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BIBLE CHARACTERS

by B. Carradine

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BIBLE CHARACTERS

BY

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CHAPTER 1

THE NAMELESS PROPHET

In some respects the world never changes. Nations may rise and fall; governments pass away; coast lines of continents as well as boundaries of Kingdoms alter; but in certain great essentials the human race abides the same.

It is not only that we see war and peace follow each other as of yore; the procession of political convulsions and alterations; the returning round of fashions and customs; but the faithfulness and the unfaithfulness; the old loves and hates; the passions and prejudices; the toiling and struggling; the succeeding and failing; the laughing and crying; the heartbreak and dying; continue to take place in the latest century as they did in every preceding age and locality of the world.

The great drama of life is going on all the while. The scenes continually shift. But the stage is broad, the play is long and profoundly interesting to the thoughtful observer. The actors are numerous, and from the time they appear at the entrance on the East side, until they disappear behind a curtain in the Western edge of time, we are held by the potent spell of the different acts in which every faculty, sensibility and energy of man is engaged, and where temporal happiness, fixedness of character and an unalterable destiny is the result in the case of every individual who has lived and died upon earth.

Of course there is much of comedy to be beheld; but far more apparent after awhile appears the great tragedy of life. In the comings and goings, in the meetings and partings, in all the many relations of earth, the solemn drama of probation runs on, in which the actors find themselves observed, studied, approved or condemned, as the case may be, and all the while working out their own unchangeable state and place in the eternity to come.

The Bible is full of such acts and scenes, and in life we behold the same. We have indeed only to read the Scripture to see in the occurrences of the long ago, words and actions, conduct and character, life and influence identical with what is taking place today.

It gives the sacred volume a new charm to recognize this fact, and adds to its already inherent power to remember that in its presentation of the actors of the long gone past, the help and warning intended there, is our own revelation, assistance, forearming and delivery now. With what intense interest, then, ought we to study the various personages and characters introduced to us in the Word of God.

Concerning the man who figures in this chapter we have the following Bible account. "And a certain man of the sons of the Prophets said unto his neighbor in the Word of the Lord, Smite me I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. Then he said unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the Word of the Lord, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him and slew him. Then he met another man and said, "Smite me I pray thee." And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him. So the prophet departed, and waited for the King by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face and as the King passed by he cried unto the King, and he said, "Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold a man turned aside and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man; if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shall pay a talent of silver. And as thy servant was busy here and t here, he was gone. And the King of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it. And he hastened and took the ashes away from his face; and the King of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets. And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and the people for his people. And the King of Israel went to his home heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria."

One lesson we obtain from this most striking character is that used of God as he was in a most remarkable mission his name is not given.

Nor did the man himself announce his name, or seem troubled or mortified that he was unknown to those to whom he was sent, and unrecognized by the public before whom he lived so truly to God, and so faithfully to man. He actually seemed satisfied to work for God, and carry out his plan, whether he was appreciated or not, applauded or not, or received the slightest recognition of his talents, gifts and labor.

Here is a wholesome example indeed that could be profitably studied by a number of God's servants today. So anxious are some latter day prophets to be known and honored among men, that they take along with them photographic "cuts" and biographical notices of themselves. They see to it that their names appear in print; and if the editor of the city paper does not come to hunt them up, they hunt up the editor.

The blessedness of an unheralded, untrumpeted service of God seems utterly unknown to them. They have to be autographed, photographed, lithographed and especially paragraphed. The service which may be overlooked, that is not likely to appear in secular and religious journals has no attraction for them. They want to be noticed, reported, commended, flattered, their whole Christian and family name given, and if any college has added a few letters in the way of degrees and titles, they desire these also to appear. Anything rather than to pass through life in the employment of Heaven, unknown by name to the world.

A second lesson is that unknown as this man was to the world, we find him in the Service of God.

There is a common idea abroad that men have to be prominent and famous to be able to do anything worth speaking of for the Lord in His kingdom. A title-distinguished, platform-renowned person is felt to be the human instrument necessary to present the word and carry out the will of God.

This of course is a magnifying of the flesh, a diverting of attention from the Creator to the creature, and hence a robbing the divine One of the glory that belongs to Him.

