

# THE SOWER.

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## A GOSPEL HYMN.

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Tune—"It passeth knowledge."

**G**OD'S "great salvation" is that Jesus came  
To make Him known, reveal the Father's  
name,

'Twas thus in love supreme God gave His Son,  
That sinners might from sin and death be won,  
And children be.

"Hear and your soul shall live," "Why will ye die?"  
'Tis God who speaks, He waits to bring you nigh;  
Christ's blood upon the mercy-seat now see,  
Haste for thy life! from coming judgment flee;  
Come as you are!

None but the Saviour-God can make you whole,  
Nought but the blood of Christ can cleanse thy soul;  
Your fear of death and judgment then will cease,  
Your soul be filled instead, with blood-bought peace,  
If you believe.

Dost thou believe on Christ the Son of God?  
Yes; He for me the path of judgment trod.  
When nailed to Calvary's cross my sins he bore;  
I am a child of God for evermore,  
Through faith in Him.

Jesus my Shepherd—"Good," "the Chief," "the  
Great,"

When wilt Thou come again? For Thee I wait,  
Let me behold Thy face in glory bright,  
And hope be o'er, my faith be changed to sight,  
Lord Jesus, come!

## REST.

ONE dark night, some years ago, a young woman passed quickly along the streets of a great city. She directed her steps toward a river which flowed through it. Having reached one of the bridges which spanned the river, she continued her course until she had reached the middle, and there paused. Then leaning over the parapet of the bridge she looked down at the dark waters which flowed underneath and said: "There I shall find rest—there is none for me elsewhere."

Poor woman! It was quite true that she had not been able anywhere to find rest. Alas! to seek rest, and not to find it, is the history of many souls; but how and where had she sought it?

Formerly, as a young girl, she had not known the want of anything at home; no special trial had ever reached her; and although she had no cause for sorrow, she was never happy, for she had never found that which satisfied her, or could give her rest of heart and soul. Thoughtless and indifferent, she passed her life, thinking if she had such and such a thing, which she did not possess, she would be happy. If only she were married, and had a house of her own, and could do as she pleased, she would have she said, some chance for happiness. So, when a young man of whom she knew but little, asked her in marriage, she readily accepted him, and without consulting her parents, who, when they heard of the engagement absolutely refused their consent.

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Lucy's father was a builder and contractor; an honest and respectable man who had brought up his children with care, at least in so far as it affected this world. He had never imagined that a daughter of his would marry a working mason, so much beneath her in education and manners, and whose whole course of life was so different from what she had been accustomed to in her father's house. But Lucy was determined to follow her own will, and despite of all that her father and mother could say to her, she took John H. for her husband. Her parents then declared that they would have nothing more to do with her; adding, that she would repent, but too late, the fatal step she had taken.

Lucy did not think that these words would so soon prove to be true. A month had hardly passed since their marriage when John returned one night from his work quite drunk. Lucy had never at her father's seen any one in such a state. One may imagine how great was her disgust, and how deeply she was wounded. She told her husband, and she felt it too, that she could never be to him as before. But what good was that? John was angry, and became so rude and disagreeable towards her, that at length she found her position altogether insupportable. In this state of things John's home had no longer any attraction for him, he gave himself up still more to drink, so much so, that the home became for Lucy a place of continual misery and suffering. What aggravated her painful situation, was, that she had not a single friend, not a soul from whom she could expect a word of

consolation. Separated as she was from all her family, her parents were the last to whom she could speak of her troubles, they would have said: "It is your own doing, we warned you against it"; and her proud heart shrank from the thought of having to acknowledge that they were right.

One can thus understand how it was that on this dark night in winter, Lucy, in desperation, was on the bridge, cherishing the senseless idea, that she would find rest at the bottom of the river. Did she not know that she had a soul? No doubt if any one had asked her the question, she would have responded in the affirmative; but how many there are to whom it might be said that they have a soul, and it would be like saying to them that there is an Emperor of China, and they would think about as much of one as of the other.

