

The Cross.

BY H. F. ADAMS.

Galatians 6:14: "Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me and I unto the world." (R. V.)

Everyone must glory in something. We are so constituted that each one thinks more of one thing than any other, the devotion to which sometimes becomes a master-passion. Whether that one thing is good or bad, the life given wholly to it, becomes a controlling force to be reckoned with in this world. In Paul's day the Romans gloried in their strength,—vast armies and universal dominion. The Grecians gloried in their culture,—scholarship, philosophy and eloquence. The Jews gloried in orthodoxy, as being elected by God to hold in trust the Word of God. Each nation in its strong point, became a controlling force in a distinct sphere. And in the composite civilization of today these forces still contribute to our character. There were mighty forces in Paul's day, and in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans he acknowledges their influence upon him. Says he "I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." But there had come into the world another force of which he took little account when he was a young man, but which was destined to influence him more than all other forces put together.

I. How the Cross became a thing to glory in.—Quietly, but with a self-propagating power and ever-deepening force, there had come into the world a system of truths connected with a cross. Without the prestige of Cæsar's patronage, lacking recognition from the Savants of Mars Hill, and frowned upon by the dignitaries of Jerusalem, it yet came to supplant every system of paganism, polytheism and deism. It came noiselessly, like the stone that was cut out without hands, in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Dan. 2:34. And as that stone smote the image, symbol of the world-power, and afterwards became a great mountain, filling the whole earth, even so the doctrine of the Cross shall break into, shivers the systems of false religions and fill the whole world with light. To the Roman, to the Grecian and to the Jew the Cross had been associated only with the criminal classes, as an instrument of death. The Romans crucified captives, assassins, highway robbers and rebels. The emperor Tiberius ordered the priests of the pagan Temple of Isis to be crucified for having led a distinguished Roman lady into the hands of the infamous Menædas. After the conquest of Jerusalem, Titus could not find places enough for the crosses, and not crosses enough for the Jews he wanted to punish. The Grecian King, Alexander the Great, ordered two thousand people of Tyros to be crucified after conquering the city, as a punishment for resisting him.

While these uses of the cross were not of Jewish origin, yet the fact that the Jews voted for the crucifixion of Jesus and classed him among malefactors is evidence that it was in vogue among the Jewish nation. Could it be possible that an instrument that formed the gallows in three great nations would become the insignia of a King whose power would break in pieces all other opposing kingdoms and make them contribute to extend His own? Could it be possible that the cross associated with ignominy, shame and degradation would one day be the first step up to the throne of the Messiah, who is exalted at the Father's right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour? Yet such prophecies have been fulfilled. On a hill called Calvary a cross was erected that changed all the world's thinking about crosses. East and west vie with each other in giving the cross the most honorable place. Not because Calvary's Cross was different from thousands of crosses that had been erected before, but because One hung on Calvary's cross who was the Son of a King and the King among men. Who coming from God, leads to God, and enfolds God. The issues of the Cross are so great as to defy philosopher to classify, historian to record, and theologian to expound. Jean Paul Richter gives us in few words a graphic and expressive sketch of the issues of that Cross. "The life of Christ concerns him who, being the holiest among the mighty, the mightiest among the holy, lifted with his pierced hand empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages." Summing up the results of the Cross Rousseau says: "Yes, if the death of Socrates be that of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God." Carlyle reverently wrote: "Jesus of Nazareth, our divinest symbol! Higher has the human not yet reached." The warrior Napoleon said: "Jesus alone founded his empire on love, and to this very day millions would die for him." Can you now wonder at this victorious outburst of devotion to the cross, seeing it was the inaugural of a kingdom that shall finally fill all the heavens with songs of triumph uttered by the redeemed of the Lord. Let us now proceed to discover—

II. What the Cross did for Paul that he should glory in it.—He says that through it the world had been crucified unto him and he unto the world. The Authorized version reads as if this crucifixion of Paul had been through Christ, but the Revised makes the cross the agency of this crucifixion. Let us read the two R. V.,

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." R. V., "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

