

POOR DOCUMENT

THE WEEKLY HERALD.

VOL. 1.—NO. 14.

FREDERICTON, N. B., THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1882.

\$1.00 A YEAR.

JESUS OR BARABBAS.

Sermon by Rev. A. J. Mowatt.

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, FREDERICTON, FEBRUARY 26th, 1882.

"Not this man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.—John xviii., 40.

My text this morning carries us away back some eighteen centuries and a half. A famous trial is going on, the trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate, a trial in which the whole world, throughout all ages, has an interest. There have been famous trials both before and since the trial of Jesus, in which men have felt much interest, and rightly so, for it is, and must be every man's interest, that truth and right be maintained in the courts of justice. But this trial overshadows every other in interest and importance, and for this reason among others, that every man has a real personal interest in it.

Some years ago, there was a famous trial in the British law-courts—I refer to that of the Tichborne claimant—in which the whole civilized world felt an interest, and watched the proceedings from day to day with an anxious sympathy. And yet the decision in the case whether that or unjust was of no material advantage or disadvantage in any respect to the millions of on-lookers; did not affect an interest they had; made them neither richer nor poorer, better nor worse.

Now, am I right in saying, that not half the interest has been shown at any one time in the trial of Jesus by the world generally, as was taken at the time in the trial of the Tichborne claimant, notwithstanding the fact, that the decision of the judge in the trial of Jesus has affected, and does affect still, and will go on affecting forever, every interest that every man has, or can have? It is not a dead issue this—a something that has long since ceased to be of importance to the ages. No, if there is a living question before the world to-day—a question worthy of man's earnest consideration, the trial of Jesus is that question; and if we are not interested in it, I have only to say this, we ought to be interested in it, for it is bound up with every interest we have, and it is to show you what a great practical interest we have in it that I am bringing the subject before you to-day.

And first, let us understand, if we can, just how the matter stands, what the trial is about, and what this cry of the populace means, "not this man, but Barabbas."

Some three years before, a young man of humble but respectable parentage, set out as the founder of christianity and reform of the world. He claimed to be sent by God; and to be the son of God; and, with the spirit and power of God, and with His soul, He entered upon His great work. He made no display, got up no popular cry, did nothing extravagant, out of the way to attract the world's attention to Him or His work, and took no advantage of the credulity and simplicity and sensationalism of the people to gain adherents. He went about His work with a quiet earnestness. Whatever He did He did in an open straightforward manner, seeking out the poorest and neediest and vilest of the people and telling them the good news of salvation, interesting and instructing them by means of His beautiful parables, and when there was an occasion for it, exerting His miracle-power on their behalf. He was in earnest. He felt that His message was all-important to the world. He took every opportunity of pressing His claims upon the attention of the people, and of leading them to think and enquire as to the truth of what He taught; but He never brought any undue influence to bear upon them. He was no demagogue, no popular leader, no miserable sectarian who had his own little party-interests to advance, no political agitator, no wild revolutionist. It must be admitted, of course, that His doctrines were such that they must necessarily affect the interests of both the church and state of the day. They were revolutionary in their tendencies, although not necessarily so in their mode of operation. Their influence began deep down at the very roots of society, and the change effected being a radical one, it was only a question of time for the whole social and national and world tree, trunk and branches, leaves and fruit, to be changed, too. But the natural way for the change to take place, according to the great fundamental principles of His system of spiritual reform, was by growth, not by revolution.

It was soon felt, however, by those who were interested in the permanency of the old institutions, that the power was slowly but surely slipping out of their hands; and they saw that if something was not done to stay the tide of new ideas flowing in upon them, all would be lost. The Pharisees were alarmed. The priests and rulers woke up to the fact that the youthful reformer was making his influence felt in every direction, and was inaugurating, in spite of all they could do to the

contrary, a new era that would ultimately sweep them from place and power. But what was to be done? They very soon made up their minds what they would do, and they were not very particular as to what it would be. They would do anything that would promise success. They would get up an agitation to put Him down. They would excite the people's prejudices against His doctrines. They would plot His ruin. And they did so, and after a while, through intrigue and deception, they succeeded. They got him into their hands, and dragged him before the courts—the ecclesiastical court as an impostor and blasphemer, and the civil court as an enemy of the government, a would-be king, a revolutionist, a subverter of the laws, and a ringleader of the people.

