

place which for strategic reasons must always have been within the walls. It is evident that the place was outside the walls yet near the city, that it was called "Skull Hill" either from unburied remains of malefactors or from the resemblance of the hill to a skull, that it was near one of the leading thoroughfares to and from Jerusalem, that it was a very conspicuous spot and could be seen by those at a distance. None of these conditions are fulfilled by the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but they are all met by the hill on

the north side of the city near the Damascus gate. It is about fifty feet high and the side facing the city is a perpendicular cliff with Jeremiah's grotto on the right and small caves in the centre, which in the noonday shadows make a striking resemblance to a skull. Jewish tradition regards this hill as the ancient place of execution and calls it "the place of stoning." There is no reason for supposing that they had two places of execution. The hill north of the city was also much easier of access.

THE LESSON APPLIED

We might think if we did not know better, as we read the story in this passage, that Jesus was merely a helpless victim. Everything is being done by His captors. He is in their hands and at their mercy. They "bring Him." They "offer Him wine." They "crucify Him." He is brought, receives the offer of the wine and is crucified, apparently without power to have it otherwise. All the activity is on the part of the authorities; all the passivity on His. They do as they please; He submits. Doubtless the spectators so understood it. He looked as if He was being led like a lamb to the slaughter. And, doubtless, also, Caiaphas and Pilate thought they were enforcing their will upon a man who did not resist only because He knew resistance to be useless.

But we know better than that. Jesus was not a helpless, but a willing, victim. No man took away His life. He laid it down of Himself. He is in reality the active, moving force in the whole transaction. His death is the fulfilment of His purpose. He meant to die from the beginning of His ministry. There is a hidden achievement here, masked by the apparent events of the day, and in startling contrast to them. Sin and death, shame and horror seem to rule. In truth, however, it is the day of their defeat. Jesus is destroying sin even in the hour of the triumph of sin. His death is the overcoming of death.

We are apt to make the mistake of supposing that Jesus is always our example. He is not always this. There are some things which He did that we cannot imitate. One of these is His death. That was unique, solitary, unapproachable. We need not try

to die like Him, for we cannot. His death was a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. None of us can, and none of us need, have any share in the atoning work of Christ. He paid the whole price, and set us free. Forgetting this, we are sometimes afraid of our cross and hesitate to take it up. We need not be frightened of it. Jesus has assumed the burden, extracted the sting, and made it the means of our salvation.

This is what Jesus means when He says, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Compared with the yokes and burdens of the world His service means ease and joy. A lady who was always complaining of the burden of her life was taught this lesson in a dream. She fell asleep, and an angel appeared to her in a vision. He said, "If you find your cross too heavy you may exchange it for any other you please." She seemed to see before her a long array of crosses of every sort, and immediately laid aside her own and took up one covered with jewels. But she could only totter under its huge weight, and was glad to lay it down. Then she chose one of chased gold, but it was heavier. She next chose a cross of flowers, but its thorns pierced her flesh, and it became unbearable. She said to the angel, "Why need I have any cross?" The angel answered, "No cross, no crown." Looking about again she spied a plain cross with the word "Love" engraved on it in letters of gold. She took it up joyfully, saying, "I can bear this." She found that she had chosen her old cross again. It fitted her exactly, and she could wear it without discomfort. The crosses we bear are