

a community called ...

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THE
TRACT BOOK
SERIES



My Son, give me thine Heart.

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My Son, give me thine Heart.

AN EARNEST APPEAL

TO SINNERS OF ALL AGES AND CLASSES IN BEHALF OF
THE CLAIMS OF JESUS.



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MY SON, GIVE ME THINE HEART.

How carelessly we put the number of the current year to the date of a letter. We have done it ever since we could write. And before that it used to be written for us, like copperplate, on the clean new copy-book. Then it shone on the brightly bound prize at school or college. When you sign a transfer, attest a signature, or give a receipt, the same four figures are mechanically added. When you put your name to the marriage contract, registered the baby's birth, or wrote out the inscription for the white stone that covers all you loved, the traces which struck you less than any the pen drew were the closing figures 18—. Those four figures, what do they mean? Changing with the chang-

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ing year, with the decade, with the century—they do ever anew attest a love unchanging and divine. ANNO DOMINI—what is its signification? It tells me that, as many hundred years ago, ONE about whom, up to this hour, I have felt but little more concern than about any other sage or benefactor of our race—ONE left the bosom of heaven to die for *me*.

Why does language altogether fail? Why are there no words, unused hitherto—words not so familiar and dull in our ears, that might express, and not fail to startle, carrying the message of a love like this? ANNO DOMINI—so carelessly written, passed over as the paging of the book, or the vague etcetera—it is the blood upon the lintel, which warns Death's angel from my door. It is the mark of the Lamb, which cries to the avenger of blood, PASS OVER. Why did not Satan, who has been able, in so many ways, to cloud the great Sacrifice from man's eye, not make the reckonings of his world to

depart from some other point than the era of GRACE? China lets her cycles run out under each new emperor's name. But in Christendom we keep all our reckonings under the shadow of the manger of Bethlehem.

Wanderer from thy God, misled and befooled till now by the god of this lost world, who arrivest near the journey's end, having neglected ordinances, and lost thy Bible by the way, raise thine eye! See one waymark left, planted by a bleeding hand in this waste for thee. He knew that to-day thou shouldest stop here a moment to gaze on it. It speaks of his blood, his love, his sacrifice. Each time you see the date of this passing year, take it for the sign of a love which language cannot render, until you take him for your own. Let it say, "He loved me and gave himself for *me*." Let it not only carry to the books of God its tales of war and crime, with all the events and ongoings of your daily life, but also

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witness that, on one of its short-lived days, he saw you turn from sin and idols to serve the God of love. Even if you refuse to turn at his call, if still your eye avoid the Bible page, your foot turn from the sanctuary, your lip from the cup of blessing, the *year of grace* shall show forth, before you and all men, the Lord's death till he come.

You feel that no man has a right to dictate a belief to you ; that it is a matter entirely between your own mind and God. You find yourself in this world, launched on an eternal existence without your being consulted. You refuse submission to a law, to the framing of which you were no party. Friend, God made you ; God has work for you ; God leaves you no alternative now but to receive his Son as your substitute, or to die the death everlasting for your sins. Are you not set down in the palace of a King ? Whose hands built such a home for you ? So vast is it, that the longest life spent in

travel would leave many chambers still unvisited. So full of wonders is it, that you cannot turn your body, nor lift what lies next you, and looks simplest, without coming on something you cannot explain. How fair the furnishing ! With lakes for mirrors, and sunshine scattering gold, with flooring of city streets, fields, gardens with their myriad flowers, and prairie wilderness, what a fair mosaic it must seem to angel visitors as they draw near ! And then the roofing of our home, the sparkling splendor, the order and the calm of these starry skies, does it not seem to snatch our very faith from us, to restore it as quickly, set in borrowed brilliants !

But for the long quarrel between God and you there would be naught to jar. You never heard of any one who bears testimony to the blood of the Lamb having washed his soul, being upset in mind, by unexplained, *apparent* inconsistencies in the word or works of God. When,

reconciled to him, you shall take your first walk along with the Voice that told Adam in the cool of the day all he asked, you will perhaps praise him most for putting you down among those wonders that now perplex and pain you, since the future shall explain them all. You find yourself set down here—will you not allow it—a hired servant? You have not yet met the Master. You arrive at this point in your destiny, scarcely knowing how or why. Others are busy all around you, but they have no right over you, and you owe them nothing. No one has yet spoken to you that seemed to have the right.

