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THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

BY THE REV. C. MALAN.

I was travelling toward Bordeaux, and had just set off from Angoulême, when a handsome, showy-looking young man accosted me politely: "I think, sir, you come from Paris." "I left Paris the day before yesterday," I answered. "And I suppose," he added eagerly, "you have seen the 'Huguenots'?"—a theatrical performance at that time, 1839, very famous at Paris—"it is a remarkably original composition; every one goes to see it; were you not delighted with it?" "The Huguenots," I replied, taking my New Testament from the pocket of the coach, "I have their treasure with me here."

"The treasure of the Huguenots," said the young man with surprise; "and pray what is that?" "I offered the sacred volume to him. He read the title and returned it immediately, saying, with scorn, "Ah, I think that book only fit for old women and weak minds."

"I know, sir," I answered seriously, "that it is very good for me, though I am certainly not an old woman. As to a weak mind, I will not decide upon that."

"I beg your pardon, sir, for my foolish expression; but allow me to say, that I cannot understand how a man of sense and education can approve, and above all, can believe such a production. Voltaire at least did not, and certainly he was not wanting in discernment, or knowledge, or good sense." Here the pupil of such a teacher repeated, with equal fluency and sharpness, the invectives of the philosopher against the Galilean and his doctrine. The incarnation of the word, the miracles, the prophesies, the death, and above all, the resurrection of the reputed son of Joseph, were passed in review, and the conclusion of the whole argument was a song of triumph as to the reason and wisdom of the present age. The young unbeliever was delighted; he thought me reduced to silence and overcome, for I listened to the whole without saying a word.

When he had ended, I own I was tempted to oppose sword to sword, and to answer the follower of Voltaire

by arguments, as I thought, of better reasoning than his own. But I was impressed by these words of holy writ, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds" (2 Cor. x, 4); and leaving in its sheath the feeble weapon of my own reason, I seized the sword of the Spirit, and answered only in these words: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv, 3, 4.

"Yes, yes," replied the youth, "so says that book; but on what authority does it speak, that is the question."

"If any man will do his will," I continued, still reading, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John vii, 17.

"That is to say," he answered, "that all the learned scholars and philosophers; in short, all men of sense and judgment, in civilized society—all these superior men are wicked and impious, and even atheists and scoundrels, because they refuse to believe the mysteries, not to say the absurdities, of an obscure book."

"That your faith," namely, of the Christian, I replied, still reading, "should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." 1 Cor. ii, 5. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty." 1 Cor. i, 27.—"He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God." John iii, 18. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii, 36.

"Very well, sir; my lot, you think, is settled; and hell, with everlasting flames, is prepared for me, and for the flower of the whole human race. I thank you for your charity."

"Sir," I answered calmly, "it was not I, but God himself, who said by his apostle, that 'there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby

we must be saved,' but that of Jesus. Acts iv, 12. Jesus also says to you, as well as to any other sinner. 'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' John iii, 15. You hear these words; they are full of love and mercy."

The youth was silent, and knit his brow. His countenance was gloomy, and for a long while he remained still. Night came on. My neighbor was still dumb, and I thought his ill humor would last until he fell asleep, when, suddenly turning toward me, he said, with much appearance of feeling, "Where, sir, can I obtain the book you have there? for I must tell you, I begin to think that perhaps I may be wrong, and that you are in the right path. I am even concerned, sir, for the thoughtless words that"—I interrupted him. "Pray, sir, do not think of any apology; but as you seem already to feel that the word of God is superior to that of a philosopher, do not let us part without your having this book, which you will allow me to offer to you when we reach Bordeaux."

From that happy moment our conversation was easy and unrestrained; and it was not till after we had spoken of all the vital doctrines of Christianity, that we both yielded to slumber.

The next day my young companion was calm, cordial and perfectly open; and when I left him, he took my hand, saying, "Do you remember the promise that you kindly made me? There is my address." "In a few moments," I answered, "the most precious of books shall be in your hands;" and I hastened to the house of a friend, a Christian brother, to whom I related the above-mentioned facts, and who immediately went to the house of the young traveller, to whom he gave the book of God, accompanying it with words of peace. He also informed him that, on the same day, and other days following, I should explain some portions of the Holy Scriptures, at meetings to which he would be welcome.

This invitation was not given in vain. The same evening the young man, with his book under his arm, came to take his place among the serious hearers whom the gospel drew together.

The next day he returned again at the same hour, and

after service came up to me and said, with earnestness, "Sir, you never can know all the good which this book has already done me, and all the pleasure I have felt in hearing you, both yesterday and to-day. Henceforth this book shall be my study — my sole study."

"And what will you do to-morrow?" I asked him. "It is the king's birthday; there will be a great ball, and much bustle, and no doubt you will be invited." "I have refused," answered the young man, with firmness, "I shall not be there. In the morning I shall go and hear you, as you preach in public; and in the evening, if it please God, I shall come and hear you again."

He came; and, for the first time, this fashionable young man, who had hitherto made plays and balls his chief pleasure, considered it his highest privilege to worship God in his temple, and in the evening to join some disciples of that Saviour whom he had once learned to scorn.

On the same evening I took leave of this youthful seeker after truth. He again expressed his gratitude and earnest desire for the accomplishment of the prayers I offered for him, and he declared, before many witnesses, that he believed the Bible, that he worshipped the Lord Jesus, and desired to live and die a Christian.

Here may be seen how the word alone resisted the attacks of an infidel, and subdued, at the feet of Jesus, the follower of vanity, even one who had long scoffed at the Son of God and his gracious offers. Let this word, then, be in your mouth, when you attempt to answer the wisdom of this world, or the treacherous arguments of infidels, for this only can reduce them to silence.

If you are not a believer, but are resting on your own reason, and the Bible is in your eyes only a book for narrow and weak minds, learn that this very word will judge you at the last day; and it were better for your soul that you had never been born, than that, despising Him who speaks to you from heaven, you count as an unholy thing the blood of Jesus shed upon the cross, which alone can cleanse you from all sin.

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