Now, it is as before the civil court, the Roman tribunal, that we have to do with Him to-day. Early in the morning the Jewish leaders and a multitude of the people drag Jesus bound to the official residence of the procurator. They want to get his sanction to put him to death. It doesn't appear that they expected Pilate to go into an investigation of the case himself. He had the right to do it, and it was his duty to do it; but, more than once, he had taken for granted that the proceedings of the Sanhedrim were all right and had simply sanctioned them, and their hope is that he will do so to-day. Pilate comes out to them, and he sees at a glance that there is something wrong. The proceedings are evidently those of a lawless mob, not of a court of justice. He refuses to sign off-hand, and upon their credit and at their bidding, the death warrant of a man like this. He insists upon an investigation. He asks what the charges they have against him. They are taken aback. However, there is no help for it, and they there and then formulate certain charges. They charge Him with perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, and asserting His claims to be king. Pilate takes Jesus into the house and he examines him. After a while he comes out to the people, and he says to them, "I have examined Him, and I find no fault in him."

They are wild with fury. They threaten an insurrection. Pilate hardly knows what to do. He is afraid of their savage threats. He knows the Jews do not like him any too well. He wavers. He tries to get out of it. He reminds the people that it is a custom of his to release on the passover-week a prisoner, and he proposes to release Jesus. But they will not have Jesus. They prefer Barabbas, a notorious insurrectionist, and a robber and murderer. "Not this man, but Barabbas," the mob bellows. What is he to do? He has not the courage to do the right, regardless of consequences. So he washes his hands, and gives up Jesus to be crucified, and lets the murderer live!

I come to speak next of the relations which we bear to the trial of Jesus and how it affects our interests. This trial is not a mere matter of history, an event that occurred long ago, and only of interest to us as a historical fact. No. As I have already intimated, it is a living question, and we have to take it up, each one for himself, as if it had never been taken up before, and come to some practical decision as to its merits, and abide by the consequences. We denounce, perhaps, the dastardliness of Pilate and the wickedness of the Jews; but, let us understand this, that we have as much to do with the trial of Jesus as Pilate and the Jews had, and let us see to it, that we, at least, do right in the case. This trial is still going on. It is going on here to-day. It is going on in our streets every day. It is going on in our places of business. It is going on in our homes. It is going on everywhere. The question is for ever coming up in some shape or form, and in a way that we cannot but take up and answer, "Jesus or Barabbas? Jesus or Barabbas?"

When Pilate's wife awoke the morning of the trial, she sent word to him to have nothing to do with Jesus, for she had a terrible dream about Him; but Pilate had to do with him, whether he would or not. He washed his hands, and tried to clear himself of any responsibility in the matter; but he could not clear himself. He was guilty. The blood of Jesus stuck fast to him, and no washing of his could wash it off from him. He snappishly said to the Jews, "Your king!" Jesus, however, was his king quite as much as the Jews' king; and He brought the matter home to Pilate's conscience in a way that he felt, that his Romanism did not and could not, exonerate him from the claims of truth.

