

THE

SLEEPER AWAKENED.

ONCE, during that time when God was wont to make himself known to men, by immediate revelations from heaven, there was a ship launched forth from Joppa, into the waters of the Mediterranean sea. But the vessel had not proceeded far on its voyage toward Tarshish, whither it was bound, when it was arrested by the hand of Him who rules the waves and the storms. There was, within its sides, one whose heart was rebelling against the commands of the Most High; and it was the firm resolve of the Almighty, then and there, to make manifest his majesty and supreme authority. Angry with the disobedient prophet, who was vainly endeavouring to flee from his presence, he poured out his fury on the vessel that unconsciously carried him from the port. The heavens thundered, the winds arose to a mighty tempest, and the crested waves rolled mountain high, threatening every moment to bury the frail barque among the billows. The men on board were seized with alarm; they cast the rich lading of the ship overboard, and called upon their gods for deliverance. All, we may well suppose, was terror and consternation; each countenance was blanched with horror, in view of immediate death.

But amid all this quaking, and trembling, and fright, there was one that "cared for none of these things." As is often true in the history of God's judgments on men, the guilty object, which divine vengeance was pursuing, was of

all the most regardless of danger. While the storm raged, and the billows rolled high, and the vessel creaked and pitched, threatening every moment to founder among the billows, he lay fast asleep. He neither knew nor cared, how near he was to the dread tribunal of Jehovah, who was pursuing him with such fearful exhibitions of his wrath.

The conduct of the infatuated, rebellious prophet excites our wonder, and is well suited to call forth righteous indignation. To persist in disobedience to the direct and reasonable command of God, and foolishly to endeavour to escape from an omniscient eye and an almighty hand, seems nothing short of madness itself. Even while the voice of vengeance is speaking to him in tones that strike the heathen sailors with terror, and while God appears in the thunder, the whirlwind, and the storm, he sleeps on, as though all was well with him.

But while with one accord we condemn the conduct of Jonah, we are in imminent danger of pronouncing judgment on ourselves. To multitudes of those who unite in deprecating his rebellious course, we may address the words of the prophet Nathan: "Thou art the man." How striking the resemblance between the sleeper in the ship's sides, and those careless sinners who remain in so perfect indifference to the awful realities of the eternal world! Yea, much more unwise and astonishing is the course of undying men, who live in perpetual disregard of the warning to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel. The loud thunders of Sinai are ever proclaiming, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The lightnings of the fiery law flash upon the souls of the impenitent, to reveal to them the number and odiousness of their sins before God. And their eyes are directed forward, to the smoke of the torment that awaits all the ungodly, ascending up for ever and ever. And yet these same lost, ruined, condemned individuals, with the sword of God's vengeance

glittering above them, make mirth. They turn to their farm and their merchandise; and amid all the dangers that surround them, they say, "Soul, take thine ease; thou hast much goods laid up for many years." While the storm rages, they are fast asleep.

There are many points of resemblance indicated, between the natural sleep of the body, and the carnal slumber of impenitent souls. They are both alike in darkness. The eye that is closed in sleep does not see the objects around it. The sun may shine in all the effulgence of noon-day splendour, and all nature may be clad in the habiliments of light and beauty; but to the eye of the sleeper they shine and dazzle in vain. Their attractions are all lost; because he sees them not, any more than if they had no existence. So the man that is in spiritual darkness, the unregenerate one from whose eyes the scales have not fallen, sees not, knows not, the state and condition of his soul in the presence of the heart-searching and reins-trying God; "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Light has come into the world; but he comprehends it not. The beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine in all their beauty and splendour, the divine excellence of knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, is vividly portrayed; but to the carnal man, they are as the things that are not. His heart is like a sepulchre full of dead men's bones, or like a cage of unclean birds; but he neither sees nor believes the melancholy truth. There is a veil of unbelief and self-righteousness upon the mind, enveloping it in the darkness of spiritual death; and not until the Spirit with his convincing power rend away the covering, will the true condition of the soul be realized. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Paul says, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin

revived, and I died." And the pious Psalmist earnestly prayed for a clearer knowledge of his own infirmities, that he might be purified from them. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Again, the man that is asleep is not aware of the transactions of the world around him. If there was nothing but a holding of the eyes from seeing, still by the aid of the other senses, the man would be apprised of the realities of his situation. But in sleep, all the senses are to a degree paralysed; the avenues of communication to the mind are closed. The clouds may grow black in the heavens, and be streaked with the lightning's flash, and the thunders may utter their voices; the earth may heave and rock with the throes of the earthquake, and the tempests may lash the angry ocean; the sleeping man, like Jonah, recks not the passing events. The greatest dangers may impend, and matters of the highest interest may demand attention, but all in vain. A frail mansion may be about to fall, or the vessel on the deep to be engulfed among the billows; no anxiety is felt, and no efforts are made to escape the danger. A devoted missionary in South Africa relates, that in travelling over a desert of burning sand all the day, without one drop of water to slake his burning thirst, he lay down at night with wearied limbs, aching head, and tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth with very dryness. Sleep at length came to his relief; and while his sufferings were temporarily suspended, he dreamed of crystal fountains and cooling draughts, that made him the rather to bless his pains, for the pleasures he enjoyed in removing them. But morning came, and with the light, the melancholy truth that all his pleasures were but a dream. His anguish returned with his waking, and he was doomed to plod his weary way without relief.

So sleeps and dreams the soul that is "dead in trespasses and sins." Its hopes are graphically expressed in the words of the drunkard in Isaiah: "I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." It dreams of honours, pleasures, riches, which it eagerly grasps at, but is never to possess. It dreams of long life, many years of prosperity and happiness, abundance of time to repent and secure the favour of God, when, by reason of age, it will no longer care for these things. But at the very moment when sinners are thus speaking peace to their souls, the alarm is sounded. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." To-morrow shall never come, with its promised pleasures. That was a lying spirit that said, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." To-morrow will not be as this day; it will be less abundant in the rich mercies and privileges of God. One day of precious time will be gone; and it will have been spent in rebellion against God; and the soul will have one day less to live on earth, and be one day nearer to the judgment bar; yea, and probably one day nearer the flames of hell. The judgment-seat is always prepared, the Judge is ever on his throne, the sword of death is drawn bright and whetted for execution, the grave is soon to be opened and the clods to rumble on the coffin lid, and the dark valley to be trod friendless and alone,—and yet the man cares for none of these things.

Beloved reader, this is the true state of every unconverted soul. Ten thousand beauties and glories shine forth in unutterable loveliness, in the person and character of our incarnate Redeemer; but the veiled mind does not perceive nor relish them. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The mind that is active, and alive to all the beauties of science and literature, and to the various enter-

prises and pursuits of this world, and that can feast with carnal delight on forbidden pleasures, finds nothing to attract it, in the eternal glories that lie beyond the reach of its mortal vision!

And is not this a most melancholy and alarming truth? Is it not cause of great concern, that the human heart is so blinded, and so perverted from its original purity, that it turns away with dislike from the most excellent of all things, to the most degrading and unworthy? If we were to see an individual turning away from the comforts and delight of home and fellow-men of cultivated tastes, and going out like Nebuchadnezzar, to eat grass like the ox, or to live the wandering life of the savage, we would mourn over him as one bereft of his reason. But how much wiser is the part which all the unconverted are acting? While God holds out a crown of unfading glory to them, and offers to make them kings and priests in heaven, they disregard the offer. When he throws wide open the golden portals of the New Jerusalem, and shows them an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, they are in nowise attracted by it. While the Spirit invites them to the crystal stream of the waters of life, that flows out from the throne of God, to drink and thirst never more, they turn away to perish on the scorching deserts of this world. The gold of this world, and the eternal gold of the New Jerusalem, are placed side by side, and it is easy to predict which portion will be chosen. It is reiterated again and again from God's holy word, that death will soon come, that the judgment is near, that hell will soon open to receive all the workers of iniquity; and yet the coffin, and the shroud, and the flaming throne, and the lake of fire and brimstone, have no terrors. O state of infatuation and insensibility!

Another point of resemblance in the sleeping prophet and impenitent souls, is found in their disobedience. While Jonah was wasting his precious time sleeping in a ship of

Tarshish, he should have been at Nineveh, denouncing the judgments of God against sinners, or at least on his journey thither. God had peremptorily commanded him to do so. But he presumptuously dared to disobey the divine command, taking passage in a ship going to Tarshish. And it was while he was asleep, and insensible as to the aggravated nature of his sin, that the Lord arrested him with the hand of his vengeance.

