

THE THREE CROSSES.

I. Behold on the three crosses the representatives of all known characters! The holy—the pardoned—the impenitent—are there. To one or other of these classes of mind all intelligent beings must belong. There is no conceivable fourth division. The guiltless, the forgiven, and the guilty, embrace all.—Stranger still that they should all meet on Calvary! Stranger still that the representative of each should be nailed to a cross! But it was not accidental. God intended to read a lesson to the world.—say rather to minds in all worlds—by this memorable coincidence. The central sufferer is the Son of God! He occupies the place which belonged to Barabbas; but the murderer escapes, and the restorer of life is crucified. Two of a banditti are also crucified with Jesus. One of them is awakened from the stupor of guilt, the death of sin, confesses his crimes, believes on Jesus, cries for mercy, and is saved;—the pardoned man represents the church. The other rails on and rejects the Messiah, until exhausted nature forbids further utterance, and he dies in his sins;—the impenitent man represents the ungodly. Their feelings towards Jesus determined their destiny. They were alike guilty when fastened to their crosses; how vast the difference between them now! All men, by reason of sin, lie "in the same condemnation!" How different the destiny of the pardoned from that of the impenitent! The view they take of Calvary determines it. The "great gulf" is related to the cross. The story of Calvary gives heaven its bliss and deepens the gloom of hell.

II. Behold on the three crosses the issue of sin—death! The holy Sufferer dies, for he is the substitute of sinners. His death is vicarious; "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." The pardoned sufferer dies; but he is "complete in Christ," and enters paradise with his Redeemer that day. The impenitent sufferer dies, and is driven from the presence of the Lord whom he reviled and rejected. Sad death! By the side of the cross, and within the sight of the Saviour! Now here, if I mistake not, is a forcible illustration of the equity of the Divine procedure.—The law exacts its penalty from the holy Sufferer as the substitute of the guilty. "It was exacted, and he was made answerable."—The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." He took the sinner's place, and bore the sinner's doom. To have relaxed the law would have destroyed the idea of substitution. Three things were essential:—first, the personal sinlessness of the Substitute; secondly, the voluntariness of the sacrifice; thirdly, independent existence. These essentials met in Christ. He was sinless as a man; "he gave himself" as a sacrifice; he was "equal with God" as an independent Being. The sacrifice was without spot, and there was self-surrender of the body prepared for him "who was God." He had power to lay down his life; he chose to lay it down; he undertook to pay the penalty incurred by the guilt of other beings; there was, therefore, equity in exacting that penalty.

The law exacts its penalty from the penitent sufferer. He looks to Jesus who has magnified the law and made it honorable, and for his sake he is justified, acquitted, saved!—its claims having been fully met by the blessed Redeemer, "with whom" the poor man was considered as "dead," and with whom, therefore, he shall "live." Here, also there was equity; grace triumphs, but not at the expense of law; faith does not make it void; God is just in justifying this sinner.

The law exacts its penalty, in like manner, from the third sufferer. He continues impenitent, rejects Jesus, and is "sent to prison." Here, also, there is perfect equity. Mercy is rejected in the only way in which it can be honorably extended, and law must take its course. There is no alternative. He who refuses mercy offered in harmony with justice, must have justice without mercy. Love and law concur in saving the soul that flies to the atoning Substitute; but if Jesus be rejected, law takes its course. The penitent robber has "a right to the tree of life," through the merits of his Saviour; the impenitent robber rejected Jesus, and must "die the death" of a transgressor.

The gospel, then, proclaims "a just God and Saviour." The angels who kept their first estate shall not be able to challenge the privileges of the redeemed in heaven; for they are there in consequence of their union to Christ. They are there honorably on the

part of God. For the same reason, the lost shall not be able to find fault with the arrangement which secures bliss to the saved.—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" But, in conjunction with this exhibition of justice, behold the triumphant career of Divine mercy! Mark the race of love! What affluence, what expansion, and what adaptation to the state of man! "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The Work of Saving Souls.

The work of saving men is a great work, requiring study, patience, and the wisdom that is from above. There is no part of his work for which a pastor ordinarily feels so much his own incompetence as that of applying the truth to individual minds in personal conversation. There comes to him a soul burdened with its guilt, and seeking instruction and light,—or a mind but partially awakened, and needing to be more thoroughly convinced of sin and then directed to the Saviour, or a mind bewildered by error, or besotted with ignorance and vice. It is easy to declaim in general terms about the plan of salvation and the requirements of the Gospel, to insist upon repentance, faith and godly living—but to say just the right thing at the right time, to inspire hope where hope is needed, and to awaken fear where there is a tendency to a dangerous self-confidence—to give such instruction as under God shall result in the conversion of a soul—this is a responsibility at which even an angel might tremble. The responsibility of a physician in a critical case of acute disease, where the life of the patient is in his hands, and anxious friends await the issue, is nothing in comparison with the responsibility of him who is called to guide an immortal mind.