And how many there are to-day who, like Pilate and his wife, do not want to have anything to do with Jesus. They are ready enough to admit, perhaps, that He is a just man. They can find no fault with Him. They have a high regard for His character. They admire His noble life. They speak well of his labors of love. They give Him credit for doing much good, introducing a glorious world-reform, and awakening men to higher ideas of life and duty and hope. They believe in religion, and they believe in

the christian religion, and they are religious. At all events they want to be thought religious. Who is the man—where will you find him, who does not claim to have more or less of religion about him? His hold upon the world to come may be very slight, but, slight as it is, he would not like to give it up, and do without it altogether. The most of men want to have religion enough to take them to heaven when they die. And so they keep on attending church, and are going the weary round of certain religious duties. All the time, however, they take very good care not to have anything to do with Jesus. They do business without Him. They farm without Him. They buy and sell without Him. They shut him out of their counting-houses, and stores, and banks, and homes, and hearts. "A very good man," they will say; "did a great work for the world; but we prefer doing without Him."

But men cannot do without Jesus. They might as well talk about doing without the air they breathe, or the food they eat, or the water they drink, or the world they live in, as talk about doing without Jesus, for he is bound up with every interest they have. He has so intermingled himself with men, and their interests and affairs, that He has to be taken into account in all that they do. They may, of course, ignore Him, and live and act as if they were not Christians; but their ignoring him does not exclude him from a hand in their affairs. Whether they will or not, they have to do with him. They have no choice in the matter. In ten thousand ways He makes them understand that there is a hand at work, and it is His hand, doing or undoing, making or marring, influencing, controlling, directing, moving, shaping everything.

Here a merchant. He says, "What have I to do with the trial of Jesus? I don't profess to be christian." "I leave matters of this kind to others, and attend to my own business." And he buys and sells as if there was no Jesus, and as if there was no trial of Jesus going on. But he cannot do it. Nothing may be said about it, but all day long; down in your shop of his on Water street, there is a trial going on, and with his yardstick he is deciding whether it is to be Jesus or Barabbas.

To the most of men life is full of common-places. There is nothing serious, grand, solemn, awful in it. They meet and part, walk and rest, buy and sell, go and come, live and die, and there is little to take a note of. They tread the weary round of life with very little higher ideas as to what it is than the stupid gin-horse. But the dullest common-places of life, when looked at right, are sublime. The web of life we are weaving from day to day may be hodge-nodge, not a thread of scarlet and gold in it; but nevertheless, the hodge-nodge of life, because it is life, is not gray but golden. The plainest, humblest, dullest, most common-place life has its sublimities. The man Jesus is both God and man, and I am not speaking wickedly when I say that every man in some sense God and man. We tread the weary round of duty from day to day, and care not much what we do or how we do it; but when we look at the sublimities of this life of ours, when we think of all that is being won or lost when we do right or wrong, when we come to know that the trial of Jesus is going on amid life's common-places, and when we realize that when looked at right, are all eternally are at stake, then we begin to understand that life is more than many think it is. Oh what it is to live! What interests are there! How thoughtfully and watchfully we should live, for so much may be gained or lost by our taking a single false step? We do wrong, and think we are making money out of the transaction, attaining to honor and power, and crowning ourselves with glory. But looked at in another aspect—looked at in the right aspect, it is neither more nor less than this: "Not this man, but Barabbas."

I come to speak still further of the dread alternative of not taking Jesus. If not this man, then it is Barabbas, and Barabbas was a robber. That was how the matter stood with regard to the Jews. It was Jesus, or Barabbas, and they chose the murderer. It was a bad choice, a choice fatal to their interests as a people, a choice that whelmed them in national ruin; but having made the choice, they had to abide by it.

And it is still Jesus or Barabbas. The choice we have to-day is not between a good and a better, or between a good and the best; but it is between the best and the worst. You do not want to choose perhaps. You want to have nothing to do with the great trial that is going on. You want to be neutral in the life-struggle. You prefer to make no choice at all, neither Jesus nor Barabbas. But you cannot be neutral. I have tried to show you that. You are deciding one way or the other every step you are taking in life. Down in your shop or street you are deciding. Out on the road you are deciding. Sitting in your pew or here listening to this sermon you are making a decision. Whether you will or not you have to make

your choice. And the choice you make is either Jesus or Barabbas. You ask, "Can we not choose a good that is a real good without choosing Jesus? We are here to-day. We like to be here. We prefer being in the house of God on the Sabbath. We enjoy the preaching of the gospel. But we have not yet made up our minds to go as far as to make an out and out choice of Jesus nor have we yet made up our minds to reject Him. Can we not then remain here where we are? Can we not enjoy the choice we have made, without going further?"