In the entrance-hall there lies a book, sealed, and directed to yourself: “To you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men.” It contains all that the Lord of the house sees it right to tell you of the past, present, and future. It speaks mainly of HIMSELF, and only takes up other things in so far as they may show

you what he has been to others, and make very plain what he is willing to become to *you*. And since he is still to you a stranger, and since his eye has watched and scanned you ever since you first breathed, *how precious* may not that book be to you! For it offers you a place of meeting in secret with himself; it promises that *there* he shall reveal to you all the rest. How are you using the book? Reverently? Fairly? Passing the open door of the study of a deist, one who intensely loved him entered it, and, lifting the pocket polyglot, *covered with marks*—marked more than perhaps any Christian's Bible ever was—said, “Can the owner of that Bible perish?”

The friend, who saw where it opened, said nothing; the marks were all to note imagined slips or failures in the truth of the divine record. Will you who read this pray that the owner of that polyglot may yet become a confessor of Christ, and never hear him say, “Depart from me?”

The heart of the friend who is praying for *you* would not be so near the breaking did he but know that you had had one hour *alone with Christ*, and then made up your mind, after trial, to have nothing to do with him; or to leave your union with him to the meager possibilities of a dying hour. His grief about you lies in this thought:

“That man, whom I ever loved, but who has become trebly dear to me since I learned to love his soul, is passing on, amid remarkable providences, through hard discipline, still bartering his soul for shadows—BLINDFOLD. He suspects not the existence of this love of Christ, which gives me summer all the year, and shall be my perennial spring of joy. And my terror is that he will arrive among the realities of the unseen still deceived, still BLIND. One of those I love lies behind a screen of infidelity, with its hundred shades of disbelief. The vision of another is built round with forms and cere-

monies—the Church shutting out the Saviour. The professed faith of another is congealed by rationalism. Pleasure does the same thing in another case. For it matters little in the end whether they lean on a devil's or a so-called angel's arm on the journey, since every way Christ is missed—*met and passed by*—on the thoroughfare of life, unknown. And the waking—the dreadful waking of these my friends in the dark land whither they are bound!

“Saviour God, let not my name at least be remembered by them there, as one of those who kept up for them the illusion, consented by timid silence to the deceit, so varied in each case, so effectual in all!”

It is in such thoughts that your praying friend spends much of his daytime, and many a night hour besides; while he trusts in God's strength and pleads in Christ's name, that the next effort made for your salvation may be crowned by

the descent of the Holy Ghost into your heart. How encouraged he would be if he knew what trembling of heart is often felt behind the stout and loud defense you raise against every stroke of the hammer, every thrust of the sword! How his heart would swell if he but saw how you do at times pine to be at his side, on the Rock of ages, safe under faith's great shield! How he would rejoice if he but knew by what a thin cord Satan has you bound! For do not men's consciences often carry them *all but* through the strait gate? Does not a Christian example *all but* allure them to the narrow way? Do not heaven's songs become audible enough to ravish their hearts? And is it not the fearful strength of the satanic power that turns the scale so frightfully for the choosing of the second death? "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." But the slave-master whispers, "No; not yet;" and, crouching and ashamed, the poor captive—the noblest and best of un-

regenerate men—follows him like the ox to the slaughter.

How love changes a man's likings, history, destiny! A new object flits before his eye, secures his heart, and the world is new to him; and if earth's love can do it, how much more Heaven's! Volumes of sermons will not illustrate to you the change which must pass over you, and make you new, as will the recollection of that hour in your history when first love mounted into the empty throne. Methinks these were made to be the sunniest moments of our earthly history, that they might illustrate and foreshadow the love-triumph of the Saviour in the soul of man. What can be the fascination of the story of earthly love, that those who live on the husks of the world continue, from sixteen to sixty, to read a thousand variations of the same story? Various attractive to them otherwise these novels are said to be, but does not the interest which they possess mainly hinge on the

spot where a double shadow first falls upon the page?

Going with a message, when a child, into the room of an old maiden lady, one of the most active and sensible of her sex, and having a large establishment to superintend in a country house, we found her reading-lamp set for the night, and three soiled volumes lying by the bed.

“Ah,” said she, “I never sleep till two or three o’clock in the morning, and these are all to keep me cheerful.”