Unbelievers of every class are involved in the same sin and condemnation. They are explicitly commanded to awake out of sleep. God has spoken to them in thunder tones, warning them of their danger, and promising them rich rewards for obedience. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light." Here is the behest backed by the dread authority of Jehovah; and here is the precious promise from the same high source. Light is promised to the blind eyes, and life to the dead soul. But sinners sleep on: neither the terrors of divine wrath, nor the blessedness of life eternal, can arouse them from their slumber. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But sinners will not believe, though the assurance of heaven be the result. "He that believeth not shall be damned." But men will still rebel, though the flames of hell be the awful consequence. Those sweet invitations of the gospel: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come," "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" all these are treated with scorn. The invitations to the marriage of the King's Son, are met with contempt or cold neglect. Though there is room, and the King bids them come, and makes them welcome to the feast, they will not come. They love their carnal slumber, more than the rich joys that can never die.

And what, O sinner, is to be the consequence of this dis-

obedience? Think you that He who thunders in the heavens will long permit such rebellion? Will he not follow you, as he followed the sinning prophet, with the outpourings of his anger? Will he not draw forth his bright and glittering sword, and his right hand take hold on judgment? Even while you read these lines, the word of the Lord may say, as it did to Ezekiel, "A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished; it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter." Awake, then, before the sword of vengeance fall. Contemn no longer the righteous, and reasonable, and merciful command of God, to awake to righteousness, renouncing every sin, and secure eternal life.

But though sinners sleep, they do not always sleep comfortably. They have their dreams of horror, as well as those of carnal delights. And their slumbers are often broken by the thunders of conscience, the providence of God, or the sword of the Spirit. The course of rebellion does not always run smooth. God in mercy interrupts it, that it may not sweep the rebel into hell. Few, perhaps, who have been born in a land of Bibles and sanctuaries, have passed far through their earthly pilgrimage, without some flashes of conviction, some fearful awakenings, and forebodings of the future. The agonizing death-throes and ghastly features of a fellow being, the riving thunderbolt scattering the gnarled oak in fragments to the ground, and displaying the awful power of Jehovah before the eyes, or the still, small voice of the gospel accompanied by the searching arrow of the Holy Spirit, has startled the sleeper from his death stupor. All at once, he felt that it was "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." He trembled like Felix, while he heard from some man of God, "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." He wept, and prayed, and made many resolves for the future,—to depart from iniquity, and live for God. And some of this

class have indeed escaped the pollutions of this world, and given their hearts to the Saviour. They have made the wise choice, like Mary, of the good part that shall never be taken from them. Reader, have you done so? We adjure you, as we love and value your undying soul, say have you awaked to righteousness, and found peace in believing? If you have not yet entered into the ark of safety, we ask you in all earnestness and affection, how long do you expect to remain without, exposed to the storms of the Almighty's anger?

Some there are, we know, who have been aroused from their slumbers, who are sleeping again. The death-stricken features, the shroud and the coffin, and the devastating lightning's bolt, have faded from the heart, the warning and exhortation of the ambassador of Christ have been forgotten, and the Holy Spirit has been quenched. The seed that was sown in the heart, has been caught away. The light that once forced itself on the mind has been extinguished; and the cloud has returned with redoubled darkness, enveloping an immortal being in a more fearful state of stupor and insensibility. This is true of thousands; and, reader, it may be true of you. Many have been awakened by the mercy of God, to see the slippery places on which they stand, and the fiery billows that roll beneath them; and they have closed their eyes in sleep again. Yes, they *sleep* on slippery places, and neither see nor hear the waves of fire and brimstone that surge below them. It is melancholy, but it is true, that immortal beings will seek again a false security, from which they have just been awaked, and from which they must soon be driven by the approach of death, in preference to that blessed peace which passeth all understanding. And then the darkness becomes doubly dark, the spiritual paralysis still more alarming, and the prospects of ever being awaked again fearfully diminished. It is in vain that we make to such

persons the most earnest and tender appeals,—“What meanest thou, O sleeper?” The storm may rage on, and others may call upon God; they, like the foolish virgins, will slumber and sleep. And Oh, when they shall be awaked at last—for awaked they will be, by the thunders of the eternal world—they will find, like the foolish virgins, that they have awaked too late. Their lamps have gone out, there is no oil in their vessels, and it is too late to go and buy. Their former convictions passed away, and left them in deeper darkness, and increased guilt.

