

"OUT OF DARKNESS

INTO

HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT."

 B_{Y} J. J. J.



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"OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT."

1 Peter ii. 9.

I HAVE a story to tell you, a wonderful story! It is the history of the journey of a soul.

What is the soul?

The soul is the living creature within the body, which moves it and uses it like a machine, and which by its connection with the spirit must exist for ever.

Yes, it must still exist, when the poor case in which it now is caged has worn out and gone to corruption.

What kind of nature does this living creature possess?

You have only to watch the youngest

child to see that Self is its object and Independence its principle.

How came Self to be thus the object of the creature? We should never have known had not the Creator drawn back the veil that hung over the far past, and thus given us a glimpse of that which happened in His earthly paradise long ago.

He has shown us the Serpent infusing his deadly poison into the creature which had been created innocent; the dark usurper enthroning himself in the heart that should have throbbed for its Creator only; the stream of human life poisoned at its source; God distrusted, Satan trusted.

Man had fallen, and darkness—deep, rayless, moral darkness—had settled down upon the fallen race.

"God is light," and it is the journey

of a soul out of this moral darkness into the presence of God that I am about to give you.

The place where the soul whose history I write began its journey was at one of the favourite resorts of fashion in the north of England.

It was during those gloomy months when ever and anon the chill breath of winter lashes the dark waves of the sea into fury, and wraps the earth in its mantle of frost and snow, when the inhabitants of S—, shrinking from the bitter winds, seek shelter and amusement around their own blazing fires, or in concert rooms and well-heated halls.

In a well-appointed house, situated in a good part of the town, a party had assembled to wile away the evening with cards and music. The lamps shone upon a bright scenegay laugh, and graceful compliment, and brilliant repartee were not wanting there. Yet dark as was the winter's night without, there was still deeper darkness brooding over that gay company within. For "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 4.) Had you opened the door of each heart in that gladsome group, you would have found Self enthroned within it, and God forgotten.

Perhaps you question the truth of my assertion, and say, "Not so"; but let me assure you, that had you brought a certain Lamp from its place on the library shelves, and let its light fall upon that thoughtless throng, cries of "Out of place! Out of place!" would have greeted you from every quarter. The darkness would have been manifest indeed, and the searching rays of the Word of God would have been hastily excluded.

Sitting on a stool at her mother's feet was a child of nine years old. She was watching, as children love to do, all the words and actions of her elders. Life was opening brightly for her, and her parents desired that she should enjoy it to the full.

How it was I do not know, but surely it was by no chance that that much-favoured child should have laid her young hand upon the Word of God! She might have closed it carelessly, or cast it hastily from her, but a picture that ornamented its pages had arrested and riveted her attention. The artist had striven to

depict death and hell cast into the lake of fire. The child looked and trembled. Was such a fearful fate to be hers? And now, while music, and song, and game went on around her, her face grew troubled and sad. The glitter and the glory of the scene around her faded from her view, and the stern realities of judgment to come appalled her startled soul. The light of that discarded Lamp had shone through her darkness, and while it had shown her the hollowness and folly of the present, it had disclosed an unwelcome and dreaded future.

She had, by its gleam, caught just one glimpse of the broad road, crowded with thoughtless multitudes dancing, singing, and gaming on the way to eternal ruin.

How could the child keep such a discovery to herself?

She could not; for terror possessed her soul

"I believe," she cried, as she raised her startled and troubled face to her mother's, "I believe that we are all going to hell!"

What a shock to the gay company! What words to break in upon the harmony of such a scene! entrance of Thy words giveth light." (Psalm cxix. 130.)

Stern looks and angry words were turned upon the little speaker. The awkward child was hushed. If she had gazed upon judgment to come, why tell it to them? They who were happy in the darkness.

"And this," cried the Son of God when He stood upon this earth, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because

their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." (John iii. 19, 20.)

"Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled." This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."—ISAIAH 1. 11.

Years had passed on, the child had grown up to early womanhood, but the soul that once had seen could never forget the terrors of judgment to come. Life, with all its pleasures and gaieties, was now before her, but the thunderclouds of coming doom ever shrouded the horizon. How should her soul escape the judgment before it?

She felt and owned the darkness,

yet, shrinking from the Word which had discovered it to her, she turned to man for light; and gazing round, she saw the strange beacon fires blazing, which he has lighted to compass himself about with sparks. Striving to find his own way back to God, he throws the light of his own reason upon himself, judges himself thereby, and if not in mercy awakened, plunges into the blackness of darkness for ever.