Poor novel reader, who seek there to varnish the faded colors of your own life, what would you think of yielding your soul up to be the stage and scene of a transaction, of a union, compared to which earth’s best is but a frail, faint symbol, and the unreal world you live in a tinsel dream? Let it pass—that mirage glare which the shilling novels keep afloat before your eyes to cover the mile-stones on the way to hell—let it go! The outline of the undiscovered heaven lies right

before you. Quicker than did Columbus's heart beat as he neared the new world, and first saw his white sail darkened by the land-bird's wing, shall yours beat at the sight of that halo of coming glory.

You feel that it is very trying for you to begin to look out for *terra firma* to plant the sole of your foot on for eternity now when life is so far spent. It is sad to write down opposite all that busy life of well-doing toward your fellow-men a *cipher*, in so far as fulfilling the end of your being is concerned. You cannot consent to come in at the same gate of life with those who have broken all the rules you have fought so well to keep.

And then, it is so hard not quite to see what is truth—who is right and who is wrong—even though one has helped to put one's own eyes out. God will not make light of one of your honest difficulties, as men may seem to do. The Master never did so when he was on earth. Did he not love the outwardly blameless young man,

because he was blameless; while, with a deep divine compassion, his heart, as Redeemer, went furthest out in love to the most deeply fallen? Grace abounds to the uttermost; but it offers no premium for abounding sin. He who extends it to men abhors that they should, up to the hour of their salvation, have polluted their fellow-creatures, and added the filth of other men's natures to their own by associating with the vile. God cannot, at conversion, take the memories of his saints from them, so as to erase what sin has written there. It is doubtful even if he will do this for us in the future state, or whether he will have us still to remember the whole past, so that we shall veil our faces closer than others do, and cry more loudly, "Worthy is the Lamb."

Fear not to deal candidly and truly with the Friend of sinners. It is no mocking call he is now sounding in your ears. It is no siren song to lure you amid delusions. It is the honest truth-speaking

Promiser of life eternal who says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please me; for he that cometh unto me must believe that I am, and that I am a rewarder of all them that diligently seek me." Does your faith reach that far? O, you believe that *he is!* Down the slippery steep of atheism you dare not go, to lose your footing in the second death. Your prayer at your mother's knee when you were a boy forbids it. And then, is he not a rewarder of them that diligently seek him? Have you no Christian friend whose image is called up by these words, none on whose face the reward is written plain as with the alphabet? Then, will you diligently seek this God? The Spirit of God will be in your heart to help you the *moment* you believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder. The moment you cease to mock at God, God *will* let light fall inwardly. Put out your hand in the dark; you will feel it is taken hold of by One you do not see; One you never *can*

see but in the face of Christ Jesus. *Diligence* has just the same meaning in the search after God as it has in any worldly investigation. If you heard that a friend was *diligently* looking into his accounts, your fancy would conjure up all that was passing in his study. Or if you heard a botanist was out after a rare specimen of plant, you would know which hills to seek him on. Man uses the same set of faculties when he seeks *diligently* after God.

When he sees the whole truth at once, he is indeed found, the same hour, awe-stricken, beating on his breast, raining tears on the spot he kneels on. The fairest life man ever led, be it but ripped up by the sword of the Spirit, and shone on by the Holy Ghost, will be a sight more vile than can be borne, and will be carried in that hour to Calvary, plunged into the fountain, and there made an end of. Friend, for one look thither, *thou* shalt have that free and entire salvation now.

"THERE IS LIFE FOR A LOOK AT THE CRUCIFIED ONE,
THERE IS LIFE AT THIS MOMENT FOR THEE."

But *if you will* walk round and round and round this Calvary first, instead of reaching at a bound the heart upon the tree, *His* hand is patient enough to keep your steps. It provokes you to hear your fellow-creatures professing to cut in a second the knot that has kept you puzzling all your thinking days. Leave them all behind, and go to HIM.

"When I was a boy at school," said a distinguished speaker to a deeply solemnized audience, "I saw a sight I never can forget, a man tied to a cart and dragged before the people's eyes through the streets of my native town, his back torn and bleeding from the lash. It was a shameful punishment. For many offenses? No, for one offense. Did any of the townsmen offer to divide the lashes with him? No; he who committed the offense bore the penalty all alone. It was the penalty of a changing human

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law, for it was the last instance of its infliction.

“When I was a student at the university I saw another sight I never can forget—a man brought out to die. His arms were pinioned, his face was already pale as death—thousands of eager eyes were on him as he came up from the jail in sight. Did any man ask to die in his room? Did any friend come and loose the rope, and say, ‘Put it round my neck, I die instead?’ No, he underwent the sentence of the law. For many offenses? No, for one offense. He had stolen a money parcel from a stage-coach. He broke the law at one point, and died for it. It was the penalty of a changing human law in this case also; it was the last instance of capital punishment being inflicted for that offense.