My answer to that is, No; you cannot remain where you are. The choice you have made so far is no choice at all. It cannot satisfy your own conscience, and it is not satisfactory to God. Jesus will have no compromise with the world, and that is really your choice is. He will be either wholly yours or not at all yours. Where you are, you are halting between two opinions, and while God may patiently wait on your coming up to the only safe standing-ground, He cannot let you stay there, and He will not let you stay there. Everything is pressing you forward to a decision, and a decision you must come to whether you will or not; and your decision, when it is come to, will be Jesus or Barabbas.

This halting between two opinions, this being almost a christian, this stopping short of the truth as it is in Jesus, this trying to be satisfied with something less than a whole-hearted surrender to the Son of God, is a dangerous state to be in. I know men like it. It is neither too hot nor too cold for them. The responsibility is not great. Not much is expected of them, and they do as little or as much as they feel disposed, and usually they are not disposed to do very much. It is thus a comfortable state to be in. But I want to press this home upon you, that it is a most dangerous state to be in. There is no salvation in that state. To stay there, I don't care how near the pulpit, or how near the cross, or how near eternal life, is to perish. Souls are perishing there in those pews as fast as anywhere else, perhaps faster. There is no permanency in that state, and one of the worst features about it is, that those in it are just as liable to go back as come forward—I think I would be safe in saying they are more liable to go back than to come forward. How often have I seen men come on and on, nearer and nearer to the truth, until they were all but christians. Oh, it is most interesting to see souls waking up to their duties and responsibilities, and to an appreciation of the truth as it is in Jesus! But very often, just when I have expected them to take the final step, they have stopped short, as if they were far enough, and farther they would not go, and all has been lost. Satan made them believe that because they had got as far as the church, and as far as a good moral life, and as far as a profession, they were all right, whereas, by stopping short of a whole-hearted surrender to Jesus, they really and practically said with the Jews, "Not this man, but Barabbas."

Numbers of church-goers are making themselves believe, because they are church-goers, that they have chosen Jesus. But they have not chosen Jesus. Ask them to profess Christ. Ask them to own Him before men. Ask them to come to the Lord's table next Sabbath. And will they do it? No; they will refuse. They are not prepared to take that step. The truth is, they are deceiving themselves. They are choosing, and they don't know it. They are saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas," and although you cannot get them to say the other, "but Barabbas," still it comes to that.

Oh, friends, let us understand just how it is with us! I hope we do not want to go through life and into eternity with a lie in our right hand. I hope we want to know the truth, however unpleasant it may be. And the truth certainly is, that if we will not have Jesus as He offers Himself, as our King and Saviour, as our Shepherd and Redeemer; the only alternative is, we must take Barabbas, and all Barabbas represents. Jesus is on trial before us to-day. The world is about Him. Some are saying he is a good man. He is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. He is worthy of our love and faith. He is true as the truth's self, and glorious with the glory of God, and they gladly choose Him as the all in all to their souls. Others, however, are condemning Him. They see no beauty in him. They despise him. They mock his name and cast reproach upon his cross. They will not have the man Jesus to reign over them, and they turn their backs upon all his claims. "Not this man," they say; "not this man, rather Barabbas than this man." Now, one or other of the two parties you must belong to. How then do you stand? Where are you, friends? The church and the world wait to know just where you are. Is it Jesus, or is it Barabbas? One or other it must be. You cannot sit here looking like a christian, and then go down the street to-morrow and in a business transaction wrong your brother man. That is Barabbas; and you cannot have Barabbas down in your shop and

Jesus in church. I know some are trying it. But it will not work. It may be Jesus here and there, else it is Barabbas here as well as there. Which is it? But you cannot get a great many to say in words what their choice is. They will sit and sit, and you do not know what they are. But words are not necessary to a choice. How do they live? Is it Jesus or Barabbas in life with them, in their business transactions, in their pleasures, in their companionships? If we have chosen the world, chosen its riches, chosen its vanities, chosen its society, chosen its interests and prospects, we have said, "not this man, but Barabbas."

