

THE SOWER.

THE WELL OF SYCHAR.

“Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well ; and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water : Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.”—Jno. iv. 6, 7.

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall.” Gen. xlix, 22.

A well of water in Scripture is the symbol of *grace*, and our blessed Lord, by the very same well which was given of Jacob of old to Joseph his son, may be viewed as the *true Joseph*, with his branches indeed running over the wall, namely his love going forth beyond the bounds of that people to whom alone He was sent (Matt. x. 5, 6 ; xv. 24) to bless, not only this poor Samaritan woman, but all in like manner whose souls are, like hers, athirst for the water of life.

Sweet was the hour, O Lord, to Thee,
At Sychar’s lonely well,
When a poor outcast heard Thee there
Thy great salvation tell.
Thither she came, but Oh ! her heart
All filled with earthly care,
Dream’d not of Thee, nor thought to find
The Hope of Israel there.

Lord ! 'twas thy power unseen that drew
 The stray one to that place,
 In solitude to learn from Thee
 The secrets of Thy grace.

There Jacob's erring daughter found
 Those streams unknown before,
 The water-brooks of life that make
 The weary thirst no more.

And, Lord, to us, as vile as she,
 Thy gracious lips have told
 That mystery of love reveal'd
 At Jacob's well of old.

In spirit, Lord, we've sat with Thee
 Beside the springing well
 Of life and peace—and heard Thee there
 Its healing virtues tell.

Dead to the world, we dream no more
 Of earthly pleasures now,
 Our deep, divine, unfailing spring
 Of grace and glory Thou !

No hope of rest in ought beside,
 No beauty, Lord, we see,
 And, like Samaria's daughter, seek
 And find our all in Thee.

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THE WAYS OF GRACE.

HISTORY OF AN OLD ACTOR, RELATED BY HIMSELF.

I HAD lost my parents at an early age. From my childhood I was filled with a passion for the theatre, and made up my mind to become an actor, cost what it might. When I had finished my time at school I got permission from my teacher to apply for a position in a small theatre. My appearance and my manners made a favorable impression upon the manager, possibly he saw in me an aptitude for the vocation I wished to embrace, for he engaged me at once.

I need not enlarge upon the first years of this life which was so much in accord with my desires ; suffice it to say that I labored at it with an ardour, and energy, which made me one of the first actors of a great city ; one of the favorites of the public. I will add, through the mercy of God, which I was not then conscious of, I was restrained from falling into the dissipation and irregularities to which a theatrical life is exposed and to which the solicitations and examples of my companions would have led me. A sort of personal pride made me despise those who gave themselves up to diversions which seemed to me to be so degrading. I even avoided taking a part in plays which contained equivocal expressions.

After about five years I noticed among the spectators a young man about fifteen years of age. The

regularity with which he came every night to the theatre struck me, as well as his expressive appearance ; his large blue eyes ; and the blonde locks which encircled his face. He was always in the same place and standing ; following my play with intense attention, and an undisguised admiration of all that he heard and saw. He at the same time both interested and pleased me. Sometimes a lady accompanied him, but he was usually alone. During two years he came regularly, then little by little, less frequently. At the same time I perceived a change in him. Deep red spots showed themselves on his pale cheeks ; he seemed agitated and nervous ; and his look had an expression of suffering and unhappiness. All at once he ceased coming, and I forgot him.

I now come to a turning point in my life. I had on one occasion to act in a piece the part of a fanatical preacher. I desired, as always, to act my part in the most natural manner possible. There was at that time, in that city, a man who was much spoken of, renowned for his piety, and zealous to a degree that many thought exaggerated. It seemed to me that I should find in him the living model of the part I was to present. I resolved to visit him under some pretext in order to study his manner of speaking ; his gestures ; in a word his whole person ; in order to transfer it to the stage. I went to his place one afternoon, but as he was out and his return soon expected I was asked to wait for him. While I was there a young lady was brought into the place where I was, in a large chair. I arose, saluted her, and pre-

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pared to depart, but she begged me to be re-seated, telling me that her brother would not be long away. I thus learned that she was a sister of the preacher I wished to see.

I shall never forget the lovely countenance of this young person, who seemed hardly more than eighteen or nineteen years of age; and although the disease had impressed its fatal seal upon her pale face, and the shadow of death was cast upon her, her features were marked by a sweetness and peace I am unable to describe. I seemed to be in the presence of a heavenly apparition. I cannot tell the impression she made upon me.