“I saw another sight—it matters not when—myself a sinner standing on the brink of ruin, deserving naught but hell. For one sin? No, for many, many sins,

committed against the unchanging laws of God. But again I looked, and saw Jesus my Substitute scourged in my stead, and dying on the cross for me. I looked, and cried, and was forgiven. And it seemed to me to be my duty to come here to tell you of that Saviour, to see if you will not also LOOK AND LIVE."

"Bound upon the accursed tree,
Faint and bleeding, who is He?
By the eyes so pale and dim,
Streaming blood and writhing limb,
By the flesh with scourges torn,
By the crown of twisted thorn,
By the side so deeply pierced,
By the baffled burning thirst,
By the drooping death-dewed brow,
Son of Man! 'tis Thou, 'tis Thou!

"Bound upon the accursed tree,
Dread and awful, who is He!
By the sun at noonday pale,
Shivering rocks and rending veil,
By earth that trembles at his doom,
By yonder saints who burst their tomb,
By Eden promised ere He died
To the felon at his side,
Lord! our suppliant knees we bow,
Son of God! 'tis Thou, 'tis Thou!"

And how simple it all becomes when God opens the eye. A friend who lately came from Paris told me of an English groom there, a very careless old man, who had during a severe illness been made to feel that he was a sinner. He dared not die as he was. The clergyman whom he sent for got tired of visiting him, having told him all he himself then knew of the way of salvation. But one Sunday afternoon the groom's daughter waited in the vestry after church, saying,

“You *must* come once more, sir; I cannot see my father again without you.”

“I can tell him nothing new,” said the preacher, “but I may take the sermon I have been preaching and read it to him.”

The dying man lay as before in anguish, thinking of his sins, and whither they must carry him. “My friend, I have come to read you the sermon I have just preached. First, I shall tell you the text, ‘He was wounded for our transgressions.’ Now I shall read.” “Hold!” said the

dying man, "I have it! read no more; 'He was wounded for my transgressions.'"

Soon after he died, rejoicing in Christ's righteousness. When I heard the story, I remembered Archimedes running through the streets of Syracuse straight from the bath, where he had found out in bathing the secret of testing whether the king's crown had or had not been alloyed by the goldsmith in making it. And as he ran he cried, "I have found it! I have found it!"

Poor philosopher, you had only found out a new principle in science! Happy groom, you have found in Jesus Christ a crown for your immortal soul!

The clergyman who visited the dying groom was thus led to seek and find salvation.

How happy the Magi must have been when Herod hypocritically said, "Go, and search *diligently* for the young child." They had had a long, long journey in the track of that star. The star was put in the sky by the loving hand that made the

manger-bed so soft and safe for the Babe—the Son of God. Herod was a devil's servant, yet he helped on the true-hearted Magi in the search. Friend, *all things will help on your search if it is honest.* Even Satan's own lies will be made to write truth backward before your eyes if you are honest. A soul seeking for the truth in the word of God cannot be long parted from Christ, the eternal Son. Nay, for he is Truth; and, all unknown to you, his Spirit is creating the honest heart within you that seeks the truth. The Magi had, no doubt, difficulty whither to turn at Bethlehem. An inn! A manger! How often they may have passed the Eastern hostelrie, saying, "There are not many streets to search; and *here*, at least, He cannot be." But their journey has been long, and their search is for *a Saviour*. What can arrest it? Nothing, till they at last press in, bending over the new-born Child with wistful, tearful eyes.

“Yon cottager who weaves at her own door,
Pillow and bobbins all her little store,
Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes,
Her title to a treasure in the skies.”

Is that Bible still a labyrinth to you?
Seek the clue in the manger of Bethlehem.
Lift the Babe. Worship him; and slowly,
surely, as by miracle, you will see, as
it were, a million golden cords radiating
from the glory round his head, binding
all truth to him. God, when he puts you
in possession of the most inscrutable of
mysteries, will make you willing to let all
smaller difficulties lie over unexplained,
till his own time to reveal them has
come.

It requires but a slender portion of intellect to receive the truth of God. Surely the possession of a great intellect ought not to put you beyond reach of it.

A poor half-witted man, who was brought in to a catechising instruction,

because the pastor insisted that every one on the farm should be present, answered thus :

“Have you a soul?”

