

Our Contributors

A Lesson from the Easel to the Pulpit.

BY REV. T. FENWICK

The title of this article, put in plain language, is "A lesson which the professing preacher of the Gospel may learn from the art of painting." What that lesson is, I shall now show.

It is a rule in historical painting to treat the most important figures in it so that they shall chiefly take the eye of him who looks at it. This can be done by the place which is given them, or by causing a strong light to fall on them. Those of less importance must be put in shadow, or placed where they will be little noticed, or both.

Wilkie carries out this rule in his picture of 'Knox preaching in St. Giles' Cathedral.' The great Scottish Reformer is standing alone in the pulpit. A strong light is falling on him. There are several between him and us, but they are in the shade. We have not the slightest difficulty in being able to see him of whom it is so often said that he "never feared the face of man." At once, he arrests our attention.

The same is true of Cattermole's picture of "The Reformers at the Diet of Spires." There, right before us, are they standing, and the high in rank of the Romish clergy, seated. We pay little attention to the other persons in the picture.

I come now to violations of the rule under consideration. As illustrations thereof, I shall take two of the works of the famous historical painter, J. McMartin. The first is "Eve tempting Adam." Of course, our first parents should be the chief objects in it. But instead of that we have a large landscape representing Eden—a beautiful scene, but far too prominent. Adam and Eve seem to be figures introduced merely to give life to the landscape. The second picture is "The Handwriting on the Wall." Of course, what should most take the eye in such a picture should be Belshazzar, the queen mother, Daniel, and the handwriting. But we have a very large representation of the palace of Babylon in which the event which is the subject of the picture, is taking place. It is true that Belshazzar, the queen mother, and Daniel, are the most conspicuous of the vast, festive throng then assembled. The rest—the wives, the concubines of Belshazzar, and the thousand of his lords to whom he is giving a great feast, occupy a secondary place. Still—as I have already said—far too much prominence is given the palace. We can say of the figures in it what I have said of Adam and Eve in the other picture.

I once visited the studio of a friend of mine who is one of the foremost artists in Toronto. I found him engaged in cleaning a portrait of the late Lieut. Gov. Macdonald, the work of a portrait-painter from France. "What do you think of that?" said he to me, knowing that I had done a great deal in the arts of design. I answered: "I like the portrait very much, but I do not at all like the background. The flowers on the wall-paper there, take one's attention as much as the portrait does. They should be greatly toned down. That would bring out the portrait with boldness." "Your criticism is per-

fectly correct," said my friend of the pencil.

Now, any professing minister of Christ can truly be said, in a figure, to hold up a picture before the mind's eye of his hearers. What should be the chief object in it? This is, certainly, a most important question. It should be "The Cross"—the cross of Calvary. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, addresses them as if in his preaching among them he has held up a picture to their view—the decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem. "Before whose eyes," he says, "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you." The great object to which he directed their attention was the cross. Very near the close of the Epistle, he says: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." To the Romans he says; when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." To the Corinthians he says; "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." "We preach Christ crucified." "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and (or, even) Him crucified." "I delivered unto you first of all . . . how that Christ died for our sins." Paul mentions the fact that Christ was crucified, to prove that He has redeemed us from the curse of the law by having been made a curse for us. To the Ephesians and the Colossians he says; "In Christ we have redemption through His blood." To the Colossians he says that God has made peace by the blood of Christ's cross. In the beginning of the Book of Revelation, John says; "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever." Very many more passages to the same effect could be given.

When Paul and Philip "preached Christ." He was "lifted up from the earth" in full view of those whom they addressed. They bade them look to Him, as Moses bade the serpent-bitten Israelites look to the brazen serpent. In Jerusalem, Peter spake with the utmost boldness of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom his hearers had crucified. Of Him he said; "There is not salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Then let him who professes to be a minister of the Gospel consider that when he preaches, he holds up a picture before the mind's eye of his hearers. The main object represented in it must be the Crucified One. Christ says; "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. His professing servant must, therefore, not aim at drawing the attention of beholders to his talent as shown in his picture, and winning their praise. He must do his work in harmony with the call of his Master just quoted, keeping himself out of sight, anxious only that those whom he addresses shall see none but Him in whose righteousness only we can stand with acceptance before the infinitely holy and just Lord God. Alas! there are many preachers who seldom, yea often do not at all, mention the name of Christ. It can truly be said that Cicero or Seneca could have preached such sermons as theirs. Many speak most beautifully of the teaching and the example of Christ, but they keep perfect silence regarding His bearing our sins in

His own body on the tree. "The blood-stained cross" is kept utterly out of sight. A minister belonging to the United States, who is very famous at present, on account of a certain book which he has written, lately preached in London, England. One who heard him, says that the far greater part, if not the whole, of his sermon could have been preached by a Unitarian. Another—the famous pastor of a certain church in "Greater New York"—when he preached his first sermon to his present charge, took for his subject something to the following effect—"Christ a great power in poetry, painting, music," etc. Fancy a man who has hitherto lived a most ungodly life, lying on what proves to be his death-bed. He feels that with him "the sands of time are sinking." He sees naught before him but "judgment and fiery indignation." Most anxiously he cries out: "What must I do to be saved?" A professing minister of the Gospel visits him and speaks very beautifully about such things as Christ a great power in literature and art; His spotless example; etc. The poor man may well say to him: "Begone! a most miserable comforter are you to me."

Christ gave Himself for us to save us not only from the punishment of sin, but also from the power and pollution thereof. He only is the source of the purest morality. Pollok very truly says:

"Talk they of morals? O Thou bleeding lamb!
The best morality is love of Thee."

The more we look at Him who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the more we shall love Him. The more then, we shall strive to be like Him, and thereby, the more to magnify Him. The Lord says: "Them that honor Me, I will honor." In proportion then, as the cross is earnestly preached, the preacher shall be blessed in his preaching and in his own soul. Woodbridge O.

The "Missionary Record" of the United Free Church of Scotland, in trying to account for the secession of one Scottish minister to Rome and the extreme Ritualism of some others, says—"We do not for a moment suggest that these results are due to any failure in our Presbyterianism or to the Scottish Church's indifference to the principles of Protestantism. They are due, no doubt, to an ominous drift which is manifest in all the Churches—the tendency to the absence of what was once more manifest than it is now (an absorbing interest in spiritual religion), and to the substitution (or it of an exaggerated ritual. We cannot do without worship, and when the life of it goes we must have form to fill its room. What is happening here seems to us a sign—a sign of religious delusion; and through it we ought to hear a call to seek more earnestly a time of reviving in all the churches."

The antipapal movement in Austria has, according to official statistics, resulted in the withdrawal of more than 150,000 men and women, who have joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

It is reported that, during the past fifteen years, 350 priests have left the Roman Catholic Church in France. A society has been formed to provide a temporary home and means of existence until such converts shall have found a permanent occupation.