False lights! false lights! which, like the beacons kindled by wreckers on an iron coast, lure poor souls to their ruin.

And now this terrified soul, dragged the body in which it lived through numberless outward rites, striving by will-worship and many ordinances to fit itself for the presence of a holy God. Four times a day she knelt in the dim light of a stately church; Sunday after Sunday she received the sacrament, meekly kneeling at the altar rails; and every spare moment she wended her way to places where man told her she could best meet and propitiate an angry God.

But peace—could there be peace in such a path?

NEVER. And why not? Because the terrified soul still wailed of a darkness that could be felt, and cried through the gloom, "How do I know that I shall find mercy at last?" "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." There must be pardon and cleansing before there can be worship.

Worship is the glad adoration of a delivered soul.

But of deliverance this young girl knew nothing, and weary of pursuing that which ever eluded her grasp, she determined to drown her fears in the excitement of a life of gaiety. Then came the whirl of the gay dance, the pleasures of the concertroom, the admiration and flattery of many friends.

Vain efforts these to close eyes that once had seen. There is no rest, saith my God, to the wicked; and this unpardoned soul—wander where it would—could find none.

It was a beautiful afternoon in summer; the town lay basking in the glorious beams of the sun, and the

[&]quot;Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."—ISAIAH v. 20.

waves as they rippled to the sandy shore sparkled like liquid gold. The lovely place was at its loveliest, and all the sights and sounds around were those best suited to a fashionable watering-place in its summer season. Amidst the gay throngs that crowded the esplanade, two figures passed in earnest converse. Fashion had done her best to deck the one of them in her goodliest style, but the troubled face and restless eye gave sure token of an unsatisfied soul within.

Ah! that poor soul, how could the praises that man lavished on the well-adorned case in which it lived, appease its terror for the future? It had gazed on all the realities of judgment to come; and though the glance had been but a passing one, how could it forget? Man might flatter and admire, but what could

he do for it, for it, which had to live on for ever, when the fair form that shrouded it should be mouldering in the dust?

And now the "ruler of the darkness of this world" pressed a step
further upon his prey. He had
allowed her to occupy herself with
the light of the false beacons, and to
walk in the light of the sparks she
had kindled, until she was ready to
lie down in sorrow; but now that she
had discovered the falseness of all
this, and was turning from it in
disgust, he placed in her way the
writings of those who put "darkness
for light, and light for darkness."

She could not forget, she would disbelieve.

Soul! take thine ease, a fable hath alarmed thee; the phantoms of a fevered dream have haunted thy

path; a merciful Creator shines upon thy way; the book that hath terrified thee comes not from Him; "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

Eagerly had that young girl drunk in the mental poison, and now, as she walked with her friend in the glorious sunlight of that summer's day, loudly rang the bold boast, "that no revelation from God existed, and that the soul had no future after death."

As well might the waves that, through some long winter's night, beat themselves to foam at the foot of the Bass Rock, deny its existence, as man thus attempt to shake the Word of the living God. The very clamour that rings out through the darkness of his moral night, proves that he is breaking himself to pieces on an eternal reality. He may deny the facts, he cannot escape the power.

Could the one who, by the power of the Spirit of God, had once been convicted disbelieve?

She could not.

An avowed free-thinker she might be, and was; but thorough disbelief would have given the rest of death, and that she had *not*.

And now, on this sunny afternoon, as she walked defiantly forward, her friend pleaded with her; and with earnest voice, and in eager tones, told her of the One who had come forth from God, to "bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." (Isaiah xlii. 7.)

Yet vainly she repeated the oft-told tale. "Nothing," replied the fair votary of fashion, "no power on earth or in heaven shall make me believe other than I do."

What a challenge for a fallen creature to make to its Creator!

The voice of the faithful friend was hushed, but she went, and took hold of the unseen Power which the thoughtless girl had defied; she bore her friend's name in prayer, into the presence of her God.

And what was the consequence?

The soul that knew no rest grew more restless still; acts of deceit and untruthful words rose in her memory, and with them the ever-stifled, yet ever recurring question, "What if the Bible should be the Word of God after all?"

Ah! What, indeed? "If it should be true," cried the distracted soul, "what will become of me?"

To that question there could be but one answer, If the Bible turned out to be the Word of God she would partake in fact of what she had already seen in picture, she would be cast into the lake of fire. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." "If, if," that terrible "if." She could not banish it, she could not forget it.

She knew not, in her blindness and her folly, that it was a mighty Power from without that was thus ever stirring up the terrors of her soul. That Holy Spirit who had so early dealt with her, by giving her a glimpse of the judgment to come, could not let her rest unsaved and unsheltered.