Some of you have chosen Jesus. You have cast in your lot with the people of God. Your earnest life-endavor is to have Him in His right place everywhere, in your family, in your business, in your pleasures. But how many are practically saying "Not this man"? Oh, my friends, your choice is a fatal one! Not to take Jesus, is to take Barabbas. It is to throw the door of your heart open to every evil. You think you can choose your company. You can take only as much of the world or as little as you please. But you will find out before you are through with it, that in choosing the world, that you have taken the world as it is, and the world as it is, is Barabbas, a robber, murdering your peace. Oh, it is too late to ask you to reconsider your choice? No. To-day you may choose right. To-day Jesus is before you, and He says, "Take me. I will bless you and glorify you."

TUPPER GOES TO THE COUNTRY. Should the incredible occur and the Conservatives succeed at the June elections, Sir Charles Tupper will be the only possible leader of the Government, owing to the feebleness of constitution of Sir John A. Macdonald. His will be the directing mind, his the Tory policy, even though Sir John should remain the nominal Premier for a time, and Sir Leonard take some little time in selecting that he might retire with. What Sir John asks the country to do for him is to elect a majority in support of a Ministry to be headed by Tupper. That would be enough to sink the Tory craft, if it were not already overloaded with an injurious policy and an infamous administrative record.

The speech of Sir Charles Tupper on the budget will illustrate one peculiarity of his character. It begins, proceeds, and ends with hardy falsehoods. Men have existed who were as ready to utter truths, but we think it would be hard to name one who did or does exhibit so audacious a preference for the untrue. It is not that Sir Charles misrepresents, not that he mingles truth with falsehoods so that to separate them is difficult, not that he indistinctly what is contrary to the fact. His method is artless, bold, straightforward assertions of what every one who hears him knows to be false. With a bellow he asserts that he was always a Protectionist; he roars out that the tax on coal reduces its price to the consumer; hoarsely shouts that the Government is economical; his amazed audience would scarcely have been started to hear him, with a howl, declare himself to be an honest man. He is the orator of the incredible, the great ignoror of such a thing as fact. To insult intelligence is his delight. He will come to Toronto, we dare say, and boldly tell the people who have paid the coal tax that it has put money in their pockets.

The hardihood of his falsification is not more remarkable than the nakedness of his jobbery. The pickpocket to whom his present colleague compared him, taking a purse with a full knowledge of the owner, and then shaking it under the latter's nose with an assurance that nothing had been stolen from him, would not be one particle less audacious than Sir Charles in the Carillon, Section B, and Moody frauds. These jobs were "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." Tupper does not even pretend to furnish an excuse for them, except the assertion that he was not dishonest "in his mind."

This brawling, bullying, reckless, corrupt, roaring, Bull of debate, brags of the thick hide which renders him callous to the reproaches and the contempt with which he is universally regarded. He calls his disregard for truth and decency "courage!" On his insensibility to shame is founded his claim to the leadership of his party.

The Conservatives of Canada have been dragged through much mire in their servile following of their party chiefs, but we doubt whether they will accept the lead of Tupper. Sir John has always practised corruption as a political art, as a means to power; Sir Charles practises politics as a business which affords opportunities for filling his own pockets. Even dyed-in-the-wool Tories will hesitate to follow the professional politician who has grown rich as he has grown notorious, and it is very certain that the electors of the Dominion will not endure a Government headed by such a man.—Toronto Globe.

TRAGIC END.

A STORY OF DISAPPOINTED LOVE.