How much then do we need the influence of the Holy Spirit to attend and succeed our efforts to save sinners! After all our study how to approach different classes of minds, after the most careful discrimination which we can employ, we shall yet oftentimes fail of reaching the state of persons for whom we are interested, so as to be of saving benefit to them. But there is one who reads the heart, who knows the inmost thoughts, who can touch every spring of action in the soul, and can make the truth effectual. Ah, this is a work that calls for prayer, that makes us feel our nothingness and our dependence upon God.—*N. Y. Independent.*

The Modern Pulpit.

It seems to us that theology is fast falling behind the other professions in regard to the character and intelligence demanded in its professors. Depth, comprehension, a large knowledge of life, skill in dissecting evidence and motives, a general force of being which never yields to moral or intellectual timidity, are not now insisted upon as necessary to the clergyman. The toleration awarded to feeble sermons is the sharpest of all silent satires on the decline of divinity. Forcible men, men possessing sufficient vigor and vitality to "get along in the world," rush almost universally into the other professions. Law and politics, in this country, draw into their vortex hundreds of scholars who ought to be preachers of God's word both to law and politics. It is a youth of education does not evince enough understanding to sift evidence or tear away the defenses of a sophism—if he lacks sufficient nerve to badger a witness or amputate a leg, his parents think him eminently calculated for that other profession, whose members are to scatter the reasonings of Hume and Diderot, to smite wickedness in high places, to lay bare the baseness of accredited sins, to brave with an unflinching front the oppression of the selfish and the strong, and to dare, if need be, all the powers of earth and hell in the cause of justice and truth. This, we need not say is all wrong. If the powers of darkness and delusion are strong in all the strength of bad passions and sophistical vices, let them be opposed by men whose spirits are of the "greatest size and divinest mettle;" by men who have the arm to smite and the brain to know; by men whose souls can thread all those mazes of deceit through which sin eludes the chase of the weak in heart and the small in mind. Without force of character there can be no force of impression. Words never gush out with a persuasive or awful power from a feeble heart.—*E. P. Whipple.*

Reflex Power of the Missionary Spirit.

REVIVAL INCIDENT.

I had wept, prayed, waited for a revival in my flock, but it came not. I prayed, too, for all flesh. I cared for each one of the lost millions of men. As I failed to impress the church with a sense of responsibility for the salvation of sinners in their midst, I spread before them as a last resort God's claims for a dying world. Not long after I was awakened at midnight by a messenger who came from one who wished to see me before he died. I went and found one of the members of my church upon his bed, calm, peaceful, and apparently in health. "What is the matter?" said I. "Sir," said he, "you presented the wants of the world before us recently. I felt it. To-night, before retiring to rest, I began to pray for the whole world. The subject rose and became great, and filled my heart and oppressed me until it was too vast for endurance: my body sank, my extremities became cold, I became faint, I had just strength to get upon my bed. I continued to grow cold, and thought I was about to die. I felt unwilling to go without letting you know my feelings. This is why I troubled you." It was plain that the good hand of the Lord was upon him for good, and I said to him, "As to the question of your dying, leave that in the hand of the Lord, and do your duty as He shall direct, and all will be well."

Weeks passed. That man went in and out before his brethren with another spirit; his countenance shone; his words dropped like the dew; in prayer he seemed to speak to God, and ask and receive; none who listened to his simple intercessions could fail to receive the impression that God listened to his prayer.—Meek, childlike, and quiet in his demeanor, he disarmed the opposition of the ungodly, and roused the hearts of God's people. He came to me one day, and said, "Sir, there will be a great work here before long, and you will go through these streets like a ghost, worn out with your labours." I was startled, and rebuked him for his presumption in foretelling events. Tears came into his eyes, and he answered, "Perhaps I am wrong." At this time he was at work in the outskirts of the village. He went out and gathered the children into Sabbath schools; when one was fully organized, he found some brother who was willing to take charge of it, and went to another neighborhood to repeat the same work. It was not long before he came into the village and intimated that the work of the Lord would soon begin in the church. It did begin. The members of it were awakened, and began to call on God; my labors increased; sinners began to inquire what they should do to be saved; a glorious work of grace extended far and wide, until scores and hundreds rejoiced in redeeming mercy, and at one time it was thought that about fifty were hopefully converted within forty-eight hours. I was indeed worn out with my labours, and at one time could scarcely speak above my breath; most fully were the expectations of this brother realized. May we not see such works again? It seemed to me, whilst sitting together in heavenly places recently, at Oswego, with the American Board, that God was about to come again amongst us with great power and glory. O that we may be ready to meet him.—*N. Y. Evangelist.*

Have A Place for Prayer.

