

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

That man had been living at the greatest distance from anything good. In his early days he had been left very much to himself, without anything like a religious education. When young, he entered the army; there evil propensities were indulged and strengthened. He became addicted to all kinds of vice, gave the reins to the worst passions of depraved nature; was a profane swearer, a constant Sabbath-breaker, a neglecter of all public worship, never attending the ministry of the Gospel: he became a scoffer at everything holy, gave swing to the most violent and ungovernable temper, and seemed to be going on with rapid strides towards final ruin. The appearance of such a man, very seriously listening to the ministry of Divine truth must have excited attention, and have called forth many remarks among the people. From that first time Thomas Law, for that was his name, became a constant hearer, and a truly improving hearer of the Gospel through all his future life. He was soon noticed by an eminent Christian in the congregation who was constantly on the watch for opportunities of doing good. He mentioned the case to Mr. Toller, at first with great surprise, and soon afterwards with grateful admiration of what God was doing for him. It was a most favourable circumstance in his state of mind that he was brought into the company of one of the most excellent, devoted, wise-hearted Christians then known in the place, who took a deep interest in his case, and became of great service to him in his subsequent course. But how comes this man at first to enter this sanctuary, and at length to discover this remarkable change? We will present the account in the words of the pastor, as it was given in the sermon preached years after, on the occasion of his death.

"I will state now the extraordinary means adopted by Divine grace, by which this vessel of wrath, apparently fitting fast for destruction, becomes a vessel of mercy, claimed and fitted for eternal glory. We have instances recorded both in Scripture and more modern history, of surprising and eminent conversions, brought about by extraordinary means; but then for the most part they have been extraordinary means, calculated and adapted to answer the purpose. The conversion of Peter's hearers on the day of Pentecost was a surprising conversion, but brought about by a most pungent, awakening, convincing address to them. The jailor's conversion was a remarkable one, but, so far as means went, brought about by the alarming providential event of an earthquake. Saul's conversion to Christianity was wonderful, but brought about by the miraculous appearance of Jesus Christ. So Colonel Gardiner's was a very remarkable conversion, but brought about by either a miraculous vision, or some vivid, awakening, heart-harrowing dream, which had all the appearance to him of a miraculous vision. But what appears to me to make the conversion of our friend the most extraordinary that I ever heard of in my life, is that the immediate original instrument had nothing extraordinary in it, but was merely a casual accidental thought, which came from nobody knew where, nor what cause, and might have passed through his mind, or a hundred minds, a hundred times without any effect at all. The substance of what I have heard him relate is this, that while at work at home in his loom, his wife on some common errand went into the town, and stayed longer than he expected or intended, upon which his passion rose to a most ungovernable height, and on her return he poured out upon her the most profane and abusive language. During the course of the same day, she had occasion to go out again, and again he thought she stayed too long, and he became greatly excited, working up himself to a most violent rage, ready to break out upon her most furiously on her return. And when he was in the height of this dreadful state of feeling, suddenly and powerfully the thought came across his mind, "Ah! you had more need to go on your knees and cry for mercy than swear at your wife." This came with the force of a cannon-ball, and its effect was so great and so sudden, that his passion fell at once, he received his wife with great mildness on her return, and was soon constrained indeed to go and cry for mercy.

After this he had a terrible heartrending view of his tremendous guilt and danger. He was filled with anguish, and went about seeking some light and guidance.