

Short Sermon.

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BARABBAS.

St. Luke, xxiii. 18.—*'And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!'*

EAR by ear as the shadows of Lent thicken to the three hours' hiding of the sun, as the voices of this awful tragedy deepen to the 'loud voice' with which the Son of Man gave up His spirit to the Father, the fourfold cord of the great argument binds us to our allegiance:—'These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His Name.' This is the supreme purpose and lesson of all. This should sink into the Christian's soul, and live and work in his doings. This is the *individual* effect. But there is a corporate effect. The bread that we break is one loaf. All we His Church are one loaf of that Wheat which fell into the ground and died. All we are baptized into His death. 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' The great *collective* effect.

There are, however, other lessons taught by our Lord and Master, of vast and vital import. Foremost of these is the warning example of the Jewish nation. For all historic purposes the whole manhood of the nation was bodily present at that Passover in the holy city. What was done was transacted, not only by the Council, the Chief Priests, and Rulers of the people, but by the very people itself. The Chief Priests and Rulers stirred them up, but the people, moved by them, cried out all at once. This, then, was out-and-out the doing of the nation itself. The miserable governor, Pilate, was a weak man. The high priest, Caiaphas, was he that gave counsel to the Jews 'that it was expedient,'—'The Chief Priests moved the people,'—'The voices of them and of the Chief Priests prevailed, and Pilate gave sentence that it should be'—not as justice required, but 'as they required.—It was the High Priest's notion of expediency that released Barabbas and crucified Jesus. The people cried as their ruler taught. The Governor did, against all his tortured conscience, as they cried.

An exchange of evil bargains was that at Jerusalem, where all were paying their price, 'a goodly price,' and gaining for it nothing but 'harm and loss.' The Chief Priests paid their thirty pieces, 'the price of Him that was valued,' and gained a field of blood. Judas sold his Lord, and gained only suicide and perdition. Pilate paid away his conscience, his authority, his soul, for no exchange at all, not even popular applause, for he was *lured* to release one, and it was the people who wrenched the seditious murderer from his grasp, too feeble to save the Holy One, whom he 'sought to release,' when he had declared Him innocent. Yes! one thing Pilate gained: the friendship of Herod Antipas, who himself had paid the head of John the Baptist for an hour of dissolute amusement.

As to the nation of the Jews, they had driven the winning bargain, for they went away with their elected Barabbas and with their rejected Saviour. They had gained all they desired. What they did with their Barabbas no one cares to know. But the