

The Man under the Seat ;

or, The Right Way and the Wrong.



THE train for Durban had come to a standstill at the Ladysmith station, and I was just about to take my seat, when I noticed a lady in a second-class carriage calling in an excited way to the conductor.

"Has that man any right there?" she exclaimed, pointing to some object under the seat of the compartment in which she was travelling.

Stooping down, and looking in the place to which the lady pointed, the conductor saw a man, stretched at full length upon the floor, as close to the partition as he could get, evidently with the desire of concealing himself as much as possible.

Grasping him by the shoulder, the conductor bade him get up. Slowly the man crawled out, and at length stood upon the platform with a guilty, scared expression on his face.

"Who are you? Where do you come from?" asked the official.

No answer being forthcoming, the conductor turned to the lady.

"Where did this man get in?"

"I do not know," she replied. "I have come from Volksrust myself, and he must have been in the train before I got in. I expect he has come from Johannesburg."

The lady's surmise proved to be correct. The man was evidently one of the many who come out from Europe expecting to make their fortunes at the gold mines on the Rand. Disappointed in his anticipations, and overtaken by the "hard times" that followed the closing of many of the mines, he had found himself stranded, thousands of miles from home, without the means of getting back.

He had evidently boarded the train under cover of darkness, before it left Johannesburg, hoping in that way to get to Durban, where perhaps he would be able again to stow himself away upon some homeward-bound vessel, and thus get back to Europe.

However, he was detected on the way and was not permitted to continue his journey to the wished-for destination.

I could not but pity him. But in a much greater degree is my pity excited at the sight of thousands, whose desire is to reach heaven at last, but who will surely be detected and disappointed because they are

travelling as stowaways.

What do I mean ? I mean that there are many who take their place in the ranks of Christian profession, but who have *no right to be there*. They are Christians in name only. They may imagine that they are all right, that the imposture will not be detected, that they will get to heaven at last. But they are bound in the coils of a terrible delusion.

They are not lawful passengers in the train that is bound for glory. They have no ticket, purchased by the precious blood of Christ. They are without a passport that will secure them admission to the realms of eternal bliss.

Reader, what about you ? Have you a ticket that will carry you to your journey's end ? Or, are you travelling in a way that exposes you to detection and disgrace ?

John Bunyan, in his well-known allegory, the "Pilgrim's Progress," describes two ~~men~~ who came leaping over the wall into the path which Christian

was treading. Their names were Mr. Formalist and Mr. Hypocrisy, and they professed to be going to the Celestial City. But mark the point! None had any right to walk in that way but those who had entered by the wicket-gate! None can rightly call themselves Christians, or hope to reach the golden city, unless they begin with "*repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*" So Mr. Formalist and Mr. Hypocrisy entertained a vain and delusive hope. For a time they appeared to be genuine pilgrims to the better land. But the day came when their true character was discovered. They stood detected! And off they went, the same way as they had come, and never reached the desired goal after all.

Profession of Christianity, without real repentance and faith in Christ, will never take you to heaven. It can but make a stowaway of you. The shell of religion without the kernel is worse than worthless. The form of godliness without the power is a delusion and a snare.

God must and will have *reality*. Life is real, eternity is real. Heaven is real, hell is real. Your sins are real. Your danger is real. God is real. Salvation is real. *Be real yourself.* Do not be content with anything short of *the real thing*.

It is far better to come out into the light *now*, and stand exposed in God's presence with all the guilt of your sinful life upon you, than to wait for the ruthless hand of judgment to drag you from your hiding-place and unmask you before the Throne.

Do not say that you will trust the Lord to help you, and ask Him to make you different to what you have been. *There is a prior question to be settled* before you can talk like that.

Suppose that when the stowaway was discovered at Ladysmith station someone had been found willing to pay his fare on to the coast. Suppose that a gentleman had put his hand in his pocket and said, "Conductor, the fare from here to Durban is £1 11s. 8d. Here is the amount; give the man a ticket."

"No, sir," the conductor would have replied; "the man has already travelled from Johannesburg to this place without a ticket. Before he can proceed further payment must be made for the distance he has already come."

The conductor would be right. In the same way, before you can rightly talk about the future, there is the question of your *past* to be considered. "God requireth that which is past."

"Is there anything I can do for you?" said a gentleman to a dying lad whom he was visiting.

"Do?" replied the lad; "O sir, can you *undo*?"

It is *undoing* that a sinner needs, in view of having to meet a God of infinite holiness.

What you need, reader, is something that can undo the past.

And it is of such a thing that the gospel speaks. There is power in the precious blood of Christ to cancel all the sins of your life, to wipe out from the page of God's recording book all the deeds of guilt which you have committed. Through the work which Jesus has accomplished on the cross your sinful past may be *undone*, so that God can say, "*Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*"

Is not this what you need? It may become true of you to-day. It *will* be true of you when, in all sincerity, you put your trust in Christ. The moment you do that God will account you clear of every charge, through the merits of His blood. You will be "justified from all things."

Your future, too, will be assured. Not only will your sins be forgiven and put away, but you will have a through ticket to glory provided for you. And *such* a ticket!

When a man takes a ticket for any long railway journey, say from Cape Town to Johannesburg, he has to provide his own meals on the way. But if he is going on a voyage across the ocean and books his passage by one of the magnificent liners that ply between South Africa and England, he gets a ticket *which includes all meals on the journey*. That is similar to what a sinner obtains when he comes to Christ for salvation. He not only receives a free pardon, but is amply provided for all along the way. Christ is his righteousness. Christ is his upholder. Christ is his food. Christ is his refuge in the day of trouble. Christ is his resource in the hour of temptation.

Reader, He invites you to come to Him. But you must be sure and come the right way.

There is a right way, and a wrong way of coming. The wrong way is to come as the stowaway came on board the train for Durban. He did not reach his destination because he came the wrong way. Nor will you ever reach the wished-for goal unless you come the right way. The *wrong* way to come to the Saviour is to come with promises, and vows, and resolutions, and efforts. The *wrong* way to come is to come fancying that you have a little strength, and

that all that you need is to be *helped* in your endeavours to please God.

The *right* way to come is to come empty-handed ; uttering no vow, making no promise, abandoning all hope in self, and trusting, as a naked, helpless, hell-deserving rebel, in the love and power and blood of Christ.

Trust Him *like that*, and you will obtain—what ?

As to the past—Peace !

As to the present—Grace !

As to the future—Glory !

For the Bible says : “ Being justified by faith we have **Peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom also we have access by faith into this **Grace** wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the **Glory** of God.” (Romans v. 1, 2.)