So it is that God often sends servants who are totally unknown to the public. The people never heard of them nor their ancestors, when suddenly here they come walking out of obscurity, all panoplied for the

fight, bearing a message from the skies, and delivering it with marvellous unction, fearlessness and power.

Let the reader take up the reports of the various religious papers in the lands, especially Full Salvation periodicals, and he will be deeply impressed at the record of blessed, successful meetings run by men whom he never heard of before. Undoubtedly God's family is larger than is thought, and his chariots and armies outnumber far the figure men have placed upon them.

Third, this man of God, although unnamed, was sent to do business with one of the kings of the world.

Here is another surprise to the wisdom, and another blow to the pride of man. God in his dealings is continually upsetting both. So a shepherd with a slow tongue is sent to declare Jehovah's message to Pharaoh; and John clothed in a camel skin rebukes the proud Herod. Neither one of them drove around in a chariot, or had a retinue like an ambassador of earth to escort them, or parchments with showy seals and signatures to attest and endorse their rank and authority. They both footed it about the country, and in the beginning of their labors challenged public attention, unknown in name and equally unknown in life.

The subject of this chapter in just the same way was sent to deliver a message to Ahab the King of Israel. Think of it, a dusty, footsore, unknown pedestrian is the chosen vehicle of the Almighty to rebuke a crowned monarch of earth.

Truly we, if left to our wisdom, would never do things after that style. We would send a bishop, archbishop or cardinal to the great and exalted ones of the world. A poor circuit preacher should not be allowed to speak to a rich or distinguished man at the altar. The woman in calico ought not to try to counsel or direct another who is clothed in silk. The terrestrial fitness of things clamors that we go into the ark in groups according to our social and financial kind.

"Who will you have to talk with you?" was asked of a lady in a great Gospel meeting in one of our largest cities. Whereupon she raised her head, deliberately inspected the big company of preachers in attendance, and selected one who was famous all over the United States. Of course she

received nothing from Heaven that day. But later her own unknown little preacher led her into salvation.

We recall instances where leading people had written and talked to a number of prominent workers and evangelists on the subject of holiness, and all in vain, and then afterwards swept into the experience led by the hand of a hostler, gardener or colored washerwoman.

By these things men are taught that it is the message, not the messenger, that saves. And it pleases the Lord to put His treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power might be seen to be of God and not of man.

Fourth, this man of our sketch was willing to suffer pain for the sake of the cause in which he was engaged.

We read that he made a man smite him, and went along the road wounded and bleeding.

Just what his idea was is not plain, unless it was to contribute to a disguise of himself which he contemplated. The point we make is that he suffered and bled in the mission he undertook for God.

The question propounded to the heart in this life story is, does not this act and consequent condition greatly differentiate him from many who say they are in the love and service of Heaven.

Truly if anything impresses the observer in these days, it is the sight of the multitude of Christ's followers, who do not care to endure anything for Him. Certainly the religion of the Son of God seems to cost them very little in the way of toil and money and sacrifice, and nothing in the line of tears, suffering and blood. And yet the Bible tells us that it is given to us "not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

In the face of a general ease in Zion, there is, however, a band of devoted followers of Christ, who like the man in the Book of Kings go up the road of life bleeding for the cause of truth. They die daily, suffer the loss of all things, and count not their lives dear unto themselves that they might please the Son of God and win heaven at last.

Fifth, the character in this history had to disguise himself in order to deliver his message to the King.

The monarchs of those days dreaded the prophets of God; they were so dreadfully in earnest, spoke such plain truths and predicted such awful things. Hence the King of Israel said on one occasion to the King of Judah, "There is a man by whom we may enquire of the Lord; but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

This condition of affairs led these sceptered and be-crowned rulers to the selection and installation around them of a set of pulpit figures who would say smooth and pleasant things to them, and about them, at all times and under every kind of circumstance. The same principle of action, springing from the same carnal mind, causes many an ecclesiastical body, and many a wealthy and prominent church member to have as their spiritual leader, teacher, adviser and comforter, only the man who prophesieth good concerning them."

