

SOVEREIGN MERCY.

A BUSHMAN'S CONVERSION.

BY GEO. C.



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GEORGE H——, until the spring of this year, was a “bushman” of the ordinary type, quite indifferent to anything beyond his daily bread, and hardened enough to be abusive if anything was pressed upon him as to eternal realities or his own soul’s deep need. Like most of his class, he was much given to bad language, but otherwise a steady, quiet man. Some years ago he had saved enough money to take twenty acres of land. Having built his hut upon it, he devoted his time chiefly to onion-growing, and was thereby able to earn a living for himself. By much

self-denial he managed, at last, to get a horse and cart. But things did not go smoothly with him. God cared too much for his soul to allow him to settle down comfortably in such spiritual destitution. Adversity overtook him in various shapes, such as the loss of crops, accidents, etc.; but none of these things as yet appeared to move him to care for his soul, or to turn to God in any way. Even an accident which dislocated both his wrists, and rendered him helpless for months, left him as hard as ever. He still turned to "his own way," forgetting God and, as he would have said himself at that time, "by God forgot," as though in that secluded spot he was entirely beyond God's notice.

But oh, the untiring patience of a Saviour-God! Truly He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. 'Have I any pleasure at all that the

wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" (Ezek. xviii. 23). In verses 31, 32 He answers His own gracious question, saying, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God."

Some few months ago another so-called misfortune overtook him, which, while bringing out more distinctly than ever the wickedness of his heart, was through God's grace but another link in the chain that drew him nearer to everlasting blessing. His horse one day suddenly dropped down dead. This more than astonished him, for he had always treated the poor animal well, and there was no apparent cause for this sudden occurrence. He was greatly concerned at its loss, but evidently said little about it to others.

Had it come into his mind that one day *he* might suddenly fall down dead? Had the inquiry been thrust upon him—If I should die thus, what next? The death of a horse is not of much consequence beyond the loss to his master. Not so the death of a sinner. Who can weigh all that hangs upon a sinner's death? Who can measure the sinner's loss? *A soul lost.* Infinity, eternity are of necessity two factors in the calculation, without measure, without end. Who can make the reckoning? Who fully gauge all that is involved in that word *lost*—ETERNALLY LOST?

We know not in which direction G. H.—'s thought turned at this time, but he seems to have brooded a great deal over the loss of his horse, whatever he might have thought of the loss of his soul.

One day when in the bush all alone he fell to blaspheming about it, in

the senseless way such men often do let loose their rage, calling upon God to damn both him and it.

Suddenly, as though a voice spoke, he heard the words, "HE WILL, HE WILL!" (Indeed, he says he actually *did* hear a voice.)

He was instantly both silenced and alarmed. How to account for the voice which he thought he heard is impossible, but of the effect of it there can be no question. Most probably it was God's voice in his conscience.

In a little while the first alarm wore off, and he thought but little more about it till evening, when in his hut alone preparing his tea. Then the conviction fastened itself upon him that GOD had spoken to him, and the thought of his blasphemy greatly troubled him. The remembrance of his past life, his enmity to God, his hatred of the Scriptures, all

came before, him and troubled him exceedingly. The more he dwelt upon it the more certain he felt that he would be "damned," for he was sure he richly deserved it.

He knew of no one close at hand to speak to of these solemn matters, and had nothing in his hut to give him the smallest crumb of comfort or render him the least possible help. A friend had once given him a Bible, but this he had burnt, and as for tracts, he had long made a practice of throwing into the fire all that came to his hand. Indeed, every scrap of printed matter that spoke to him of eternal things he had treated in the same way. How gladly, *now*, would he have turned to something of the kind, and he has nobody but himself to blame that such was not in his possession.

He was now getting into years, and seemed to have lost nearly all

remembrance of the Scripture he had listened to in earlier years. His father was a churchwarden, but one that only made merchandise of religion. Such empty formality was therefore not likely to impress his son very favourably with the reality of divine things. All the poor bushman could now do, therefore, was to go on in soul-darkness and bitter agony, not knowing where to turn for light and relief. He would willingly have travelled some miles to see a certain Christian he knew who kept a store, but the fear that he would think that he was only *pretending* to be religious for the sake of some personal advantage deterred him from going. So he went on, all alone as he was, crying to God for the mercy he so much needed.