She began to speak with simplicity of her brother; she recounted to me his life of toil, and entire devotion to his ministry; how he had consecrated to it all his time, and all his powers. In thus hearing her I could have wished I had been a hundred miles away. Wretch that I was! Had I not come with the intention of studying the tone and manner of this man so worthy of respect, in order to ridicule him upon the stage? My torture increased every moment. I knew not how to keep my countenance. I sought a pretext to get away. Making an effort, I said to my young interlocutor:

You have doubtless, Miss, had much suffering?

"Yes, sir," she said, with a sweet smile, and a look which illuminated her countenance as a ray of the sun; "Yes, I have suffered much. For many months I have given up all hope of recovery, but I am so happy—I sigh for my heavenly home, and I know that I shall soon be with my beloved Saviour."

All was real in those eyes turned towards Heaven ; in those clasped hands ; and the joyous tone of that sweet voice of the young sick girl.

In listening to her, it seemed that a dagger was piercing my heart. I felt humiliated, and ill at ease, in her presence ; and my conscience condemned me. But who can describe my embarrassment, when suddenly the door opened, and her brother entered the room.

What should I do ? A terrible struggle was raging within me ; the clever and admired actor had become as confused as a scholar taken in a flagrant offence. The severe look of the preacher, who had not failed to notice my embarrassment, was fixed upon me. My hesitation was soon terminated. I frankly confessed for what purpose I had come, and how the short conversation I had had with his sister had opened my eyes to the outrageous character of my procedure. There followed a long and serious conversation between me and this man of God, whose character I had so misapprehended ; they were solemn moments, and the remembrance of them remains ineffably engraven on my mind ; the turning point of a complete change in my life.

I had entered that house a proud man, indifferent to the things of God, and with perverted thoughts ; I left it humiliated, repentant, and ardently desiring to know that which illuminated with such intense happiness the face of the young invalid. Ah ! how marvellous are God's ways of grace !

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Shortly after my visit to the preacher, I found peace by faith in Christ Jesus. When my conversion became known it raised a storm of indignation among my friends, and the admirers of my talent. They sought by all possible means to retain me in the way which I had followed up to that time; but the Lord gave me power to resist all solicitations. I abandoned completely a vocation in which I could not glorify God, and with it the luxury and ease which I had enjoyed; I became a poor man, but what matter, since I had become rich in God.

For some time I applied myself to the study of, and meditation on, the word of God, and then the Lord gave me the grace to be able to announce to others the good news of salvation which I enjoyed in my own soul. Christ and His cross were the sole themes of my exhortations, and of the appeals I addressed to sinners. In His love I found an ample compensation for all I had left.

II.

Six months had passed from the time that the Lord had brought me into this new life. In the midst of many sorrowful and distressing circumstances He had also given me much consolation. He had deigned to make use of me as an instrument to lead many sinners to the possession of salvation and eternal life.

One day, a servant, dressed in rich livery, came to me, sent by his young master who was very ill, praying me to go and see him. The message was pressing, and as quickly as possible I made my way

to the place indicated. It was a large and sumptuous mansion where everything indicated wealth and luxury. A servant conducted me to a chamber richly furnished. There, stretched upon a couch, lay a young man who seemed very near his end. His beautiful locks of hair fell upon a forehead white as marble, and in his restless look was apparent an expression of profound despair. I seated myself quietly near him. Suddenly the dying man fixing upon me an indignant and irritated look, said to me in a harsh and broken voice :

“ You have come here!—yes—come to see the ruin which is your work.”

I trembled on hearing him, for instantly I recognized the features which at first had not appeared familiar to me. Yes, I had often before seen those blonde locks, and those eyes fixed on me, but with a wholly different expression. How should I be able to forget them !

Before, in my surprise, I had recovered myself to say a single word in reply, the invalid continued ;

“ Yes, you, now a preacher of the gospel, undo your deadly work. Before evangelizing others, return to me that which you have made me lose, the peace and happiness of my soul.”

These words were uttered with such bitterness that I felt struck to the heart. With a grief impossible to describe, I recalled the time when he went to the theatre, where he hung upon my lips, wholly absorbed by the scene which passed before him.

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My young friend, I said to him, in a voice trembling with emotion, but he violently interrupted me as he cried :

“Your friend! Do not apply that name to me; you have ruined my soul, I tell you. I am here upon this bed of sickness, surrounded by all the devils of hell, more terrible than the imagination can conceive, and unable to pray. I am dying in despair! Ah! you have been my destroyer! Fascinated by your art I followed you like a slave, until I could not be happy in any place but in the cursed theatre,—yes, cursed, for it conducted me along the path of vice; it has robbed me of pure thoughts, and of peace; it has caused my ruin; and now,” added he, with a bitter smile, “as I have already said, undo your work! Is it just, I ask you, that you who have been the cause of my ruin, should be saved, and that I should go to hell? Is it just?”