It is of course the most natural thing in the world, but herein is its woeful defect, that it is so natural. There is in it nothing of the supernatural. It is certainly not spiritual, nor scriptural. And it is undoubtedly fatal; for the congregation or individual never hear the truth about themselves, and never receive the real message from heaven. The wire is tapped. The dispatch is trifled with, or not delivered at all.

Some people do not want a genuine communication from the skies. They do not like the looks, and abominate the presence of the mail carriers, and telegram bearers of Heaven.

This being the case, there was little hope in bygone days, of a true prophet having an interview with a King. To get a divine message through to the berobed, and enthroned sinner, God's servant had in the instance in question to put ashes on his face. Perhaps the streaming blood enabled the singular mask to adhere and so increased the disguise of the prophet. The King of Israel, looking upon the strange-appearing individual before him, did not dream that one of Heaven's Postmen was before him with a quick delivery letter. That he was about to hear from the great offended King of the Universe. If he had dreamed it for an instant, how his guilty heart

would have throbbed in terror, and how he would have ordered his soldiers to drag the man away to prison.

In like manner the preacher who brings the message of holiness or Full Salvation to most of the churches today, and to the rich and distinguished among men, will not be allowed a hearing. Some today who are presenting a complete redemption from sin, a perfect salvation which delivers from all iniquity and fills with the Holy Ghost, would never be allowed to do so in certain quarters. To obtain audience for such tidings they would have to change both dress and appearance, so that the congregation, conference, or church would not know them—in other words, put ashes on the face.

A final thought is that the man of God in spite of every difficulty succeeded in his mission

His arrow hit the target. The point of his sword penetrated the harness before him, and drank the blood of one of the enemies of God. Ahab was pierced to the heart with the striking message delivered to him by the dust covered man by the wayside, whom he discovered at the same moment to be one of the prophets of the Lord. He was struck dumb by the words of a lowly servant of Jehovah, and went away “heavy and displeased.” Truly if a servant of the Lord can silence and overwhelm the great ones of the earth, what will the King of Heaven himself be able to do when He comes?

It is a most encouraging and strengthening thought to the rank and file of God’s humble unknown people, that their words are used to bring conviction to the highest as well as lowest! That they can be brought to stand before the Kings of the earth! That in the case of every difficulty and opposition the Almighty can get them a hearing, and their utterances are made to come to pass!

All this was seen in the case of the unnamed prophet, and the same thing is continually taking place in the history of this earth today.

The great essential is to be God’s man, and remain such in spite of everything and everybody. All the rest will come easy. God then can use us, and God then will use us. Our hands will be full, and things will come to pass. We will know what to proclaim to the disobedient person who comes along; what to say to the obedient man who follows; will find

crowned Ahabs in the way of life, and be more than a match for them in all their plans, purposes, authority and power.

Some who are met and spoken to in the Spirit, and in the name of the Lord, may turn away heavy and displeased. But God will not be displeased, and we who are the faithful mouthpieces of Heaven will not be heavy, but like one of the servants of the Lord in ancient days, will be caught away to other fields and be found elsewhere in other places of duty still busy and always happy in the service of our God and His Christ.

CHAPTER 2

A TRUE PROPHET

In the dealings of God with an ignorant disobedient and sinful world, it is essential that he should have a faithful, human mouthpiece by whom he can invite, instruct, warn or pronounce doom upon His creatures according to their conduct and relation to one another and to Himself.

The divine voice itself, speaking from the clouds or mountain tops, always terrified. An angelic messenger seemed in like manner to paralyze the hearer. Hence the necessity of human lips for the heavenly communication to be heard as it should, in composure and thoughtfulness, and with every power pertaining to moral freedom unhampered, unhindered, so that men would be given full liberty to yield or resist, to obey or disobey the invitations or mandates of the Almighty.

But the mouthpiece thus used by the Lord must be true to the King who sends the servant forth. He must not trifle with the divine message. He must not add to it, nor take from that, which he was charged to deliver. Such an ambassador should not be terrified by any kind of adversary; should not be bribed into silence with gifts; nor be enticed into faithlessness by any manner of friendship or affection; nor brow-beat into inactivity or retreat by any kind of threat or opposition.