Oh! the wonderful mercy, and longsuffering of God in thus following a rebel soul. Calling to it so patiently through the darkness, wooing it to turn to His "marvellous light."

Does He thus follow you? Then yield thee, yield thee, while it is called to-day.

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."—John viii. 12.

The summer, with its blaze of glory, had passed away, the autumn, with its burden of rich fruits and ever shortening days, had followed it, and once more the winter's frosty thrall had fallen upon town and country; but that poor weary soul had found no rest; it still struggled on through a darkness, of which, through the great mercy of God, it was now perfectly aware. And should the eye of anyone yet walking in darkness and without light fall upon these pages, "let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." (Isaiah l. 10.) For light and rest were at hand for the weary soul.

It was evening, and in a large room in a low part of the town of S—, a motley crowd was assembled. Sailors, with their weather - beaten faces and rope-hardened hands, and women, whose poor dress and worn countenances gave manifest token of the struggles of life, were gathered together under the flaring gas-jets, to hear the sweet story of the Saviour's dying love.

Weak in the eyes of man, but strong that night in the power of God, the speaker opened the Bible, and read that wonderful message from God in Isaiah liii. It was the Word of the living God, and by its faithful light, shining forth in that scene of moral darkness, it held up to view the Son of God, as a despised, rejected, bruiséd Man.

Hush! Have you seen Him thus? "A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our

faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."

Surely, "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

Word by word the wondrous message fell upon the listening crowd. Was there a grieved and sorrowstricken one? "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

Was there a guilty sin-laden one?

"He was wounded for our transgressions... bruised for our iniquities."

Was there a soul there that had no peace? "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

But was there a self-willed soul there, that had followed its own wild bent, and was now groaning under a sense of unpardoned sins? "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Groaning, distracted soul, where then are thy sins? If already dealt with, why thine alarm? Judgment lies behind thee, and not before thee. To the soul that shelters under Christ the judgment is a past thing. What have death and hell and the lake of fire to do with such?

This was the message; but it was not only for rough sailors and weary hardworking women that it came that night. Amazed, amused, half ashamed to be seen there, the young girl whose history I write had been drawn into that room, and there the light of the glorious gospel of Christ had reached her inmost soul.

Where were her fears? Gone.

Where was the darkness? Gone. Where were her sins? Gone. She had seen "Him, stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." What needed she more?

And now a living Saviour rose before her, and claimed that poor soul of hers, yea, claimed its salvation, as the fruit "of the travail of His soul."

What marvel that she left that humble room with sunshine streaming into her soul.

It is a solemn moment for a soul when its darkness has been dispelled,

[&]quot;Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—MATT. v. 15, 16.

and it is rejoicing for the first time in the light. The question then arises, Will it let its light shine? Will it confess its Deliverer, and acknowledge its deliverance? The arch enemy, the ruler of the darkness of this world, is ever ready with the bushel. "Let it shine out by degrees," he cries; "do not show it all at once."

Terrible delusion! Make a stand for Christ at once; your start will colour your whole after-path.

And, oh, who shall say with what fears and tremblings this new-born soul looked forward to the moment of confession! Ah! and who can say too with what tender love the One who had saved her drew to her side, as in all her woman's feebleness she faced the power of the foe?

It was in the evening when the

time of trial arrived. The family dinner was over, and the servant had retired, when strange words rang out in that worldly household, and the light flashed in upon their darkness; they heard with wonder that one of their number was saved, her sins had been borne by Another, she had neither doubt nor fear, she had been called "out of darkness into His marvellous light."

The father, the mother, the sister gazed at her with amazement, and the two latter, shrinking from the too reproving light, left the room. "For whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Eph. v. 13.)

Then the father, with all a father's authority and solicitude, strove to put out the beams. For two long hours he reasoned with the child he thought deluded, assuring her that "darkness

was light, and light darkness." But she, poor feeble thing that she was, could raise her eyes to the opened heavens and say, "We see Jesus."

And let me in passing just ask you—whose eye is resting upon these pages — one question. How many blind men would it take to persuade you that there is no such sense as that of sight?

You laugh perhaps, but, believe me, there is a change to the soul just as real and tangible as that from physical blindness to sight. I cannot explain it to one who has not had it, I can only say "that, whereas I was blind, now I see," and entreat you to go to Him, from whom this change can alone be obtained.

I implore you believe that it exists, and do not rest till you have it.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

—ROMANS xiii. 12.