Breathless and exhausted by this effort the dying man was silent, while my heart was broken by an inexpressible anguish.

Oh! do not speak thus. I have regretted sorrowfully enough my past life. I have deeply felt that to many I have been a cause of evil instead of doing them good. But God has pardoned me, and I entreat you to forgive me also. Oh! if you would only listen to me! The Lord is near to forgive your sins, and to give peace and rest to your soul. Be convinced. Throw yourself into His arms as I have thrown myself. I

cannot efface the past ; would to God that I could ! I have repented with humility and brokenness of heart. How I long that you should come to the Saviour who received a sinner such as I was, and who would also receive you !

He looked at me earnestly for a long time ; then gradually the hatred and resentment which had at first filled his features disappeared ; his lips trembled ; and covering his face with his hands he burst into a torrent of tears. I wept also. Never had a visit to a sufferer produced such an impression upon me. I reflected upon the fatal influence which a man may possess over the future of his neighbor.

“ Ah ! ” sighed the young man, after a moment, “ I have lost all ; all that adorns man. I have lost my good sentiments ; one after another I have banished them from my heart. I might have lived many happy years, but now I go to the grave just as I reach my twentieth year. I have been the shame of my mother ; I have tarnished my name, and each day lying here I think of you ; I recall how the admiration I felt for you drew me on, and how I learned to love you—then to hate and curse you.”

I deserve it, I said, but I cannot bear that you should curse me on your dying bed. How I long to carry salvation to your soul ! Oh, be assured, however culpable you have been in your own eyes, and in the eyes of God, the Lord Jesus can cleanse you from all sin. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost, and resting thus upon the word

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of God, I can assure you that there is for you a present salvation. Let me conduct you to Him, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and who has died for you.

"Oh! yes, lead me to Him," he cried giving me his thin hand, wet with tears. "Give me hope, alas! only a little hope, that God will be merciful to me. Pray, Oh! pray for me, and I forgive you willingly."

I knelt and prayed, but my prayers were only groans and cries to God. I could not bear the thought of his dying thus without hope. The thought that this soul would be claimed at my hands, and that I should have been the one to bring him to this, rent my heart. I prayed, implored the Lord for him, with tears. Deeply moved, I prepared to leave, when, to my great joy, in taking leave of me, the poor dying one assured me that now he rested entirely upon Jesus. The short interview beneath the Lord's eye had brought forth its blessed fruits.

The next morning I hastened to the house where I had experienced such intense and sorrowful emotions. But the solemn calm which reigned; the closed shutters; told me beforehand that death had accomplished its work. A servant conducted me to the room where I had been the previous evening. My young friend was there, lifeless, but with an expression of perfect peace on his face. He seemed in a calm sleep, and I could see that at the moment of passing away the peace of God had filled his soul.

"He was quite happy," his mother said to me, staying her great anguish for a moment. "One could scarcely say that it was death. He begged me to tell you that he was happy in seeing the approach of his departure, having the certainty of the forgiveness of his sins, and that all anguish had gone out of his heart. He will see you again in heaven. But pray for me, for I am now childless."

I prayed with her, and when I looked for the last time on the remains of my young friend, instead of the terrible words: "You have been my destroyer," I seemed to hear: "You have brought me salvation."

Dear readers, in placing before you this account I cannot but plead with you the merciful ways of God. He had compassion on this poor young man, drawn into sin and reduced to despair. He brought him salvation through the means of one, who, without knowing it, in his godless days, had done him much harm. Divine grace foiled the devices of Satan, as it is written, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (Jas. ii. 13.) Where are you as to this? Have you ceased to seek satisfaction in the ways of the world and its corrupting amusements? Or perhaps you flatter yourselves with the hope that there will be time later to think of your salvation. Will you wait for that, like the sick one, for a dying bed? Fatal illusion, produced by Satan himself! If the young man was saved on his death-bed, that is no reason why you should be drawn

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away. You cannot count on the same issue, and you risk proving the truth of the words, "Because I have cried and you have refused to listen. * * I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. They shall cry to me, and *I will not answer.*"

THOU beginnest at the wrong end, if thou disputest first about thine election. Prove thy conversion, and then never doubt of thy election. Or, can'st thou not yet prove it? Set about a present and thorough turning. Whatever God's purposes be (which are secret,) I am sure His precepts are plain. How desperately do rebels argue! if I am elected, I shall be saved, do what I will; if not, I shall be damned, do what I can. Perverse sinner! wilt thou begin where thou should'st end? Is not the word before thee? What saith it? "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii. 19.) Revealed things belong to thee; in these busy thyself. It is just (as one has well said), that they who will not feed on the plain food of the word, shall be choked with the bones. Whatever God's purposes be, I am sure His promises are true, that if I believe on His Son I have eternal life; if I believe not, I shall be damned. Is not here plain ground for thee? and wilt thou yet run upon the rocks?

