

CONFESSION AND TESTIMONY OF A BURGLAR AND SAFE-BLOWER.

CHRIST was crucified between two thieves. One of them prayed in the hour of his dying agonies, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy Kingdom;" and the Lord replied, "Verily I say unto thee to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." And so the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who died to save sinners, carried the pendent thief triumphantly to the abodes of glory, and set him down amidst angels and archangels and the hosts of the redeemed. How amazing God's compassion! What depths of mercy, what heights of glory—stooping so low and lifting so high. And all the joy of heaven bursts forth when the miracle of love and grace is accomplished.

Looking upon the engraving "Captured from the Enemy," which is on the last page of this issue, our readers will see, on the right side of the picture, between two pairs of crutches, a revolver, burglar's "Jimmy," and certain ingenious attachments and drills for "safe-blowing" purposes. These are referred to in the Confession which follows, and which speaks for itself.

We may say that more than three years have passed away since the confession was written, and that we have baptized the writer, his wife, his brother and companion in crime. His family, his brothers, and a number of persons with whom they were associated, have been for some time members of the Church, and have been living consistent and useful lives. He is a very skillful workman, and has been earning a considerable as foreman of a Department of a large manufactory in Chicago.

We read this confession publicly shortly after receiving it; but for good and sufficient reasons, we have kept it back until now. But we believe God will bless its publication now, and we can withhold it no longer.

"Why should the wonders God hath wrought
Be lost in silence and forgot?"

CHICAGO, ILL., March 26th 1892.

TO THE REV. JOHN ALEX. DOWIE.

DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST:

No words can express the gratitude which I feel in my heart to our Father in Heaven, who for Jesus' sake has pardoned my many sins and rescued me from a criminal career which could only have ended in a shameful way, perhaps a murderer's grave. I know that by the grace of God I am saved.

My heart is changed so entirely that I scarcely know myself, and my whole life and thoughts and wishes are so entirely different from what they were a year ago, at which time I was living upon the proceeds of successful robbery and planning new crimes, one of which was indeed the crime of murder in revenge for what I considered to be a great wrong. O how wonderful is that salvation, and how condescending God is, that in His infinite mercy He should have stooped to rescue one so deeply dyed in sin of every kind.

I know I am led by the Holy Spirit to make this confession to you and to write it in order that you may use it in any way that you think will promote the glory of God and perhaps the rescue of such an one as I have been.

THE STORY OF MY LIFE

up to June of last year is one of crime and shame. Until then from my fifth year I had been a thief, and I do not know that there was a single day in all these years that I was free from the desire to steal, and scarcely a week in all that time that I did not steal several times, and yet strange to say, in all this long career of thirty years, I was only arrested once.

I was born in the state of Indiana thirty-six years ago, and I regret to say that my first lesson in crime was taught to me by my own father. I was only five years of age when he took me with him to a place where he stole a barrel of cider, and I, while he was so engaged, filled my pockets with the apples that were lying around. From that day I was a thief. I remember well the following Sabbath day going to Sabbath School and when my teacher asked us for the verses of scripture which we repeated to her, I said I had one. When she asked then to repeat it I said that I had forgotten it, but I had learned it and wanted the card. The fact was that I had learned no verse and that I told a lie simply because I coveted the card. From that day I was a liar. It seems to me that all my life through until my conversion last year, those two words, a thief and a liar, would cover all my life, and from these two things, the desire to steal and the readiness to lie, my other crimes proceeded. I had a good mother who tried to teach me to be a Christian, but all in vain. The evil spirit had possession of my heart and I was completely under the dominion of sinful and lustful passions. I ran away from school and associated myself with bad boys in the country district where I was born. I became an increasingly bad hoy between the ages of six and twelve, at which age I learned to chew, and smoke, and drink, and lie, and steal everything that I could lay my hands upon. When a mere boy I formed a gang of youths to rob a wealthy man's house. We laid our plans with the utmost care, and knowing that we would be likely to meet with resistance, we went to the house, each armed with a club and a revolver, and masked. As we had expected the old gentleman was alarmed, but before he had time to use his fire-arms we had bound and silenced him. Then his family was awakened and rushed to his rescue, but the members my gang secured them one by one except a powerful