“No, sir.”

“What! no soul?”

“I once had a soul; but I couldn’t keep it, and I gave it to Christ, and now I’ve no soul.”

Still more touching were her words who had been denied admission to the communion-table in a Western Island. After long years of deprivation of ordinances, brethren had come to preach to the poor Highlanders, and to spread the table of communion for God’s children among them. Many were found thirsting for the ordinance, but one poor woman could not be got to answer any question intelligently. As she was going away she turned to the brethren, saying,

“You may keep me out; but as the lint-bell turns to the sun, so my soul turns to the Saviour.”

Right joyfully they gave her the hand of Christian fellowship.

Young man, it will not demean you to be Christ's. It will immeasurably raise you. The talents you possess will never truly shine out till then. All that is worth keeping in you will harden and purify in the furnace of his love; and what is vile it will consume and melt away. Already has he not been speaking to you? You wept sore when he took your little sister to be a jewel in his golden crown. But is he not going to take you too—in answer to her prayer—to be part of the sickle he holds in his royal hand for reaping souls? A part of his Church he already wears for a garment of glory, and of part he has made the great sickle gleaming in his hand.

“But he wont have me,” say you? “’twas only last week I mocked a dear fellow who asked me to come to Jesus. He never can love the like of *me*.”

Say not so! The tear in your eye, the

thought that wrings your heart, show that God is near. Bow your neck low in grief and shame ; and even from the scorers' company Christ will lift you weeping, to dry your tears, and send you to-morrow to gather souls. That is how the great Reaper whets his hook in our days. He takes scorers and idlers and makes them new creatures, and then puts them at the edge of his sickle to cut down the golden grain—confessors of his power to save. Go back to him whom you mocked at last week. Say to him, "I am so vexed at myself for what I did ; but I'm going to be Christ's now ; tell me how." So shall all the ill you meant him be soon undone, and he shall have the deep, deep joy of being your soul-gatherer. And now you will work with him for Christ. You saw the magnet gather to it all the loose fragments of steel ; splinters that seemed nothing worth it drew, and they at once drew others. And so, over your weak, sinful heart the Lord will bend his sickle,

draw you in, and straightway you too will be a soul-gatherer. "Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness of these things which thou hast seen."

You need not envy Howard for having been the one to take filth from dungeons, and bring to the poor prisoners light and air. For now it is to be *your* life's work to carry captives to the King's throne for pardon, and lead their voices in the first sweet song of praise. You will find out that there are captives to free everywhere around you as soon as you get your own chain broken. This work will go on the better in your hands that you are the best and busiest workman at your trade. Hal lan Page, the carpenter, died at forty-three, saying, "I have evidence that more than one hundred souls have been converted to God through my own direct personal instrumentality," *mourning* only that he had not given himself more fer-

vently to the work. Wilberforce did the same work among his own circle, while keeping his place in the senate and toiling for the negro. Five minutes—*prayed* for, *watched* for, and *not let slip* when found—is long enough to tell a friend, a fellow-workman, or a stranger, about his danger and immediate salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Few words are needed when the heart is full. They will not often give offense, if the love that prompts them gushes up from the heart's depths, and is very modestly spoken.

In your search after pearls for the King's diadem you will cast many doubtful things aside, along with things unlawful. You will fear to leave one snare near a fellow-creature's path by doing what *might* be safe for you, yet dangerous to *him*. Some will say you must be built up before you try to save sinners. Yet it was not so when Christ was on earth. No sooner had Andrew, at John's testimony, believed in Jesus, than "he first

findeth his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias. And he brought him to Jesus." The next day Jesus calls Philip, and Philip straightway finds and brings Nathaniel. In the same measure that the discovery of the Lord is bright and definite will the beholder hasten to communicate and share it. No work will so build you up, graft you deep, knit your very soul to Christ, as this work. How often will it send you to your Bible for a promise; how often to your own breast, to read afresh your pardon there! And while your hands are busy with daily work your heart will be stealing up the short, sweet path to the mercy-seat, to lay in Christ's hand the dear name of the last soul you spoke to for him, and to ask him to send you another soon. Trust him to arrange your work beforehand. Sometimes there will come glorious Alma days of swift victory, when God's love shall, in your sight, make sudden conquest of the souls

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of men. Again, it will be like the slow siege work of impregnable Sebastopol; but at the *slowest* never grudged, because of the love you bear to Christ and them. It will become your cordial, your luxury, your heart's leisure amid a life of toil.