Reader, is this your experience? We tell you of Esau, who awaked to the realities of his situation, when it was too late; his tears could not recall the despised and forfeited birth-right. We remind you of Felix, who was almost persuaded to be a Christian, and of many who shall come in the last day saying, “Lord, Lord, open unto us,” whom the Lord will reject, with the reply, “I never knew you.” And we call to remembrance the rebellious Israelites, who vexed and grieved the Holy Spirit, until he turned to be their enemy. God may say of you, as he said of them, “Make the hearts of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed.” And then you will sleep on, till that fearful hour when you will be summoned to the judgment-bar. In view of these awfully solemn truths, let me say, “What meanest thou, O sleeper?” Arise now and call upon God, that he may have mercy on thee.

But we anticipate the reply to these warnings and entreaties. What shall we do? is the natural inquiry of every soul, that is interested enough about eternal things to make it. If we are spiritually dead, though naturally alive, if we walk about living corpses, how can we lift a hand or exercise our heart's emotion, to remove the curse

and restore life? The call of the shipmaster to the sleeping prophet was, "Arise, call upon thy God." A better sermon could not have been preached by prophet or apostle, than was delivered by this heathen. He saw the danger that threatened them all, and in agony of soul he cried, probably to the crew first, and lastly to the sleeping Hebrew, "Arise, call upon thy God." And we know not any fitter words to address to inquiring sinners. Paul says, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." We have seen that the danger is great, the condition of sleeping souls is awfully alarming. And if they slumber on, their case will grow worse. The disease of the soul is insidious. Unlike the sleep of the body, from which the man rises refreshed for the toils and duties of the day, the death torpor of spiritual sleep takes deeper and more powerful hold on its victim, and renders him weaker the longer its possession. Persons freezing to death become more and more insensible to their danger, and finally cease to suffer altogether. The benumbing influence of cold produces drowsiness, and a desire to lie down and sleep. And if they give way to this feeling, they sink into sleep, to awake no more in this world. The snow has been the winding sheet of thousands. A like danger threatened Bunyan's Pilgrim on the "Enchanted Ground." Oh, the deceitful, hardening nature of sin! It enchants while it destroys. With one hand it holds out the anodyne, and with the other it thrusts the dagger of death.

It behoves sleepers of every class, Christians and unbelievers, to shake off their slumbers and call upon God. "It is now high time to awake out of sleep." Let the objector, who complains that he has no power to change his own heart, *make the effort* to obey the command of God. The man with the withered arm had no strength in it to stretch it forth; and yet he made that no objection to obeying the Saviour's command. He made the effort, and he suc-

ceeded. Is the objector making any effort? Or is not the objection undoubted evidence of his unwillingness to try to do anything whatever? You who make the excuse that you cannot arouse yourselves from sleep, that you cannot arise in your own strength from spiritual death, reflect for a moment what you have been and are now doing. God has commanded you to do certain duties, which you have power to do. "Take heed how ye hear." One principal reason why so many are unprofited by the preaching of the gospel, is *inattention*. The sound of the gospel is to them only as the pattering rain on the house-top; it conveys not one idea to the mind. And if one peal from the thunders of the law startle them from their lethargy, they will banish the impression, and sink back if possible into their former insensibility. How many go to the house of God, and retire from it, without receiving one idea! And how many who have been awakened there avoid the holy place, from fear of conviction of sin, again! How many cavil at the word, and strive against the influences of the Holy Spirit! Some have banished serious impressions as soon as possible, by mingling in gay company, or in some sinful indulgence. The fumes of alcohol have been invoked, to aid in quenching the Spirit of God.

And now sinner, can you, with candour and sincerity, put forth the plea of inability to create a lively interest in your own heart, while you are doing all you can to prevent such a result? If you will not hear and seriously ponder the truth; if you resist the Holy Ghost when he would work salvation in your heart; if you listen to the artifices of the devil, give a loose rein to the flesh, and set your heart more and more firmly on the world, can you say that you *wish* to be converted and saved? When you have resisted all evil influences, as far as your infirmities allow, mortified the deeds of the flesh, and given up the world, and still found the Saviour unwilling to receive you, then may you

begin to complain. But did we ever hear of a soul being rejected, who was willing to part with all for Christ? Was it not the chief of sinners that Jesus came to save? Yes; just such weak, helpless, ruined offenders as you are. If you are a very great sinner, remember Jesus is a very great Saviour. If you are very weak, he is very powerful. If you feel a dreadful hard and stony heart, averse to God and holiness, and can mourn nothing else but that hardness and wickedness, remember he is able and willing to save to the uttermost, all that will come to God through him. The more helpless you are, the more you are the object of his compassion. Take care then, we warn you, how you frame excuses for remaining in unbelief; these excuses are only palliatives to the conscience, with which you are pleading the privilege of waiving the subject, and living in sin. Have you *tried* to work out your salvation, while God was working in and for you? The plea that you have not power to renew your own heart will not be regarded as sincere, and will avail nothing, until you have done every thing in your power. While one sin is cherished, one lust indulged, one known duty neglected, sinners must never urge the defence that they have no power to arouse themselves from the slumbers of spiritual death.