Perhaps you are thinking that now that you have followed the course of this soul "out of darkness into His marvellous light," that here the history must close. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. iv. 18.)

Have you ever placed a mirror, whose reflecting power has been dimmed by moisture, in the light of the summer sun? If so, you have seen a picture of what happens to the Christian who basks in the light of a holy God. The dews and mists of earth are banished by the warm light of heaven, and the mirror is all ablaze with the glorious beams that keep it bright.

Clothed in the armour of light, which can alone defend it from the wiles of the evil one, the soul passes on through his domain unscathed, passes on unto the perfect day.

But, mark me, the pressure of the stream of all things here will be against such a soul—"what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. vi. 14.) There can be none; and the soul that goes on faithfully and fearlessly in the light of a holy God, will soon find itself separated from the world.

There were rough and stormy days before the one whose history I write. When her friends at home found themselves powerless to shake her out of her "new-fangled notions," they sent her with her sister to visit a world-loving family in London.

And then all the allurements for

heart, and eye, and ear that the vast city possessed lay before her. Her host, too, puzzled with the strange visitor who had come to his roof, thought to overcome all her scruples by one most tempting offer. He led her to his study, and there displayed before her all that could most attract a woman's fancy—jewels of rarest beauty in settings of antique design. "There," he said, as he opened treasure after treasure, "give up your religion, and choose what you will. Whatever you fancy shall be yours."

What a strange offer! How little he knew that in the light in which his young visitor rejoiced, his costly gems were but worthless baubles! They might glint and flash with all the colours of the rainbow in the earthly sunlight; but what were such glories to eyes that would ere long gaze upon the "King in His beauty"? "Gold, or pearls, or costly array" were not for her. (1 Tim. ii. 9.)

When he had ended his vain display, she in her turn laid bare her treasure. She told him of the One who had saved her, and warned him to flee, as she had done, from judgment to come. But if she had cared little for his gems, he cared still less for hers. He trampled them "under foot." (Matt. vii. 6.)

Day by day she struggled on with the stream of all things dead against her; but day by day she experienced more of the tender care of Him who was "afflicted in all their afflictions."

Oh, ye redeemed ones, who float at ease down the stream of this God-dishonouring world, ye little know the strange deep joy that thrills the heart of the faithful one as he breasts

the surging tide, and knows that, whether he pass through fire or water, there is One with him "like the Son of God."

It is to the faithful soul alone that Christ reveals Himself in all His tenderness and beauty.

And most tenderly He sustained this young soul in her onward way.

It was the height of the London season, the parks were thronged with the finest equipages that the rich city could display. Fashion rode and drove amidst the noble trees, whose blackened boughs were freshly dressed with the bright green foliage, so soon, alas! to be darkened by the smoke-fogs of the mighty town. To this fair, bright scene she, whose history I write, was taken, and the roll of many wheels and the tramp of many horses sounded around,

while smiling salutations passed from friend to friend as the gay equipages swept past each other. But on that sunny afternoon in May there was one carriage which had an occupant whose heart was bleeding from taunt and scorn, and whose tried and tempest-tossed soul was sorely cast down "because of the way."

She had suffered much that morning, and there was no earthly voice to whisper words of cheer and sympathy. Her tearful eye was turned upon the rough waves that swelled around her, and she had lost sight of Him who could alone sustain her in her onward march.

But had He lost sight of her? No, His eye was on her amidst the bewildering waves, and His hand was stretched forth to succour.

But how was comfort to reach the

solitary sufferer through that charmed circle of thoughtless worldlings?

God has His own way of working. It was "the season" of the gay and fashionable; it was the season too for the poor and indigent who lived upon their bounty.

At the corner of the park stood three blind men with a musical instrument. Shut in in life-long darkness, they drew attention to their pitiable condition by playing and singing well-known airs, and as the carriage which bore the downcast girl dashed by them just five words floated to her ear, "A day's march nearer home." Only five short words, but they were all she needed. They raised her drooping eyes to the bright future before her, to the Father's house above, to the Father's loving care. Could she not joyfully suffer

awhile for Him whose precious blood had been shed to fit her for that home on high?

Yes, she could. And the light came back to her eye, and the smile to her lips, as she considered Him who "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself."

Love Him! How can the delivered soul do anything but love Him? Then obedience must be the proof of that affection.

And at this point a new difficulty met the soul whose journey we follow.

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light:....

[&]quot;Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words."—John xiv. 23.

proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." (Eph. v. 8, 10.)

