

GOOD FRIDAY THOUGHTS.

"IS IT NOTHING TO YOU ALL YE THAT PASS BY? BEHOLD AND SEE IF THERE BE ANY SORROW LIKE UNTO MY SORROW?" Listen to the sorrowful cry of the suffering Saviour to His people on the great day of His Passion. That cry goes forth to-day, and calls us one and all to the hill of Calvary; over the whole earth there is a darkness which may be felt, and the gloom of the Passion is resting on all around us. Amid the thoughtless crowds who hurry from their Saviour's side, amid the gay sounds of mirth which the angels weep to listen to, amid all the blasphemy and sin by which men crucify afresh the Son of God Who suffered for them on this day, that pleading voice goes forth, and by its sad earnestness calls sinners to the foot of the Cross. Who is it that thus addresses us? It is the voice of one enduring the pangs of bitter anguish, who asks us at least for our sympathy and compassion. We could not turn away from such an appeal if it were the voice of a mere fellow-man, though his woes in no way concerned us, though they were the result of his own sin and folly. But (marvellous mystery) it is the voice of our suffering God that we hear. He addresses us not as an angry Judge; He threatens not to consume us in a moment for the sins by which we provoke Him every day; He speaks not to us in harsh accusing language of our past lives, of our offences which have nailed Him to the Cross; but He appeals simply to our pity and sympathy. He only asks us not to turn away and leave Him alone on this one day in all the year, when for us and our salvation He endured sufferings to us unknown, inconceivable.

See, He is hanging in dreadful agony upon His hard bed of suffering, His sacred Body stretched out and racked with pain, His brow wounded with the sharp thorns, His hands and His feet pierced and torn with cruel nails; from His wounds great drops of blood are falling to the earth, and His frame is consumed by inward fever, and a parching thirst; there, as He hangs exposed to the scorn of all men, there faintly reach His ears the cruel taunts of the Pharisees beneath, the ruder mockery of the soldiers, or the railings of His fellow-sufferers; He sees His Blessed Mother, and His beloved Disciple, standing at the foot of His Cross in the midst of the fearful scene which surrounds them; the minutes pass slowly on, and each one adds fresh intensity to the agony of His Body. But this is not all—nay, all this is as nothing to the horror of thick darkness which is allowed to overspread His human soul, and to shut Him out for a time from the presence of God. Tortured and rejected by man, He looks up to God from His Tree of anguish, and the Father's face is turned away. In the mysteries of that inner desolation we may not dare to enter; we may not venture to imagine or attempt to explain all the horror of soul which found expression in that exceeding bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But in the midst of all, the love of His sacred heart is yearning for man's Redemption, and He is still seeking the souls for whom He became Incarnate. With outstretched arms and loving eyes, He is calling to us from His Cross this Good Friday. He is appealing to us with infinite tenderness and pity. As He hung during those weary hours upon the

Cross He gazed through all time, and bore in His heart each soul which should be born into this world. He saw us, of *this* day and generation; each one of us, with all our varied circumstances, with our hopes, our fears, our temptations, our weaknesses, our struggles, our strivings after better things was present individually to Him; He saw us and He loved us; He offered to the Father the merits of that infinite sacrifice, that precious Blood which He was shedding in satisfaction for all our sins and short-comings; as He hung patiently through those long weary hours of anguish He gave Himself willingly for His people; sharp were the piercing nails, and bitter the long-protracted agony of the Cross; but His love was strong as death; many waters could not quench it; through the midst of all there glowed the Divine Love for sinners; He was suffering for you and for me, and His love for our souls upheld Him to the very last. To-day His voice once more summons us to Calvary, and bids us stand beneath His Cross. He seems to speak to us with tender reproach, and silently to upbraid us with our want of love to Him. As the world hurries to and fro in recklessness and thoughtlessness during the sad watches of this mournful but blessed day, a sad appeal ever and anon seems to break from the lips of the Divine sufferer, whose life-drops slowly ebb from His sacred wounds.

For you, I left the glory of the Father, and the brightness of Heaven to take upon myself your nature, and to join it for ever to My God-head; for you I was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of Mary, and was born into this your world of sin and sorrow in the stable of a country inn; for you I was an outcast in my very infancy, flying into Egypt from the wrath of one of my creatures. IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

For you, during thirty years I lived a life of poverty in Nazareth, unknown and despised of man, labouring with these hands at the common trade of a carpenter, and subject to my earthly parents. IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

For you, I have passed through all the labours and persecutions of my three years' ministry, rejected and reviled by mine own people, traversing with these feet now pierced with nails, the length and breadth of the land on errands of mercy and love, stretching forth these bleeding hands to heal and bless, seeking the souls I loved. IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

For you, I have encountered all the powers of darkness: for you in Gethsemane I agonized in prayer until the blood poured from my body; for you I have endured all the tortures and insults of the past night; for you I am now hanging between heaven and earth upon my Cross in torments both of body and soul. IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

O listen to the pleading voice of your Saviour as He calls to you from the Cross this day, and remember that it is your God who speaks, that same God before Whom you must one day stand, when the fate of your soul is about to be fixed for all eternity; Whose body you shall even then see marked with those wounds which He receives to-day.

Will you, whose only hope for eternity is in those blessed sufferings dare, will you even wish to turn this day of His PASSION into a day of mirth and pleasure, or even of ease and selfish

rest. Shall the hours which were marked, one by one, by fresh insults and sufferings, heaped on His sinless head, now witness the thoughtless laugh, the idle jest? Shall our dear Lord as He looks down on this Good Friday on the earth on which He suffered, and on the souls which He redeemed, see the day of His atoning sacrifice made an occasion for fresh sin; the day of His agony uncared for and neglected; men's minds full of anything but of Him who bled and died for them?

Rather let us hasten to the foot of the Cross and continue with Him in His sufferings; let us grudge every moment which is spent away from Him; let us accompany Him as He is dragged from place to place, and meditate on each point of His Sacred Passion; let us go forth with Him along the way of sorrows; above all let us kneel before Him in sorrow and in penitence (if it may be, in church, if not, in our own homes), during those hours in which He hung in agony on the Cross. O, Jesus, manifest Thyself to many souls on this the day of Thy Passion, mayest Thou in this land and among this people on the Good Friday of this year see of the travail of Thy soul and be satisfied. O Saviour of the world, who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord. Amen.

ECCLIASTICAL NOTES.

THE Bishop of Bedford (England) has been seriously ill.

IT IS stated that judgment will be given on the Lincoln Appeal at the commencement of the May sittings.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury gave the mid-day addresses at St. Paul's Cathedral during Holy Week.

THREE of the candidates for the Diaconate at the Lent Ordination in Llandaff Cathedral, had only recently come over from Nonconformity.

"IT IS better," says the Bishop of Ripon, "to have a faith allied to what the world calls narrow, than to be so wide as to love all faiths."

NEARLY 7,000 sailors took the total abstinence pledge of the Missions to Seamen branch of the Church of England Temperance Society last year.

THE death on March 16th last of the Right Rev. Dr. Thomas Bishop of Goulburn, New South Wales is announced. He was consecrated in 1863.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury is strongly opposed to, and has for thirty years refused to allow at his residence, delivery of postal matter on Sunday.

96 PERSONS was confirmed by Bishop Whitaker on the evening of 23rd March in the Church of Covenant, Phila; more than half of whom came from other religious bodies.

ONE of the pithy sayings of a late English bishop was, "I have a horror of irresponsible talk." He explained his phrase as meaning talk to which attached no responsibility for subsequent action.