Lucy had never learned to think of her immortal soul; she only saw herself lying dead and insensible under the water, regardless of anything more, and consequently without anxiety. All she wanted, was to go at once to the bottom. Suddenly the thought came to her, that a part of her clothing was made of stuff that would prevent her sinking. To get rid of it was easy, all she had to do was to untie a string. She gave a hurried look from side to side; she was alone on the bridge; she had never been taught to think of Him who is everywhere present, and who sees all things, however profound the darkness may be, but He thought of her. How often in the smallest circumstances we can see His tender watchful

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care over us, not waiting for us to love Him, or to turn towards Him! It is He, who in His love, first comes to us. To untie a string was in itself an insignificant circumstance, but on that depended the eternal future of Lucy's soul.

In her haste and agitation, she had tied a knot which she had a difficulty in untying; and while occupied with it, she had not noticed two women who were passing on the other side of the bridge. They stopped a moment, and as the light of a gas jet fell upon the agitated countenance of Lucy, one said in a low voice to her companion: "This young woman has some evil purpose in her mind; I will speak to her, while you go and find a policeman who can have an eye on her."

"Are you in want of a pin?" she asked in a loud voice as she approached Lucy, "I will see if I have one."

Lucy suspected that her design had been discovered, and was certain of it, when she saw the other woman coming, followed by a policeman. She resolved to return home, and come back the following night to put her fatal project into execution. She fled hurriedly, knowing that she was followed by the policeman, but just as she arrived at the door of her house, she met her husband. She had left a letter telling him that when he would read it, she would be at the bottom of the river, and she had quite forgotten having written it. She was therefore taken unawares, when her husband shut her up in a room, declaring that she should not go out without some one keeping a watch over her.

The poor woman fell very ill, more unhappy than ever; the want of air and exercise, and especially her heart sorrow, wasted her away, little by little, and would have very soon ended her miserable existence.

Rest! Ah! it seemed to her now very far off. She saw before her only a desolate and hopeless life. The doctor whom they had had to consult, told the husband that a change of air was necessary, and that she must remain out doors as much as possible. John therefore took lodgings for her in the country, and for a person to watch over her.

Lucy had only been there a few days when one evening on returning from a walk, she saw the door of a large house wide open, where a gentleman and his family lived. A great many people, apparently of the poorest class of society, were entering the house, each with a book in their hands. Lucy stopped to look at them, wondering what they were doing there. At the same time, a woman who noticed her, said to her: "There is a preaching here once a week, every one is invited to come freely, will you not come in? It is the gentleman who owns the house who is to preach to-night."

Lucy was satisfied to find anything new for her, for she had never before attended a meeting of this kind. She followed her new acquaintance into the great hall of the house and sat down. The preacher was at the farther end of the hall, and had just finished a prayer. The first words which Lucy heard were those of this passage: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you

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rest," precious words which had been uttered by the Saviour. "Rest!" This word struck Lucy as though it had come direct from God. She was arrested by the thought, now for the first time presented to her mind, that God knew what she had need of, and that He Himself had spoken to her heart.

Would to God that all those to whom the gospel is announced would listen with as intense an interest as Lucy did. Never before had God been a reality to her soul, or Christ been more than a name. Could it be that He was a real person, a living person, who called her, and who offered her what she had so long sought, that which seemed as wonderful as it was unknown.

All that was true, all was for her, and it had never before been brought to her mind! Truly it was a new world into which she had entered. It was not heaven in the future more or less removed, but it was for her now already this marvellous passage from death to life, of which the word of God spoke, when it said: "If any man is in Christ, it is a new creation; old things have passed away, and all things have become new, and all things are of God" (2 Cor. v. 17-18).

That night Lucy met Christ as really as did the blind man at the gates of Jericho, or the widow of Nain from whom the last ray of hope in the world had disappeared, and who, from the depths of the profound darkness of her affliction, heard these words: "Weep not!" We readily accept the fact that happiness depends upon our surroundings, but if this is so,

how can the fact be explained, that from that night, or from the first time she heard the word of life, Lucy was really and profoundly happy? Not a single circumstance, as to this world had been changed for her; to the eyes of all, things were just as they had always been; but now, Lucy had eyes to see. She had seen Him who gives eternal life and eternal joy, for He himself says: "Whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on Him hath everlasting life."

This ineffable portion is then to us from the present moment, and as to the future, in directing our thoughts to wait for His coming from heaven, He says: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you."

Lucy possessed this faith and this hope; she could return to her poor house, her heart filled with peace, having at last found rest. "You have no need any more to watch me," she said to her husband, "you need have no fear that I will seek rest at the bottom of the river. I have found rest in Him who is in the glory of heaven."