While Paul in Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ," and of course that is doctrinally and experimentally true, yet in this passage 6:14 the apostle makes the cross the meeting place of two forms of life, and where both died by crucifixion. Paul was a living sinner, and the world-power was living in him. They had been companions for many years, and were well mated. The academic life of his boyhood, the College course of his young manhood, and his residence in Rabbi Gamabiel's theological school within the precincts of the Temple only fed the flame of an early-planted ambition to shine in the world as a man of power. His presence on the Sanhedrin, and all the cumulative evidence of growing greatness indicated by him in Philippians 3:4-7, all point to a man of commanding gifts, of a progressive spirit, and an aggressive nature. Patronage and power smiled on him and finally placed within his grasp the sceptre that would make him a king among his peers. A champion of orthodoxy, he received the high commission from the High Priest to undertake the extermination of the disciples of one Jesus. He "made havoc" of the church, "hauling men and women to prison." His thirst for human blood indicates him a monster, and now he is going to Damascus to carry forward his cruel inquisitorial work, who can elude his staff of detectives, one hundred and thirty-three miles north-east of Jerusalem. The journey must have covered a week, as a "day's journey" was between ten and twenty miles. Behold the proud leader exultant at his prospective success. Self-contained and admired by his subordinates he proceeds arm in arm with a proud world, that was caressing its vain child with promises of reward, promotion and power. But a crisis is at hand. As these two drew near to Damascus, the living sinner and the living world, the crucified, but now ascended Christ, appeared. The effulgent glory smote the living sinner with blindness, and a voice said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" His heart was smitten, his voice faltered, and the strong, proud man struggled out an enquiry, "Who art thou Lord?" and "What wilt thou have me to do?"

Blind and trembling, Paul, the chief of sinners, is led into the city of Damascus. For three days he neither ate nor drank. How changed. Instead of this living sinner entering the city amid the applause of his old friend, the world, he is glad to slip into it unseen and unrecognized.

What has happened? Saul and the world came unexpectedly face to face with the cross. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. But yielding himself up to the Lord, his old self was crucified through the cross unto the world, and the world power through the cross was crucified unto him. The living sinner in the world, and the living world spirit in him, both died through the cross.

Regenerated, Spirit filled, it was no longer "I but Christ liveth in me." When his eyes were opened again the two things that first met him were his old dead self and the old dead world; both lay like two corpses at his feet, crucified through the cross. Can you wonder that hereafter the cross of Christ became such an object of his love, that the one master passion of his life was to preach Christ crucified. His intellect, splendidly educated, his acquired knowledge, his masterful power of argumentation, every talent, every hour, every penny, were all laid at the feet of his Saviour. All to be used in unstinted consecration and unswerving fidelity to proclaim salvation from self and sin through the cross.

But do not think he meant a cross of wood. This is Rome's great error. Hence the craze to possess a piece of the wood of the real cross. Until to-day there are enough pieces of the cross to build a ship, and enough nails of the cross to fasten it together.

The cross that Paul gloried in was the great and glorious fact of the Atonement. On the cross Christ was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with stripes (or bruises) we are healed.

When Paul learned that Jesus died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, he was so overcome by the greatness of the love, that it at once became the marvel of the ages. When Paul learned that he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, he saw a revelation of such wonderful grace, that he surrendered himself to God, and in the act of acceptance of this truth of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, he died unto sin and lived unto God.

Henceforth the love unfolded in the voluntary sufferings of Jesus; the grace exhibited in the plan whereby God could be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; and the fulfilment of all prophecy and all symbolism, by the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, were all focussed and enfolded and expressed by that one word the Cross.

