the eternal Spirit, by His own resistless energy, lead thee, just now, to come! "Come unto me," says the loving Lord and Saviour, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Precious words! May they fall with divine power upon many a weary heart!

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