It meant a great deal for the cause of God and the good of men, and for the man himself, for the Almighty to have a faithful servant and messenger among the prophets in the olden days. And it means as much for heaven and humanity in the present time. And just as there were mercenary and backslidden prophets in the Old Dispensation, so there are church-created, salary-loving and spiritually lapsed preachers in the Dispensation in which we now live. But just as there were true prophets in Judah and Israel thousands of years ago, we thank God there are faithful ministers of Christ in our own land and times today.

Micaiah was one of the prophets of the Lord. Several facts about this man of God are worthy of special attention.

First, he was a prophet in a period full of trial and difficulty.

Idolatry was spreading everywhere through the influence of Ahab and Jezebel. The King of Israel was about the vilest of the whole set. The King of Judah, although a far better man than the monarch of Israel, yet had a way of trimming, compromising, and, as the Bible says, “Joined affinity with Ahab.” False prophets abounded by the hundreds, and the people were spiritually dead. And yet at such a time Micaiah, the servant of the Lord, lived, and lived right and well and gloriously.

It is a common thing to hear numbers of God’s people complain about their environment, their worldly churches, wicked neighborhoods and Christless families. They wish the Millennium was here, or that they were born in a different age, or anyhow could be situated in more spiritual and heavenly surroundings.

We cannot blame anyone for such a desire, but the point is brought out in Micaiah’s life that we can be faithful in the darkest times, in the unfriendliest and most irreligious communities, and so far from going down under such circumstances and conditions, through the blessing of God these very untoward features can be made the mightiest instruments and agencies for our own uplifting and spiritual development as well as blessedness to others.

Second we note the remarkable faithfulness of the man under difficulties, not only of a very trying nature, but of a double sort.

A great battle was to be fought against Syria by the two Kings of Israel and Judah. Four hundred prophets had been summoned and asked what to do, and they replied, “Go up — for God will deliver them into the king’s hand.”

One can easily foresee the burst of fury and indignation from the four hundred and from the people if he, the servant of God, counseled and prophesied differently and adversely. Then there was present the King of Israel, who hated him. On the other hand the King of Judah had recommended that he be sent for and allowed to speak and foretell, and

was now listening, hoping the sermon would please himself, the other King, and the entire congregation.

If the reader cannot see the peculiar difficulty in this case, then we must marvel. There was the suffering of loneliness; the being one against many; the attitude of fancied superiority; the delivery of a dark message over against the bright, cheery utterances of the other preachers; the angry, "I told you so," of the King who was set against him; and the deep disappointment of the King of Judah, who had been at such pains to get him in the pulpit to preach a trial sermon, in hopes that everybody would be delighted with the new preacher.

But the faithfulness of God's servants knocks many a human plan and expectation into nothing. It has done so since; it did so then.

Micaiah, quiet, self-collected, leaning on God, looking up to God, receiving light, inspiration and direction from Him, said, "I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains as sheep that have no shepherd." The Heaven inspired deliverance went on to the end, and as God's revealing warning messages always do, stirred the assembly with mortification and anger.

Of course Micaiah was not called to fill the pulpit of that church after such a sermon, nor requested to return to that camp ground. He had been entirely too plain. They actually understood what he preached; and he had the effrontery as well as stupidity to declare what God wanted said, instead of what the people desired to hear!

Of course Ahab would not join the church under such a preacher. His wife Jezebel would likely as not have her feelings hurt in the next sermon. And then his own friend Jehosaphat, the king of Judah, was evidently disappointed in the discourse. Everybody could see it lacked in flowery eloquence, in rhetoric, in oratory and in graceful poses in the pulpit. Moreover, he made no touching allusion to the Old Flag, did not brag on the Temple, failed to compliment the King of Israel who was in the front pew, and in addition so agitated everybody that the regular hat collection was overlooked and thus lost forever.

No, the only thing to do was to invite Dr, Zedekiah, the principal one of the Four Hundred Palace Prophets to lead the camp meeting next year and

accept the call of Sky Scraper Synagogue on Esthetic Avenue as their settled pastor.

