

The Cross of Christ.

Take the cross of Christ out of this world, and its greatest glory would be gone. There have been other crosses lifted up, and there have been other victims crucified, and the world has forgotten them. But for more than eighteen centuries the eyes of men have been drawn to that central cross upon Calvary, and fastened upon the crucified One that hung upon it. Other crosses have cast a narrow and transient shadow, but that one cross has cast an ever broadening and permanent path of light throughout the world. The cross itself, once regarded as the sign of sin and the symbol of death, has become the pledge of holiest love and the symbol of immortal hope.

The cross of Jesus does not owe its perpetuity and power to the time and place of its erection, nor to the circumstances by which it was environed, nor to the lack of opposition on the part of the world to which its doctrines have been preached. Paganism kindled around it the fires of persecution, but like the burning bush in Horeb, it has not been consumed. Judaism tried to cover it with dishonor and disgrace, but its truth and purity, its effulgence and glory, are such that no breath of hatred has dimmed it in the least. Infidelity has tried to dig it down and bury it, but it is so firmly planted that no hand of unbelief can dig beneath its deep foundations. Higher Criticism has sought to pour suspicion upon it, and Rationalism has tried to nullify its power, but in vain. It is so potent that it draws the world unto itself, fulfilling the words of the Crucified, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

But wherein consists the virtue of the cross, its influence over the hearts of men, and its saving efficacy? The power of the cross does not lie in the time and place of its erection, nor in the character of the death suffered upon it, but in the life and character and person of Him who suffered. The influences which flow from the cross are determined by that which lies back of it, and which gave it existence; and the light and life-giving power of the cross center in Him who was crucified thereon, and flow from Him. The person who suffered, the motive which led Him to undergo those sufferings, the moral element which entered into them, and the object to be accomplished—these determine the power and efficiency of the cross.

Between God, the Creator and Ruler, and man, the creature and subject, sin, blinding the mind of man in ignorance, hardening his heart in enmity, dragging him down under the law of sin and death, had digged a deep, dark gulf. Not from the human but the divine side of this gulf the Mediator originally came. Jesus Christ is indeed "the seed of the woman," "the son of David," but he is also much more. The babe of time is the Ancient of Days. He is the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. The Word, which became flesh, was in the beginning with God, and was God. By Him all things were created, by Him they are upheld, and unto Him they belong as heir thereof. He is the image of the invisible God, and has revealed and declared Him whom no man hath any time seen.

The calm and silent heavens declare

God's glory, but they tell us nothing of divine pity and compassion for the sinning and the suffering sons of men. The constant and unchanging laws of nature declare God's wisdom and power, but they tell us nothing of pardon and of hope for them who have once transgressed. The cross alone reveals this to us. He whose arms encircle helpless infants while He blesses them, whose heart yearns with compassion for needy and hungry multitudes while He feeds them, whose tears of sympathy fall and mingle with the tears of human sorrow while His words bring comfort to suffering hearts, discovers to us the tenderness, the pity, and the compassion of our God.

Christ did not become the Lamb of God by being lifted up on the cross, but He was lifted up on the cross because He was the Lamb of God. And while the cross brings to light all the gentle and lovable attributes of God's nature, so in the cross of Christ are revealed, too, the divinest, holiest and most worthy attributes of our human nature. It has every needed grace for the saint; it saves to the uttermost the sinner.

"Through all the depths of sin and loss
Drops the plummet of thy cross;
Never yet abyss was found
Deeper than that cross could sound."

Christian Work.

St. Cassianus and St. Nicholas.

Two saints of earth—so runs a legend old—
Together came up to the throne of gold,
The scenes and cares of life forever done,
St. Cassianus was the name of one,
A type of rigid monk and saintly nun,
And all who strive by lonely pondering
To fit themselves to stand before the King—
His ample, flowing robe, all purely white,
Glowed dazlingly in heaven's radiant light,
Till some bowed low in mute, amazed delight.

But thus the Master questioned: "Tell me now,
When travelling last on earth, what sawest thou?"

"I saw a peasant—poor unfortunate!—
Who, with his wagon, lost and overlate,
Is, for his folly still, for aught I know,
Alfoudering in the mud and mire below,
'Tis pity men will spend their living so!"

"And didst thou help him not in his sad plight?"

"Nay, Lord, my garments were so purely white
I feared to soil them e'en with contact slight,
And I was coming up before Thy sight,
I've kept my robes unspotted from earth's soil,
And left for baser minds its lowlier toil."

The Master sighed in sad and thoughtful mood,
And then He turned to where St. Nicholas stood,
Alashed and waiting, claiming naught of good.

"And thou, what didst thou see on earth?" He asked.

"I saw the peasant, too, and straightway cast
My brawny shoulders 'neath his wagon-load,
And helped him till he found the homeward road,
I think he will be here with us ere long
To join with angels in the triumph-song."

Then in the presence of the Master's smile
The dust of earth, which for a little while
Had gathered on his girdled robe and brow
Fell off, and left it spotless as the snow.

"Stand thou aside, St. Cassianus, here;
Make room for Nicholas to draw more near,
For unto him I fourfold blessing give
Who while he lived helped others, too, to live."
—Christian Endeavor World.

He who tries to walk "in the footsteps of Christ" can always find them. Christ left his footprints in the rocks of truth and practice, not in the sands of theory and speculation.

The Sabbath.

The observance of the Sabbath according to divine command is highly essential to man's physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual well-being. As a machine at times must go into the shop for repairs, so man's physical and intellectual being is designed by a wise and beneficent Creator to enter the shop of rest and repair one day out of seven. Observation and history bear testimony to the fact that incessant toil is detrimental to health and prosperity.

God is to be worshiped and served every day, but the Sabbath is designed to be a special day of divine worship not only in the closet, but especially amid the solemnities in the sanctuary in an open and public capacity—a faint type of the exalted worship in heaven. Sabbath desecration is a violation of natural law, and, above all, a most flagrant breach of divine law. Heinous as horse stealing is, violating the third commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," is vastly more heinous, because it belongs to the first table, and thus pertains to God directly. An infringement here is a sin directly against God. There is nothing more sinful and criminal than Sabbath desecration, and anything that breaks the Sabbath, or leads to it, should be struck with a vigorous hand.—Exchange.

Prayer.

We beseech thee, Lord, to behold us with favor, weak men and women, subsisting under the covert of thy patience.

Be patient still. Suffer us yet a while longer, with our broken promises of good, with our idle endeavor against evil; suffer us a while longer to endure, and, if it may be, help us to do better.

Bless to us our extraordinary mercies; if the day come when they must be taken, have us play the man under affliction.

Be with our friends; be with ourselves. Go with each of us to rest, if any awake, temper to them the dark hours of watching; and when the day returns to us—our sun and comforter—call us with morning faces, eager to be happy if happiness shall be our portion, and, if the day be marked to sorrow, strong to endure it.—Part of a family prayer written the day before he died, by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Good Cheer About Death.

BY SOCRATES.

Let any man be of good cheer about his soul who has ruled his body and delighted in knowledge in this life; who has adorned the soul in her own proper jewels, which are temperance, justice, courage, nobility, and truth. In these arrayed, the soul is ready for the journey even to another world, when the time comes. For, if death be the journey to another place, and there all the dead are, what good can be greater than this? Be of good cheer about death, and know this of a truth, that no evil can happen to a good man either in life or after death. God orders and holds together the whole universe, in which are all things beautiful and good. He keeps it always unimpaired, unconfused, undecaying, obeying His law swifter than thought, and in perfect order.