Could it be "acceptable" to Him whom she loved, to hear her week by week moaning over unpardoned offences, and declaring the "burden of them to be intolerable"? Could she, pardoned and delivered as she was, on the authority of God's holy word, thus incessantly deny the efficacy of the work of Him who had delivered her?

She was sorely puzzled. What was she to do? She would go to the clergyman, whom she believed to be her God-appointed guide in such matters, and ask his advice.

The vicar received her most graciously, but when she laid her case before him he began by emphatically denying that such a thing as conversion existed at all. He

assured her that she had always been in the light, and that there was no such thing as a passage out of moral darkness into the light of life.

It was then that the soul which stood in the light of God's presence saw that this man was but a blind leader of the blind, that he had never seen the light of which he spoke.

Shaken thus suddenly from her last earthly prop, she declined both his arguments and his books, and threw herself wholly upon the word of her God, and the guidance of His Spirit. This had been sufficient in the early days, why should it not be so now? It was that to which the apostle to the Gentiles had commended the Ephesians when taking his final leave of them: "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts xx. 32.)

It would be enough for her.

The vicar was startled and alarmed. "If you only trust to God's Word, and to His Spirit," he cried, "I do not know to what you will come! You may become a dissenter, a methodist, or a baptist, or lastly, I should not be surprised if you went among brethren." He could not, like the apostle of old, commend her to God and to His Word, for he knew not Him upon whom that young soul was then venturing. He feared for her; for he saw only the shifting sands and deadly shoals of men's opinions, he saw not the One on whom her feebleness reclined itself.

To the Word itself, therefore, she went, tremblingly indeed, yet sure that

there alone she could find the guidance that she needed. From that moment that Book, that wonderful Book! had a new value in her eyes. It was to be a "lamp" unto her feet, a light unto her path, and its beams were henceforth to order her steps on her heavenward journey. How strangely altered all things looked in its light! How it made manifest the intense darkness of the scene here, and man's absolute and entire departure from God! But what a new value it showed in the cross and grave of Christ! She could see there at last not only the punishment due to her sins borne by Another, but her old self crucified, dead, and buried from the sight of God, and from her own sight in the person of Him whom God had "made to be sin" for her. The Adam nature judged and condemned in His person on the tree, and then she saw Him rise from the grave, and as the last Adam become the Head of a new race, in which He had given to her a place. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.)

Where was the darkness? Left behind on the other side of that strange gateway, where the righteous law still thundered out its demands over man in the flesh.

Where was the principle, "Independence"?

Where could it be? It had met its doom with the wilful Adam nature to which it belonged.

Where, then, was the object, "Self"?

Left behind, too, in the old creation to which it also belonged. That old self, once the centre of the heart could never pass the grave of Christ, but lay buried there, and she herself, now of heavenly origin, lived a new life which knew no principle but that of absolute dependence upon Christ in glory. And what "object" could there be in that sphere of life but the person of the Deliverer? He had ended her history as a child of Adam's race in His own body upon the tree, and had opened it anew with Himself in resurrection.

And for what did she now hope? For that glorious moment when Christ, now hidden in the heavens, should issue forth, and change "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," her body of humiliation into one like unto His own glorious body. The moment of "the manifestation of the sons of God." (Rom. viii.) "For this corruptible must put on incorruption,

and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Cor. xv.)

And till then, what of the pathway? The Word showed that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" had made her free "from the law of sin and death." (Rom. viii. 2.)

Walking in the power and liberty of the Spirit, she would fulfil the word "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 11.)

And now the soul that stood in "His marvellous light," without a fear, could well exclaim with the apostle of old, "What communion hath light with darkness?" Plainly there could be none.

How could those yet unforgiven worship the One, the efficacy of whose sacrifice they practically denied?

How could those yet in the darkness, unwashed and unclean, under wrath and judgment, rejoice in the blaze of "His marvellous light"?

How could those yet in the flesh, in bondage and death, mingle their praises in her glad song of deliverance? How could they join her in "remembering One" whom they had never known? Enough! Brightly and clearly shone the lamp of the Word. "Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." Ah, yes! and there in that heavenly light she saw the path that "the vulture's eye hath not seen" —the path of obedience and dependence—which shineth brighter and brighter "unto the perfect day." a man love Me, he will keep My words." Separation from the unsaved was evidently a matter of individual

ness its condition, into one where Christ is the object, Dependence the principle, and Light the condition.

Farewell! But if in darkness still, I implore you to remember that the path "out of darkness into His marvellous light" is by faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John viii. 12.)

J. J. J.



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