We read in Second Chronicles that Ahab forwarded this call. King Jehosaphat of Judah had made such a poor selection in the man that he brought forward, and the failure was so lamentably evident, as beheld in the resentment and chagrin of the congregation, especially the leading people, that prominent as he was he could not be trusted again. It was now high time for a person of sound sense, excellent judgment and fine discrimination to see to future invitations, carry on the correspondence, and decide on the coming preacher. So Ahab made the next choice and called Dr. Zedekiah. And Dear Dr. Zedekiah, of Humbugville, Humbug County, accepted the call.

The opening sermon of the Doctor will never be forgotten. The graceful way he handled the horns of iron, the valiant manner in which he pushed an imaginary enemy before him, his reassuring words about the coming battle, contrasted with the solemn and gloomy discourse of Micaiah, made him quite the man and hero of the hour. Then, after the Doctor made some touching remarks about the old flag, the brave boys at the front, and the moonlight falling on his mother's grave, everybody was convinced that the Syrians did not have the ghost of a chance, and that victory was certain. It was with difficulty the enthusiastic congregation could be kept from clapping their hands as the eloquent preacher left the pulpit.

Right then and there Ahab determined that he would present Dr. Zedekiah with a full suit of broad-cloth, and persuade the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of Samaria to give him a gold-headed cane for his transcendent abilities and services, while Queen Jezebel as quickly resolved that a full length portrait of the dear Doctor should be hung up in the Sewing Room of Parlor-Kitchen Memorial Church on Formality Boulevard.

A third fact in connection with Micaiah is that he was struck a cruel blow in the face for telling the truth.

Of course this was an unanswerable argument to his prophecy. Beyond all question the blow proved conclusively that the prophet was mistaken, that the Syrians would be defeated, and that everything would eventuate well for Judah and Israel. Why, how could the Syrians come and conquer

after Dr. Zedekiah said they should not and could not and had struck the man who said they would be victors over Israel ?

Remarkable to say, the blow on the face has always been the answer of sin and guilt to the accusing, denouncing and warning servant of God.

The bad conscience and evil life have no answer to the merited rebuke, and so would execute immediate vengeance upon the one who brings the word of exposure and condemnation.

So the Savior received a blow in the face for telling the truth. Paul was smitten on the mouth for telling the truth. Stephen was not only struck but beaten to death for telling the truth. To this day the mouth that declares the truth of God to the people, is certain to be bruised and smashed at the hands of men.

Let the lips and tongue move to please mankind rather than God, and all such man pleasers in pulpits and on platform will be fed and clothed by the Ahabs and Jezebels of today, and fairly roll in the fulsome praises of men and women who know not the Lord.

But let the follower of Christ, and the successors of Paul and Micaiah declare the whole counsel of Heaven, and the marred countenance of the first, the bleeding mouth of the second, and the bruised face of the third are certain to be seen reproduced in our midst, even though we live in the boasted light of the twentieth century, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and seven.

It would be well indeed for the priests and prophets of this present age to ask themselves the question, in view of human nature as we find it, the truth of God as he sends it, the Day of Judgment that is coming, and the fixed, unchangeable Destiny beyond; how are my messages and ministry received? Am I popular with God or man? Do I receive the blow on the mouth, the call down from authority in high places, and the coldness, ridicule and opposition of the great body of the priesthood; or am I the favorite of the hour, the pet and companion of rich and worldly people, the recipient of countless civic, collegiate, and ecclesiastical honors, covered up with broadcloth suits, loaded down with beaver hats, presented with gold watches and gold-headed canes and glittering with the badges and regalias of a half-dozen fraternities and secret orders?

Such a question put faithfully in time, might save thousands of congregations from the fires of an endless hell, and just as many pastors, preachers, and evangelists from an everlasting damnation.

CHAPTER 3

THE FALSE PROPHET

According to the Bible, and the history of life as well, the character called the false prophet has always been on hand. Moreover they have abounded; and where God's servants were few and far between, Baal and the rest of the heathen deities had their messengers and teachers in teeming companies. On Mt. Carmel, Heaven had but one man, while the idolatrous worship of that day introduced by Ahab and Jezebel numbered its hundreds.