It is most certainly true, that God and the sinner coöperating, or working together, do, in some way, effect the salvation of the soul. God operates on man, and man must work in obedience to the divine influence. And it is a precious truth, that the power of God and the obedience of man are wholly sufficient. God has promised his influences, and he is now exerting them on the heart and mind. Reader, how are you engaged? While the Saviour invites, do you hear and obey? Or are you endeavouring to shut your eyes and ears, and steel your heart against the message, and return to your former state of carelessness and sinful indulgence?

Shall we offer any further reasons for immediate attention to the concerns of eternity? Time enough has run to waste already. Time is a precious talent; one for which sinners must soon give account. One year, yea, one day, one precious Sabbath is too much to spend in sleep, while time is wafting the soul swiftly downward to the pit. Some are in their youth, and have not squandered many precious years away. But those few are too many to take from the service of the benevolent God that bestowed them, and give to the worst enemy of him and ourselves. But some have slept away long lives, and they are near the end of their earthly course. And will they sleep on? And are they resolved to awake only in hell, or at most on the dying bed? Oh, it is enough to arouse our tenderest sympathies, to see immortal souls who have a hell to escape, and a heaven to gain, as unconcerned as if heaven and hell had no existence. And it is only obeying the better impulses of our nature, to cry to them in the earnest language of the shipmaster, "What meanest thou, O sleeper." The storm of wrath is raging, the waves of damnation roll high; for "God is angry with the wicked every day;" and they will soon sink among the fiery billows, unless they awake to the awful realities of their condition.

We have seen that delay only makes the work more difficult. Every hour of impenitence bears the soul farther from heaven and God, and brings it nearer to the world of woe. The heart becomes more absorbed in the world, and more hardened in sin. And gospel-hardened sinners will soon be gospel-condemned sinners, unless they repent. And we know not how soon the offers of mercy may cease. Life is but a vapour. The brittle thread may be cut at any moment. The midnight cry will come. The grave will open for the gayest, the clods will rumble on their coffin-lids, and the wild winds of heaven will sweep and moan over their dark narrow dwellings. But even while life lasts,

there may be a sealing of the soul's eternal doom. Mercy may cease to call, and the Spirit no more convince, and the unbelieving heart may be left to itself, long before death comes.

And now, sinner, will you sleep on? Must we leave you where we found you, or in a still more hopeless condition? The three young men above Niagara Falls slept too long. They awoke only in time to agonize in view of their own destruction. The foolish virgins slept too long, when they awoke they had not time to go and buy oil. So may you sleep too long. We entreat you awake now, for "you know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh."

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT.

And canst thou, sinner, slight
 The call of love divine?
 Shall God with tenderness invite,
 And gain no thought of thine?

Wilt thou not cease to grieve
 The Spirit from thy breast,
 Till he thy wretched soul shall leave
 With all thy sins oppressed?

To-day a pardoning God
 Will hear the suppliant pray;
 To-day a Saviour's cleansing blood
 Will wash thy guilt away.

But grace so dearly bought,
 If yet thou wilt despise,
 Thy fearful doom with vengeance fraught,
 Will fill thee with surprise.

SLOTHFULNESS LAMENTED.

My drowsy powers, why sleep ye so ?

Awake, my sluggish soul ;
Nothing has half thy work to do,
Yet nothing's half so dull.

The little ants, for one poor grain,
Labour and toil and strive ;
Yet we who have a heaven to obtain,
How negligent we live !

We, for whose sake all nature stands,
And stars their courses move ;
We, for whose guard the angel bands
Come flying from above :

We, for whom God the Son came down,
And laboured for our good,
How careless to secure that crown
He purchased with his blood !

Lord, shall we lie so sluggish still,
And never act our parts ?
Come, Holy Spirit, come and fill,
And wake, and warm our hearts.

Then shall our active spirits move,
Upward our souls shall rise ;
With hands of faith and wings of love,
We'll fly and take the prize.