A CHILD'S DEFINITION OF FAITH.

HE was only seven years old when the Lord took him. Towards the close he spoke of mercy and grace ; of faith in God as his only foundation for his hope of going to be with the Lord Jesus, who died for him. Being visited about this time by an unconverted relative of mature years, who asked him how he was, he answered that he was very happy, though sick in body, and that his faith in the Lord Jesus kept him so.

His relative said, "I can't make you out. How do you get the faith you speak about?"

"Oh," said Charley, "God gave it to me."

"Well," said his friend, "I don't understand, what's it like?"

"Oh," replied Charley, "its just like this: s'pose you was up stairs, and you made a hole in the ceiling and spoke to me through the hole, and told me up there was better than being down here, and that you had got some beautiful things up there for me, if I was to come. I should want to come, shouldn't I?"

Well, yes, I dare say you would ; but how would you know I had the things I spoke of?" he asked.

"Well said the dying child, "I SHOULD BE SURE TO KNOW YOU WAS THERE WHEN I HEARD YOU SPEAK."

That's what faith is, BELIEVING GOD'S WORD WHEN HE SPEAKS, WITHOUT SEEING THE THINGS HE PROMISES. And God does make a good many holes and speaks to a great many people, only they

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pay no attention, and if they do hear they want to see the things first, but that's not faith.

This dear child in tears and grace thus silenced with the words of faith a gainsayer, and then passed away to the bright home above. Reader, hast thou faith as this little child. Dost thou believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God?—Hear the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, HE THAT HEARETH MY WORD AND BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT SENT ME HATH EVERLASTING LIFE and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life.” Hast thou passed from death unto life?—If so then thou art happy, thou art safe for all eternity, for your life is hid with Christ in God; a safe hiding place indeed.

READER, do you know that were you to die this night, your soul would either go to be with Christ forever, or to eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, there to endure God's righteous wrath for ever and ever?

God is in earnest and desires your salvation, Christ is in earnest and died for sinners, the Holy Ghost beseeches you through God's word to accept salvation, and the devil is in earnest and seeks your damnation.

If you come to God as a sinner, owning and confessing your guilt and that you are lost and ruined, and accept the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as your only and all-sufficient Saviour, that very moment God will blot out all your sins for His Son's sake. Now is the day of salvation.

REMISSION OF SINS.

It is strengthening to ponder the various expressions our gracious God and Father uses to assure us of His entire forgiveness of sins. It would seem as if He delighted to vary the terms He employs to meet every variety of state of soul, and that the sin of doubt and unbelief in this matter might be expelled from the heart, that we might be without excuse. Below are some of the terms used :

Blotted out. Isa. xliii. 25 ; xliv. 22. Acts. iii. 19.

Covered. Ps. xxxii. 1 ; lxxxv. 2. Rom. iv. 7.

Not imputed, or reckoned. Ps. xxxii. 2. Rom. iv. 8.

Removed. Ps. ciii. 12.

Taken away. Isa. vi. 7.

Put away. Heb. ix. 26.

Passed away. Zech. iii. 4.

Passed by. Micah. vii. 18.

Cast behind thy back. Isa. xxxviii. 17

Cast into the sea. Micah. vii. 19.

God's face hidden from. Psa. li. 9.

Not beheld. Num. xxiii. 21.

Sought for and none. Jer. 1. 20.

Sought for and not found. Jer. 1. 20.

Made an end of. Dan. ix. 24.

Finished. Dan. ix. 24.

Subdued. Micah. vii. 19.

Pardoned. Isa. lv. 7. Jer. xxxiii. 8. Micah vii. 18.

Forgiven. Ps. ciii. 3. Rom. iv. 7. Eph. iv. 32.

Not remembered. Jer. xxxi. 34.

Borne. Isa. liiii. 11. Heb. ix. 28. 1 Pet. ii. 24.

Purged. Ps. lxxv. 3. Heb. i. 3 ; ix. 14.

Remitted. Acts. x. 43. Heb. x. 18.