Two facts alone are sufficient to account for the presence as well as numerous class of false prophets. One being an inward state, or the depravity of the human heart; and the other the outward condition, or public demand for such a person or persons as wrong teachers.

We have selected Zedekiah from the class to bring forth certain lessons concerning this strange body of men who unsent of God, are found occupying places that only should and can be properly filled by the heaven commissioned and divinely-anointed servant of the Almighty.

One thing we notice about Zedekiah is, that he seemed to be in exalted favor with the highest and greatest in the land.

This alone would not be sufficient to perfectly locate him spiritually, but when we see that these same people were of the vilest in heart and life, then the so-called prophet is at once recognized and properly graded.

With such a Gospel as we have to preach, and such a human nature before us to be met, dealt with, and changed, it would be the strangest thing in the world if a true minister of Jesus Christ should be popular with the rich and great. His life and utterances would so rebuke and cut into the pride, fleshy ease, haughtiness, exclusiveness and worldliness of such a class that the man would become intolerable, an ever visible rebuke, and a tormentor at all times, and before the time.

It stands to reason, then, that if the preacher is a pet in high social circles, either that social circle has been regenerated and sanctified, or the preacher himself is wrong. He has either never been converted, or has backslidden, and is now a false prophet.

All of us have observed that when a minister in these days is a kind of pulpit idol with a large mixed city audience, that he is never accused of being spiritual, and no one for a moment, not even his admirers, dream of connecting the word and life of holiness with him.

Most of the readers of these lines will recall very easily to their recollection certain pastors of large churches who for years stood in highest favor with the worldly members of the congregation, were ever to be found at their sumptuous dining tables, and though every kind of secret and open sin sat richly attired before them in the Sabbath audience, yet never was there a warning and rebuke, and so there was not the slightest ripple of mental disquietude and spiritual disturbance produced among them under the smooth flowing periods of the polished, well-studied Sunday oration. Among the board of stewards of one of these clergymen was a spreeing bank president, a theater-attending merchant, a card-playing lawyer, and a wholesale liquor dealer; and yet he the pastor stood high in favor of them all. If we believe the teaching of the Bible, the man was a false prophet. And undoubtedly one who could stand well with such characters now would have been a prime favorite at the Court of the idolatrous Ahab and Jezebel.

A second feature of the false prophet was that he always prophesied smooth and pleasant things to his hearers.

In this he was a perfect contrast to the servant of God, who would declare the truth and a coming disaster, no matter what the people said, and whom it distressed or offended. So when Ahab contemplated a battle with the powerful King of Syria, God's prophet warned him and predicted failure and defeat. But Zedekiah, the man in the office of a prophet but without the Spirit of Him, who makes and sends the prophets, took a pair of horns of iron and said, "Thus saith the Lord, with these shalt thou push the Syrians until thou have consumed them."

The preaching that is studious to please men, that fails to warn men of sin and danger, that holds back a great part of the counsel of God because it may be unpalatable to many, that seems mainly aiming for popularity and ecclesiastical enrichments and position, is nothing in the world but the mouthing of the false prophet heard again in these days of the twentieth century. Hope is held out when there is no reason for such an expectation; and as the Bible declares they say, "Peace, peace," when there is, and can be no peace.

To this day we can but observe that if a man calls attention from the pulpit to the evils existing among the Christian churches, and to the absence of genuine revival power from its meetings, he is at once regarded as a pessimist, and speedily discounted and retired. Let him proclaim the cause of general backsliding in the presence of carnality in the regenerated heart, and now the disgust is profound and general. But only allow the person about whom we are writing arise and begin to parade the Statistics and General Minutes of the church; and commence praising and exalting human nature, proving in many delightful ways, how much goodness is latent in it, how it only wants time and some favoring circumstances to evolve into all moral beauty and spiritual excellency, and an expression sweeps over the face of the congregation of cordial endorsement, and of as profound pleasure as that which overspread the countenance of Ahab when Zedekiah used the iron horns and showed the King how he was going to overwhelm his enemies.

A third feature of the false prophet is seen in that he did not deliver any message from God.