NIAGARA FALLS, ONT., Feb. 28.—A sad romance, connecting the history of one who was once the leading belle of this village, has been told for the past week. Amelia Taylor, the daughter of a storekeeper at Niagara Falls, was ten years ago the favorite of many suitors. She was then but seventeen, beautiful, and endowed with a classical education, combined with rare musical accomplishments. She inherited the ambition and energetic traits of character, and down to her death her life was one of many sacrifices. Among the suitors for her hand was one Charles Wilson, a handsome, rollicking young fellow, the son of a wealthy grocer and a respectable citizen here. She showed him so much favor that the gossip intimated that their fortunes would be united some day, but fate ordained a different future for them.

Charles Wilson's parents were rich and proud, and objected to the union on the ground that Amelia was far below their son socially, and positively forbade their marriage. Amelia's bright hopes vanished. Charles Wilson was true to his love, but respected the wishes of his parents and his two sisters, who are the belles of society at the Falls. Eight years ago Amelia, living in this village, and leaving her father, went to Rochester. While there she became acquainted with Dr. Peer, a dentist, and after a short courtship came to Drummondville with him, and was married. Her marriage fell heavily upon young Wilson, who yet loved Amelia, with whom, it is said, he corresponded after her marriage.

Dr. Peer's first year of wedded life was indeed a happy one, but after that her husband became addicted to the company of fast women, which aroused the jealousy of his wife. Eighteen months after their nuptials, Dr. Peer was found in his rooms with a handkerchief covering his face saturated with chloroform. Before medical aid could be brought to bear he died. Mrs. Peer then came to Niagara Falls, where she remained for two years in her father's store as clerk. But life was too dreary for her, and she left for Rochester again, where she remained but a short time. After a time she went to New York and became a saleswoman in a large millinery house.

DEATH FROM RAT POISON. About eight o'clock on the night of February 15th, 1882, Mr. Hardy stepped into the dining-room to tell Mrs. Peer of his trip, when she exclaimed—"Don't come near me, for my breath is disagreeable. I have taken rat poison." Mr. Hardy smelled phosphorous, but he paid no attention to Mrs. Peer's remarks, not having any idea that she had taken enough to do any harm. Towards midnight she was seized with violent pains, and despite every effort of two physicians she died about five o'clock on the morning of February 16th. Coroner Brady took charge of the case, and discovered that Mrs. Peer had purchased poison ostensibly for rats, and had playfully remarked to her servant that it was not injurious to human beings, and pointed to the label as proof of her assertion.

Charles Wilson, when he heard of Mrs. Peer's death, was stricken with grief, and was one of the principal mourners at the funeral. Since the death of Mrs. Peer he has apparently lost all interest in business, and has become despondent and reckless.

THE FLOODS IN ARKANSAS.—HELENA, Ark., Feb. 19.—For three weeks it has rained almost daily, until now there is but a dreary water waste between Memphis and Vicksburg, extending 15 miles inland from either bank. The destruction of dwellings, stock, and lands cannot be estimated. There have been innumerable breaks in the levees, and the outlook for the future is anything but hopeful. Cattle and hogs have been drowned by hundreds, barns swept away and their contents wasted, mules and horses suffering, and the loss to planters by these mishaps will tramp their facilities for putting in crops for the year. This condition of affairs exists to an alarming extent in the largest cotton growing counties of the Mississippi valley. Starvation threatens many poor people whose homes line the bank of the overflowed streams. In some instances, negroes, hogs and mules are all gathered in cabins awaiting the receding of the waters. The latest break occurred Friday night above Austin, Miss. This will overflow the country for a distance of 25 miles.

Some Princetown College boys offered to saw wood for a poor widow, but she replied that if they would relay the four rods of sidewalk torn up by their crowd she would ask Heaven to see to the wood-pile.

"The man who is happy is rich," says Peter Cooper. Uncle Peter, send on your ducats and take our happiness for the next six months. We want to see how it will seem to be rich and miserable.