We do not need to enter the closet to find the Lord. He is ever near to us. But we enter in order to escape distractions, and in order to regain those associations, and, it may be, to surround ourselves with those mementoes which we formerly found helped to our prayers. One who has great powers of abstraction may take refuge from surrounding bustle in the depths of his own spirit, and pass along the crowded street in the perpetual hermitage of his own self-seclusion, undiverted and undistracted by all that is whirling round him. But few have this talent of inward sequestration—this power to make a closet of themselves; and, in order to find for their thoughts a peaceful sanctuary, they must find for their persons a tranquil asylum. It little matters where or what it is. Isaac went out into the field, and Jacob plied his night-long prayer beside the running brook. Abraham planted a grove, and, in the cool shadow of his oaks, at Beersheba, he called on the name of the Lord. Abraham's servant knelt down beside his camel; and it would appear, from some of his Psalms, that a cave, a mountain fastness, or cavern in the rocks, was David's frequent oratory. Peter had chosen for his place of

prayer the quiet and airy roof of his seaside lodging; when the messenger of Cornelius found him. It would seem that the open air—the noiseless amplitude of the "solitary place"—the hill-side, with the stars above, and the shadowy world below—the fragrant stillness of the garden when evening has dismissed the laborers, were where the Man of sorrows loved to pray.

It was in the old church of Ayr that John Welsh was wont, all alone, to wrestle with the angel of the covenant; and we have stood in the wild rock-cleft where Peden found frequent refuge from his persecutors, and whence he caused his "cry to ascend unto the Lord most high." It does not need four walls and a bolted door to make a place of prayer. Retirement and silence, and a sequestered spirit, will create it any where. By the shore of the sounding sea—in the depths of the forest—in the remoteness of the green garden bower—nay, amidst the dust of the dingy ware room, or the cobwebs of the owlet haunted barn, in the jolting corner of the crowded stage, or the unnoticed nook of the traveller's room, you have only to shut your eyes, and seclude your spirit, and you have created a closet there. It is a closet wherever the soul finds itself alone with God.—*Independent.*

A Notable Villain.

What if you came suddenly upon a suspicious-looking fellow who had entered unbidden your kitchen or parlor? Would you not be startled? And would you not startle him? Your indignation at the intrusion would be on its way to the culminating point in a hurry. Would you call for a police officer to rid you of the villain? No, you would be such an officer yourself, and the looter would not be long on hand.

But a bad thought is one of the worst kind of villains. It has no business in your breast, its only errand there is one of mischief. But the looter in your house had not stolen an article. What of that? His being missing is the only thing that will satisfy you.

Come down upon that bad thought after the same fashion: It entered your heart without a bow, or if, with a bow, and with a welcome, then so much the worse. The greater the danger.

A bad thought can steal into the most secret recesses of the heart, as a villain in the house at midnight can enter the most retired apartment. That thought can go where an intruder, less subtle and deceitful, could never have gone. It can make prize of the fairest, richest jewels in the soul.

Such intruders are little suspected of evil by multitudes. They are often in fair disguise, but are the foulest hypocrites. They let other villains into the soul. As you would drive a viper from your parlor, drive out that bad thought. Don't wait for the police. Be the police.—*Eve. Traveller.*

The Bible.

By opening this volume, we may at any time walk in the garden of Eden, sit in the ark with Noah, share the hospitality or witness the faith of Abraham, ascend the mount of God with Moses, unite in the secret devotions of David, or listen to the eloquent and impassioned address of St. Paul. Nay, more, we may converse with him who spake as never man spake, and participate with the spirits of just men made perfect in the enjoyments of heaven. Amazing volume; in every one of thy pages, I see the impress of the Godhead. I reiterate the mighty term, THE BIBLE, that richest of man's treasures, that best of Heaven's gifts, that volume, conceived in the councils of eternal mercy, containing the wonders of redeeming love, blazing with the lustre of Jehovah's glory—that volume, pre-eminently calculated to soften the heart, sanctify the affections, and elevate the soul of man, to enkindle the poet's fire, and teach the philosopher wisdom, to consecrate the domestic relations, to pour the balm of heaven into the wounded heart, to cheer the dying soul, and shed the light of immortality upon the darkness of the tomb.—*Visiter.*

During an earthquake that occurred a few years since in the South, the inhabitants of a small village were generally very much alarmed, and at the same time surprised at the calmness and apparent joy of an old lady whom they all knew. At length one of them, addressing the old lady, said:

"Mother, are you not afraid?"
"No," said the mother in Israel; "I rejoice, to know that I have a God that can shake the world."