daughter who rushed past me to her father and whom I struck upon the head with my club. I feel that blow in my heart to-day. I thank God that she was not seriously injured, but I feel the first blow that I struck in robbery now more keenly than at any time, notwithstanding I have confessed it to God and believe been forgiven. This was my first house-breaking, and we stole the old man's horses and wagon and drove as fast they could carry us a distance up to the railway line, where we broke into a place and took a hand-car which we worked on the line until we reached a neighboring city and we were lost among the people. The robbery was successful and we divided the spoils. I was only a lad at that time, but I became at once a full-fledged burglar, although as I have already stated I had been a petty thief all my life from my childhood.

It would be impossible for me to give you a detailed account of the many years of my criminal career. Suffice it to say that I became an expert in the making of burglar's tools, and for years was associated especially with two others. We became safe-blowers, that is as you understand, robbers of safes, using tools which I had invented, and dynamite when necessary to open the safes with. I give you my last box of dynamite with this confession and a number of burglar's tools which I had constructed with great care and had used successfully with my confederates. At the time of my conversion we had become expert in the use of these tools that we had planned a very extensive bank robbery and had every prospect of success, but our plans were all destroyed by the goodness of God. You will see from the tools which I hand you that they have oft been used and are made of the finest, strongest steel. The dynamite which I give you I used to obtain in similar packages to this from confederates in the east who sent it by express, the express companies little knowing what the boxes contained. The two sticks of dynamite which I give you in this box would be sufficient to be used eight or ten times in safe-blowing. I also hand you a Smith-Wesson revolver which belonged to one of my confederates in crime, who, in another state some years ago killed a policeman with it. A strange fascination has induced me to keep this weapon which came into my possession after his death, he having been killed shortly after his crime whilst engaged in an attempted robbery. But his untimely end did not turn myself and my other confederate from our career. I associated myself with a number of other criminals and continued my robberies. I occupied in a certain city in the states a good position in a public institution where I was a systematic thief, the superintendent of which incurred my wicked anger because he rightfully dismissed me from the position in which although he knew it not, I was robbing him. My heart burned with anger against this man and I swore a great oath that I would murder him. I planned to do so and went on one occasion to commit the crime, but was graciously frustrated by God in my murderous intention. I have since my conversion confessed to this good man and have returned to the utmost of my power all that I stole from him. I have also given up all the proceeds of my robberies so far as they remained in my possession and have made confessions to those whom I have robbed, it is the desire of my heart to live and make as far as possible restitution for these wrongs, although that will be utterly impossible in many cases. Some have since died and the multitude of my crimes is too great almost for me to remember. I thank God that throughout the whole of this long career of crime I never shed any man's blood, although I have often been in heart a murderer, and have threatened many, standing frequently over the victims of our robberies with two revolvers in my hands. The marvel is that I have not been a murderer, and yet there is a sense in which I have been guilty of blood, for I have aided my wife in the destruction of our unborn children, and that awful crime of blood guiltiness rested upon our hearts until the blood of Christ cleansed it away. Throughout the long years also I have been guilty of many other sins, living a profligate and vicious life, steeped in every form of iniquity; associating with the vilest often times, and pursuing the wicked courses suggested by an unbridled lust and a depraved and wicked heart. It seems impossible that from all this I could have been rescued, but such is the amazing fact, and I have told this story of my crimes with the utmost pain, simply that I might show the great depths out of which God has taken me. And now I turn from it to tell

THE STORY OF MY SALVATION.

In May of last year a Christian lady induced me to go and hear you speak. You were then conducting a Mission in the old Fourth Baptist Church, Washington Boulevard, Chicago. With other confederates I was at this time maturing plans for an extensive bank robbery. I had not been inside of a church for eleven years, and only two or three times at the most for about ten years previously. The very idea of my going to church seemed absurd. The things that I had heard concerning you had awakened my curiosity and interest to no ordinary degree, and I thank God that ever in His infinite mercy He led me to hear you preach. Up to that time I had never believed that there were any good men or women in the world, save my own mother, and one man whom I believed to be a thorough Christian and whom I almost worshiped; but when I heard you speak I felt that for the first time in my life the voice of God had reached my heart. I went away from that meeting with the strangest feelings that I had ever had in my life. I was awakened and there dawned upon me a sense of my awful depravity and degradation. Your cutting words also concerning tobacco made a deep impression upon me. By some irresistible power,—it must have been God's, I was compelled to go again and again to hear you preach. I remember one evening when walking slowly from my bouse alone I had a specially fine cigar in my pocket. My fingers closed upon it to take it out and smoke it, when the words that you had spoken