One night things took a new turn. He went to a neighbour's house for some "dripping." His neighbour gave

him the fat wrapped in a piece of paper. When he reached home, he unfolded the packet, and noticed, in doing so, that the paper was the outside leaf of *The Leader* newspaper. It so happened that upon this sheet it was usual to print a weekly sermon. This one was by the late C. H. Spurgeon, and entitled "A Simple Sermon for Seeking Souls," on the text "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 13). In the close of this sermon the preacher says, "I know that what the Saviour did He *did*, and if He did redeem He *did* redeem, and those redeemed by Him are positively *redeemed from death and hell and wrath*. I can never bring my mind to the unrighteous idea that Christ was punished for a man and that such a man will be punished again. I never could see how Christ could

stand in a man's stead and be punished for him and yet that man be punished again. No; inasmuch as thou callest on God's name there is proof that Christ is thy ransom. Come, rejoice. If He was punished God's justice cannot demand double [payment], 'first at the bleeding Surety's hands, and then again at thine.' . . . Are you feeling your sins? Do you shed tears in secret on account of them? Do you lament your iniquities? Oh, take His promise—'Whosoever' (sweet 'whosoever!'), 'whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' The devil says it is no use for you to call; you have been a drunkard. Tell him it says, 'whosoever.' 'Nay,' says the evil spirit, 'you have never been to hear a sermon these last ten years.' Tell him it says 'whosoever.' . . . Tell him that—

“ ‘If all the sins that men have done,
In thought, or word, or deed,
Since worlds were made or time begun
Could meet on one poor head,
The blood of Jesus Christ alone
For all this guilt could well atone.’

“ Oh, lay this to thine heart! May God’s Spirit do it! Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

This was just what he had been doing in his distress and loneliness, and here was the unexpected but God-sent answer! God had not answered his angry cry in the bush when he asked Him to damn him, but now that he had begun to cry to Him to save him, the answer of peace He would surely convey to his troubled heart. He who sent Philip to the desert to help the seeking eunuch could arrange that this poor lonely “bushman” should get a message also. What a God!

Well, he sat down at once and eagerly read it through, and thankfully receiving the glad tidings he entered into peace there and then.

A few weeks later he went to see the Christian storekeeper just alluded to. He was very shy about it, but his thirst for the Word of God overcame his reserve and timidity. The storekeeper noticed that the old man seemed considerably agitated, but as he usually had *some* trouble to talk about when he went to the store he did not pay particular attention, not even when the "bushman" asked him if he could have a little talk with him, until he added, hesitatingly, "about *Christianity*."

"Certainly," said the Christian at once, although thinking he had just got some "fit of religion" not uncommon with those lonely bushmen. "At the same time," he said, "I really felt desirous of helping him, and bade

him come in at once, remarking, 'I am always ready to speak of divine things.'"

He went into the dining-room, and at once began to relate the foregoing occurrences. There could be no doubt of the change in his relationship with God. He said, "I have never been so happy in my life." He said also, that all his old love of fiction and of the newspaper had gone: that he now longed for the Word of God. On asking the storekeeper to get him a Bible, he proposed to lend him his own dear mother's, with the many passages which she had marked, and specially directed him to the tenth chapter of John's gospel.

The old man wept as he read it, and, as the storekeeper puts it, "He nearly had me weeping too." His delight and joy in the Word seemed so real.

Two things were exercising him,

he said. He had heard or read that "confession," that is, a public confession of faith, followed salvation. How and to whom was he expected to confess? The storekeeper tried to help him on this matter, and was pleased to find that he had already been telling his old friend, a lonely bachelor bushman like himself, of the great grace which God had been showing him. The other matter was the question of baptism.

On leaving, the storekeeper lent him a book called *Grace and Truth*, and marked in the Bible such passages as he thought would help him to a better understanding of God's grace to him. He asked also for some gospel tracts as he wished to give them to some he knew, and then left, peaceful and happy. He did not speak of his own doings, nor did he *promise* to do anything. His whole bearing was that of one eager to show

his gratitude to God for His boundless grace to him.

One word with *you*, dear reader. Has the grace of God yet shown you what you are, and brought you to the feet of a risen Saviour? Listen to one of His last invitations recorded in Scripture, "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Faith, as she listens to such an utterance, can boldly say, "If He *says* He will, then 'HE WILL, HE WILL.'"

Put Him to the proof, reader. Come to Him at once!