The very fact of his alien nature, and complete non-communion with Heaven, would necessarily show his inability to declare the mind and will of the Divine Being to the people.

It is certainly a very dreadful thought to realize that we have men and women today in the positions of teachers, preachers, leaders and shepherds in the Church or Kingdom of Christ, and yet to whom God never speaks a word. They may talk volubly, lengthily, violently and even eloquently, and yet it is their own talk after all. The Lord has not sent them. And while a mass of words may have been poured out, the truly

spiritual hearer would be compelled to testify that God was not in the message, and that indeed nothing was in it.

A fourth feature of the false prophet, as taught in Scripture, is that his prophecy does not come to pass

The Bible speaks of this as a test and proof of the prophetic messenger. “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

According to this statement of Scripture we have a great many false prophets in the land today; men whose croaking predictions of the end of time and the ruin of all things are unattended and unfollowed by the calamities foretold. They evidently think they are filled with the Spirit of Prophecy, when they are simply overflowing with spleen, bad temper and general uncharitableness.

This scriptural light thrown on the fussy, rasping character clothed in robes of judgment and woe, brings of necessity quite a relief to the individual and congregation who have been so frequently denounced and doomed with “bell, book and candle”; handed over to present backsliding and ruin in this world, and to everlasting woe in the world to come.

As this slandered, misrepresented and continually abused company notice that they still continue to live, and work in the love and favor of God, and no woe comes, no judgment befalls; they are literally driven to the conclusion furnished by the Word of God that a false prophet has been speaking. For, says the Bible, “If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

Finally it is noticeable in the Scripture that calamity at last came upon the false prophet himself.

He, who was so given to sentences of condemnation, predictions of failure, and death and ruin, comes into every one of them by detail and by wholesale. The wrong teachers who kept the multitude from Christ perished by thousands in sacked and burning Jerusalem, or made one of

the swaying, writhing, twisting, thirty thousand figures crucified by Titus on the hills and by the roadsides of poor desolated Judea. The four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal, and the four hundred counterfeit prophets of the Groves who were fed by Queen Jezebel, had their triumph for a while; but there came a day when the true prophet of God exposed them, when God himself turned upon them, and the people whom they had deluded for years, rushed upon the wretched frauds and spiritual cheats and at the word of Elijah dragged them “down to the brook Kishon and slew them there.”

It was in full recognition of the awful doom that is certain to come at last upon the wolf in sheep’s clothing, upon the false prophet posing as a messenger of Heaven, that Micaiah uttered true words of doom to Zedekiah. For when Ahab’s pet preacher and counselor attack God’s servant on the cheek, crying out, “Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee,” the calm reply of Micaiah had in it the solemn sound of a funeral knell. “Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.”

The Bible does not tell us what this fearful calamity was that finally overtook Zedekiah; just as the Lord does not see fit to make a public declaration of every dealing with the wicked; but the truth that is taught beyond all question or shadow of doubt is, that the false prophet is heading all the time for overwhelming trouble, and is certain to come at last to failure, exposure, disaster and a hopeless destruction.

CHAPTER 4

THE RUNNING PROPHET

The personage figuring in this chapter is introduced to us in the Book of Second Kings. The special lesson to be drawn from his life is taken from a single verse. Here after a faithful carrying out of the commands of Elisha in the anointing of Jehu and in prophesying the coming ruin of the House of Ahab, the Word says of the young prophet, “And he opened the door and fled.”

As we read this simple sentence it is almost impossible to keep from smiling. It is such a picture in itself. The words are so rich in suggestion as to amount to description, and one feels that he knows the young man well from the first introduction.

Some prophets were given to running.

There were those in their ranks who excelled in the practice, but perhaps in the life of each one of this divinely called body of men, there had been at least one day devoted to this exercise and we may say experience.

Jonah evidently had a most serious attack of this kind of locomotion. Even Elijah with all his boldness and intrepidity, yielded to the spirit of travel for three days, and placed many miles between himself and the Queen whom he dreaded. He who had not feared a multitude one day, fled most ingloriously before the threat of an angry woman the next day.