concerning tobacco and its filthiness made me put it back in my pocket again. Then the appetite for it returned with full force and I said I did not care if he did say that and I would smoke. Thereupon I took it out again, but I could not smoke it and I crushed it in my hand as if it had been a viper and said: "I will never touch the filthy stuff again." This seemed to be the turning point, for very soon after I went forward and knelt among the penitent and sought mercy; and O, how graciously the Lord revealed Himself to me. "He took me up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock," the Rock Christ Jesus. All my thoughts and desires were instantaneously changed. I loathed my past. The instinct for stealing which even when I first went to the church made me to desire to steal there, was all taken away. The desire for smoking, chewing, drinking and sinning, and the fascination for crime was all taken away. I loathed my past with an unutterable loathing and looked down to the abyss from which I had been rescued with a nameless dread, but I looked up with thankfulness, for it was into the face of a reconciled God. The Holy Spirit came into my heart and has ever led me since. I could not describe what has followed with any language that would not seem exaggeration. I can only praise God that ever I heard you preach the gospel of salvation and healing and cleansing power through faith in Jesus. It proved to be the power of God to my salvation. My home was transformed; my wife was converted; some of my companions in crime have been also converted, and when I heard you tell the story and show the burglar's implements of one who was converted in that same Mission, I felt an irresistible desire to tell you my story and to hand you my implements. It was a strange and wonderful thing that two such men as we should have been converted in that Mission, and yet it was God's own way, for that very man was one of my companions in crime. We have both sought to lead our old companions to Christ and we trust not without some blessing.

Ten months have now passed away since my conversion and I have been working honestly for my bread every day of that time. I have, as I have already stated, given up all the proceeds of my robberies, and if it would be for the glory of God and the good of man, I would give myself up to suffer the consequences of my crimes. I am willing to do so, but since the law of man has only for its objects the punishment of the criminal, the protection of society, and the restoration of the criminal to an honest life, I feel that all these three have been effected by God. Society is protected from my depredations by the grace of God having changed my heart; the proceeds of my robberies have been given up as far as possible, and I am working with a view to repay in many cases where the wrong has been very great, and no prisons or discipline could effect the reformation in me which has already been wrought by the Holy Spirit. I feel also that if I were to go to prison I should simply leave my wife and young family who need me as their bread winner, to be scattered, and the good work that is now being done in my home, perhaps to be destroyed. Still I am willing to surrender myself to justice if that would be for the glory of God. I would rather go to prison than to hell. But I thank God I know my sins are all forgiven and that I am by His grace, on my way to heaven. You know the condition of my family and you know how wonderfully God has answered prayer for us when we have been sick, and how we have been kept by the power of God.

And now, dear man of God, I have written these things believing that in your hands they may be used for God. I have put the dynamite, the burglar's tools and the revolver into your hands to be added to the burglar's tools given by my confederate in crime, and I have resolved to spend my whole life now in serving my Lord. "Old things are all passed away; all things have become new;" the things I loved, I hate. I have no desire for the things which were sweet to me as life and for which I often hazarded my life. I am now a new creature in Christ Jesus. I give God all the glory. I praise my Saviour and my Healer every day, and ere we eat in the morning my family gathers with me around the mercy seat. We read a few verses of scripture and have prayer, and so at night. My home is happy; our hearts are glad, and I thank you as the instrument in God's hands through whom all this has come to pass. May He use you to His glory in increasing measure every where, and may I be kept faithful by His gracious Spirit's power.

I do not append my name to this for you know the writer and know where I live and have told me that you did not wish it, but I will subscribe myself as

ONE OF THE CHIEFEST OF SINNERS

SAVED BY THE GRACE OF GOD,