Alongside this great work of redemption, all else paled

into insignificance. Riches, property, scholarship, literature, art, and even thrones and empires, dwarfed and dwindled into things compared to the refuse of the street when he gazed upon the unsearchable riches of Christ. Worms of the earth do not understand why eagles prefer the mountain summits. Even so the sordid and sensuous Agrippa could not understand the view point of this spiritual giant Paul devoting his great intellect and sacrificing his all for the cross. This was the secret of Paul's power, of Luther's, and Wesley and Whitfield, and of Spurgeon and Moody. What is true in the magnitude of those past heroes, is true in the miniature of ordinary people like you and me to-day. The world was crucified unto them, and they unto the world, through the cross of Christ. There is no other way to rise but upon the ashes of our old dead selves, via the cross. Come then selfish and world-burdened souls; come and gaze upon the love of God and the God of love, hanging on the Cross to deliver you from the curse of a broken law, and to secure you the remission of sin! Gaze upon this spectacle that prophets foretold and angels desired to look into! Gaze upon the Christ suffering for you, gaze upon the God-man in the agonies of death for you. Listen to his cry "I thirst" for you! Listen to his plaint "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me," for you! Harken to that word of love "Father forgive them, they know not what they do," for you. And finally hear the victorious shout of the Conqueror, "It is finished," for you. And then—then tell me if you can resist the power of the Cross.

"A Preacher's Life"

BY REV. A. C. CHUTE.

This is interesting reading. If during perusal of some of the pages the reader wonders whether it would not have been better to have borrowed the book than to have bought it, there is satisfaction at the end over ownership, since there are many matters to which he wishes to return. The author will soon have to be reckoned among the old men. Indeed he tells us, as he writes so tenderly of his gifted wife's ascension, that upon the day of her going, Jan. 26th, '99, he entered upon his old age. There is still, however, the glow of youth in his writings. His friend and admirer, Dr. Robertson Nicoll, in speaking of his latest volume of sermons, says that "they have all the freshness of youth, all the ripeness of age, all the wisdom and the beauty of a heart that has been fed at the everlasting springs." He is one of the much-misunderstood and much-criticized men, and he sometimes shows signs of chafing under it. On a recent Sunday morning he told his congregation that he had had a letter the night before from a respected journalist requesting him to cry out against "this most unrighteous war." Coming to the vestry in the morning he found a letter from Cape Colony, begging him to support "the most righteous war that was ever fought in the world." With repetition of these last words, applause came from the assembly. Then Dr. Parker said: "You evidently know what to do; I wish I did. Never be an independent minister if you can help it; I am glad I am just about to be done with it, I am." In speaking of his early studies he ascribes much to the thoroughness which characterized them, and urges parents and teachers to see well to it that this, above all else, is emphatically present in the school work of their children and pupils. To the same thing he recurs again and again in order that the important lesson may not be missed. Every book on his shelf and every loaf in his cupboard he ascribes to pains taking industry. The foolish prejudices that are apt to arise in an isolated life find good illustration in one of the chapters. A piece of distressing intelligence reached the far-off town of the writer's youth, to the effect that a lunatic had suddenly developed in Leicester, one who was going to pull down all church steeples and bury all bishops and curates under the ruins of their own bellfries. The alarm arose to a panic. Little by little it was learned that this man had started an "Anti-State Association." Every dissenter round about was therefore regarded with great disfavor. Their goods were taken for the payment of church rates. But the lunatic, upon his approach, was not found to be dressed in scarlet, and not the sharpest eye could detect the hiding of a dagger in his sleeve. Usually those who differ from us look worse at a distance. The coming of reformers and lecturers to the vicinity where young Parker dwelt, let him abroad into wider and more correct views of men and truth. The atmosphere in which he was brought up was puritanical and rigorous. Much could be said against its severity. To-day we see not such extremes as existed then, nor do we want to see them. But the affirmation is made that "it is the operation of this Puritan Conscience—no doubt often blind and narrow—that makes it hard for nonconformist England to take kindly to horse-racing premiers or to the gambling princes." Amid prayer Joseph Barker was reared, and the testimony is given by him that on to the present his highest joy has been in the solitary companionship of the Eternal Spirit. Early did he come to realize that he had not to invent a Bible, but

"A Preacher's Life: An Autobiography and an Album," by Joseph Parker D. D., Minister of the City Temple, Holborn Viaduct, London. Hodder and Stoughton. pp. 288. 6s.

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