

THE
DUNGEON
AND
THE LADDER.

"I sink in deep mire where there is no standing." PSALM lxix. 2.

"Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink." PSALM lxix. 14.

"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."
PSALM xi. 2.

"Then will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Saviour I have found;
I'll point to thy redeeming blood,
And say, "Behold the way to God."

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Annie Emlen
from mother
1810

THE
D U N G E O N
AND
T H E L A D D E R.

A POOR man was once shut up in a dark and dreary dungeon, into which the cheerful light of day never entered. The floor was miry and dirty, and the clothes of the unhappy man were spotted and stained all over. He had been a long time in prison, and he was very weary of confinement, and earnestly longed for deliverance, but he knew of no way by which he might escape. The walls of the dungeon were high, and there appeared to him no possibility of climbing up to the one narrow opening by which alone he could get out ; indeed,

he had often wearied himself with attempting it, but in vain ; and in addition to the difficulties, he found that he was as weak as a little child, and utterly unable to help himself. This made him very sad, and he gave himself up for lost. Often did the walls of his prison resound with his groans ;—often did the bitter tears run down his pallid cheeks, and sometimes, when his despair and agony were at the greatest, he would utter piercing cries for help. One day, when he had been doing thus, he was surprised to see a faint light at the entrance of the prison ; it was like the cheerful light of day, and he heard a kind and gentle voice, whispering to him, and asking him, if he would like to come out of that dungeon. He thought at first he must be dreaming, but the invitation was again and again repeated, and every time with more and more earnest persuasion ; so that, at

length, he found that it was really true. He sprung joyfully upon his feet, but all at once his countenance became sadder than ever, and he said, "O, why did you come to mock me by asking me to come out of such a prison as this, without providing a way by which I might escape?" As he said these words, the light, which had gradually become brighter, filled his dungeon, and a bright sunbeam suddenly lighted it up in every direction, and to his unspeakable delight he saw a ladder lying in one corner, which, owing to the darkness, he had never perceived before. He hastily seized it, and placed it against the wall of the dungeon; then taking up a large bundle of dirty tattered clothes which lay upon the floor, he began to ascend, reached the top of the ladder, but all the efforts he made to get out were vain, for the bundle in his hand would not go through; and yet, he was quite un-

willing to leave it behind, and tried again and again, but to no purpose ; at last, after wearying himself with the efforts he made, he felt that he must either leave it behind him, or remain in the dungeon ; so casting it away, he crept through, and found himself at liberty. The clothes which he had worn in the prison were taken away and replaced by new ones. He was free, and he went on his way rejoicing.

And now, dear reader, what do we learn from this man's history ? By nature, we are all lying in darkness and the shadow of death. We are spotted with sin, we are unclean, unclean ! We know not what to do ; we cannot help ourselves, and we know of no way of escape. We try to establish a righteousness of our own, but find no true peace. The Saviour sees our sad condition, he sends his Holy Spirit to enlighten us, he sends us his word to

invite us to come forth. He shows us the only way by which we can escape. We hear it with joy, but still cling to the filthy rags of our own righteousness, until finding, by repeated and bitter experience, that it is useless, we cast all away, and trusting alone to the all-sufficient merits of Jesus, we are set free, and, clothed in the robes of his perfect righteousness, we go on our way rejoicing.

It is impossible for a man to be a Christian, without having Christ ; and if he have Christ, he has at the same time all that is in Christ. What gives peace to the conscience is, that by faith our sins are no more ours, but Christ's, upon whom God hath laid them all ; and that, on the other hand, all Christ's righteousness is ours, to whom God hath given it.

Christ lays his hand upon us, and we are healed. He casts his mantle upon us, and we are clothed; for he is the glorious Saviour, blessed for ever.

“ And can it be that I should gain
 An interest in the Saviour’s blood?
 Died he for me who caused his pain?
 For me who Him to death pursued?
 Amazing love! how can it be,
 That thou, my Lord, should’st die for me.

’Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
 Who can explore this strange design?
 In vain the first-born seraph tries
 To sound the depths of love Divine!
 ’Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
 Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left his Father’s throne above,
 (So free, so infinite his grace!)
 Emptied himself of all but love,
 And bled for Adam’s helpless race.
 ’Tis mercy all, immense and free,
 For O, my God, it found out me!

Long my imprison'd spirit lay

Fast bound in sin and nature's night ;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray—

I woke—the *dungeon* flamed with light ;
My chains fell off, my heart was free ;
I rose, went forth, and follow'd Thee.

No condemnation now I dread,

Jesus, and all in Him, is mine ;
Alive in Him my living Head,

And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my
own.”

But if, dear reader, you cannot adopt the language of this hymn as your own, if you have not yet come to Jesus, and found rest to your soul, then I entreat you to delay not another hour ; come *now*. You will have heaven if you come : hell must be your portion if you do not come. Pray to God to draw you.—Come quickly.—You may be less disposed to come to-morrow ; yea, to-morrow itself

may never come to you. You need not be afraid to come, for he says, (and you may believe him,) "he will in no wise cast you out." Make no excuses. Say not, I am ignorant. Come to Him, and He will teach you. Say not, I have a hard heart. Come to Him, and He will soften it. Say not, I have a corrupt heart. Come to Him, and He will sanctify it. Say not, I am a great sinner;—this is the very reason why you should come. "This man receiveth sinners;" He came on purpose to save them, and bids you come that He may save you. Think not, foolishly, — first to mend yourselves, and then come to Him; you will never be better till you do come.

If you wait till you are better,
 You will never come at all;
 Not the righteous,
 Sinners, Jesus came to call.

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H Y M N.

No strength of nature can suffice
To serve the Lord aright;
And what she has she misapplies,
For want of clearer light.

How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress!
I toil'd the precept to obey,
But toil'd without success.

Then, to abstain from outward sin,
Was more than I could do;
Now, if I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too.

Then, all my servile works were done
A righteousness to raise;
Now, freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose his ways.

What shall I do, was then the word,
That I may worthier grow?
What shall I render to the Lord?
Is my inquiry now.