Dear reader, have you found for your heart the rest which does not depend upon circumstances? It only exists there, where Lucy at length found it, that is to say, in Christ, in the knowledge of the happiness of His inexpressible love. Earth born clouds cannot ascend to His throne, they could not veil that glory. Whatever may be the difficulties or trials strewn in our path, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, all authority having been committed to Him in heaven and in earth. He is the

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Saviour. He is ever in the presence of God for His own. It is in Him that there is rest for us. He Himself has said: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a fountain of living water springing up unto eternal life."

"IF ANY MAN THIRST LET HIM COME UNTO ME AND DRINK."

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**M**AN'S state of ruin in this world, ruin by reason of sin and death, calls for the presence of God Himself among us, and that, too, in the character of conqueror over sin and death. And He whom God has sent is such an One. He is the Christ the Son of the living God, the living God in flesh, who came here for the very purpose of bringing life into this scene of death, destroying the works of the devil, and putting away sin. This is the One whom our condition demands.

Such is our ruin, that nothing less than this will do for us, and if we can, in our own thoughts, do with anything less than this, we shew that we have not yet discovered our real condition, our condition in the presence of God. All acceptance of Christ short of this is nothing. It is no acceptance of Him. He may be a Prophet, He may be a King, He may be a doer of wonders, but if this be all our apprehension of Him, our all is nothing. None but Jesus can save ruined sinners.

## A BED TOO SHORT AND A COVERING TOO NARROW.

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“For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.” Is. xxviii, 20.

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**A.** SURELY you will not say that I ought not to do the best I can?

*B.*—I would be very sorry to hinder you from doing well, but what do you mean by doing your best, and what profit do you expect to draw from it?

*A.*—Well, to please God and reach heaven at last. But you seem to want to throw cold water on all the efforts that one can make.

*B.*—That depends upon your particular point of view, but I assure you that I would be only too glad to see anyone really occupied with the question of their salvation; only, it seems to me, that you are trying to do what God for many long years has declared to be “in vain,” for “if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. ii. 21). A comparison will show you the purpose of the law. When a mason wishes to build a wall, he constructs it of stones, or bricks and mortar, but as his work advances he tries it often with his plumbline. Now, he does not build the wall with the plumbline, but with stones and mortar. The man would be senseless who would pretend to construct a wall of a plumbline, whilst he would make very poor work if he should construct one without it. As everyone

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knows, the mason uses this instrument to verify his work, to see if the wall is straight and plumb. That is what the law does with respect to man's works, it puts them to the proof. It was, so to speak, the plumbline, and God's level, to show the imperfections and the sin of man, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin," and "the law entered that the offence might abound" (Rom. iii. 20; v. 20).

*A.*—But if that is the case it follows that there must be something defective in the law.

*B.*—Most certainly not! "The law is good if a man use it lawfully" (1 Tim. i. 8); but the question must be seriously asked, for what purpose God has given it. Now the scriptures prove, in a way altogether conclusive, that God has not given the law to man in order that he may build upon it a righteousness for himself, but in order to show that he has no righteousness; that, on the contrary, he is unrighteous. Seeking to use the law as a means to obtain life and righteousness, leads only to the finding out that "the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." In the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle mentions three kinds of righteousness: "the righteousness of God," "the righteousness of the law," and what Paul calls, in speaking of Israel, "their own righteousness." He says of the Israelites that they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for they went about to establish their own righteousness and had not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.

Now remark that their own righteousness, that is to say the righteousness of man, is classed with the righteousness which comes from the law, and that the righteousness of God is called "the righteousness which is on the principle of faith."

*A.*—Admitted, but your reasoning leaves entirely aside the fact, that Jesus has kept the law for us, and that He has promised to help us if we seek His assistance.

*B.*—I do not speak of it, for the simple reason that the Lord has done no such thing, and has promised nothing of the kind. If He has done so, show me the passage of scripture that says it.

*A.*—I have always understood it in this way. If it is not so, what is meant by the expression, "the righteousness of Christ?"

*B.*—We do not find exactly this expression in scripture, nor either the fact, that He has fulfilled the law that it might be accounted or imputed to any one. He magnified the law and made it honorable, so that death had no claims upon Him. He, only, of all those who have trodden this earth, has kept the law, which, as He Himself has expressed it, is comprehended in these words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." The same chapter that I have quoted, says that Moses thus describes the righteousness which comes by the law: "The man which doeth those things shall live by them," that is to say, if a man is able to keep the law perfectly he will live as long as he keeps it. The

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conclusive proof that this man has not yet appeared is, that all die, is it not? It is a sorrowful thing to see zeal misdirected, and the more sincere and zealous you are, the more I am desirous in your interest that it may not be a complete loss, but that you may be able to see that your thought of keeping the law, and of doing your best, is only a futile repetition of what has been attempted many times and declared to be in vain. I would like you to understand that in this way you lose all that is worth possessing, and that at the bottom you are trusting in yourself instead of trusting in Christ. In wishing to be under the law, you conceal from yourself your true state before God, not understanding that He has given the law in order that you may clearly know your state. Let me ask you a question: After your efforts for so many years to do your best to keep the law, have you the forgiveness of your sins, and peace with God? Have your efforts resulted in procuring for you a purified conscience, and is your heart without anxiety at the thought of meeting God?

A.—To be candid, I cannot say it?

B.—No, you cannot say it, and it is simply because none of these things can be obtained in this manner. They are the result of the *death* of Christ. They belong to each of those who believe in Him, and are righteously given by God, who is righteous in justifying him who has faith in Jesus. Your efforts are the clearest proof that you have not submitted to the righteousness of God. The word to submit is not difficult to understand. To submit myself to another

is the very opposite of seeking to come to an end of a thing by my own efforts. It is to accept simply what God has done for me. The righteousness of God is called: "The righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ," in contrast with what one seeks to obtain by their works. "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Gal. ii. 16).

*A.*—But what I cannot see is, that all our efforts amount to nothing, as you say. If we ask God to help us keep His law, and to do what is good, will He not assist us?

*B.*—Assist us in what? To ignore all the lessons that the old "school-master" has sought to make us learn? The 24th verse of the third chapter of the epistle to the Galatians says: "Wherefore the law was our school-master up to Christ, that we might be justified on the principle of faith." (N. T.) The more you conscientiously measure yourself by the rule of the law of God, which is holy and just and good, the more you will be ready to listen to the voice which teaches you another way of salvation. But do you really know what it is to be under the law? Have you rigorously submitted to all that the law exacts? You acknowledge that you have not yet obtained the pardon for your sins. Have you made any progress to that end? Have your efforts not shown you that you are not happy, and that you have not come to be any nearer to God?

*A.*—Probably it is so, but I thought I was following scripture in doing as I have done.

*B.*—In the first place you have not taken account of the deceitfulness of your own heart which the

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scriptures reveal in its true character. It is just because man is lacking in uprightness that he does not make good use of the law, and that he does not test himself by this "plumbline;" he imagines he will be able to pass, and does not discover that the bed is too short, and the covering too narrow. What avail would it be to give a dishonest man an exact measure for the sale of his goods, if not to show him he is a cheat? God has not given his law to man to make him righteous, but to convince him of his sin by bringing it before him. But blessed be God! He does not leave us there; He has provided a righteousness for us which gives us exactly what we acknowledge we have not obtained by our efforts at law keeping. Hear what He says:

"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered, blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Rom. iv. 5-8). Why then continue striving, and in vain, to weave a righteousness for yourself, fruit of your own labour, instead of submitting to the righteousness of God? Do you assume to use the law which God has declared closes every mouth and brings in everyone guilty before Him, to conceal from yourself that you are a sinner, guilty and lost? For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written,

"Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10).

Week after week, month after month, year after year, you revolve in this painful circle, asking God to incline your heart to keep His law, to have pity on you, and during this time you disown His mercy which has given you Christ, you do not believe the testimony He has given as to His Son. Practically you pretend that you can do what the word of God says is impossible, at the same time you do not obey the word which invites you to believe in Jesus: "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John, iii. 23). "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John, v. 11). "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar." It is my case—most solemn thought—if I seek to have eternal life by any other means than by faith in Jesus, although it may be by that which is good in itself, and which comes from God, but which is valueless to me because I am weak, powerless, and a sinner.

Dear reader, what great blessings await us if we turn to God who has given His Son "in order that we might live by Him," His Son "who is the propitiation for our sins"! But on the contrary, what ruin, and what eternal misery, if we turn away! "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Prov. i., 32-33).