The young prophet presented in this chapter gave unmistakable indications of his present gifts and future talent in the running business in the words, “And he opened the door and fled.”

Some commentators say that this individual was none other than Jonah. If so, we obtain a little light on the case, and can better understand the lengthiest race he made from Nineveh some twenty years later. The first performance led to higher excellencies in this line. Or a habit was formed

when a young man which as a middle aged person he found difficult to break.

In strict adherence to the teachings of the Bible, however, it is clear that there are two kinds of flight that may be, have been and are still indulged in by the servants of God.

First, one can take place in the discharge of duty, and is duty itself.

Injustice to the young prophet whose history we are just glancing at, we would say that his retreat was according to direction received from the skies. He was doubtless told that when he had done what was commanded him of God, through Elisha, that he must then go away quietly.

This course is not unusual in the Scripture. We see another instance in the case of the Man of God who was directed to go up from Judea and rebuke the idolatry of Israel at Bethel. The command was that when he had delivered his message, he should turn away at once and leave the country.

Evidently there is a meaning in these hurried or abrupt departures following the discharge of duty; and as we have studied the matter, we heartily wish we could see more running after this order. Nothing could be more impressive it seems to us in these days, when a solemn warning from God has been given, a message of deepest, saddest, darkest import, than that the speaker of the hour should immediately withdraw. The people had better be left with the effect of the word, and the vision of the lonely, faithful rebuker and warner upon them. Let him depart before the glow and glory pales on his face, and while his figure still seems standing on the very doorstep of Heaven, as he gives forth the Word and Will of the King who is imminently near.

For the best of reasons we cannot but wish after certain sermons from the pulpit, that God's faithful ambassador could be swept up like an Elijah, or caught away like a Phillip from the sight and touch of the crowd.

As we have beheld the envoy of Heaven, linger in the aisles, and then at the church door, chatting, laughing, and handshaking; we have as often witnessed the solemn impression of the preaching hour pass away, and a mighty possibility of good end in nothing. The Messenger of the Skies had suddenly become like those he had addressed. The Ambassador

Extraordinary of the Divine World had changed into a citizen ordinary of earth. The grave faced reprover in the pulpit, had been metamorphosed into a grinning, snickering joker at the church door.

We doubt not that it was because of this sudden letting down after a faithful sermon, that a thoughtful man and a fine judge of character and of the proprieties and duties of a Christian minister, said of a certain preacher, "When he enters the pulpit, he ought never to come out; and when he comes out, he ought never to go in again"

Second, there is another flight of the than of God which is not in the course of duty, but away from it.

This did not happen to the young prophet in the instance just mentioned as we have seen, but at a later period of his life, if it be true that he was Jonah.

The flight from duty may take place through fear of man.

It was this that caused Jezreel to be hastily forsaken, and Nineveh to be neglected when God wanted it rebuked, warned and saved. It is this same fear that prevents congregations, communities and large bodies of sinners everywhere from receiving the messages which God would have them hear. The Jonahs of today continue to dread Nineveh. The servant of the Lord is still afraid of the crowd.

The running prophet is beheld in our times in the pulpit's silence about conditions of life around, and those doctrines and experiences that are essential to happiness, usefulness and entrance into Heaven. This silence is flight!

Then if full salvation from sin is declared, and later on, in the pastoral round, or at social and church entertainments given by his flock, the preacher takes back, or explains away, or tones down what he said, we behold another spectacle of moral stampede.

We once knew a pastor who delivered a noble sermon against sin and its consequences to his congregation. The conviction was tremendous. Instead of retiring to his study, or if compelled to remain with the people, yet maintaining the moral and spiritual elevation of the hour; he became panic struck at the grave faces before him and surrendered every advantage that

the Truth and God had given him. Slipping out of a back door he ran around to the front entrance of his church, and there in the vestibule as the audience poured forth past him, became a smirking, bowing time server, and human favor seeker. With a series of back pappings and a lot of light talk he undid in ten minutes what had been accomplished in the previous hour in the pulpit, and lulled to sleep a crowd of immortals whom God had awakened. Verily the preacher opened the door and fled.

Then there is a flight from disappointment and failure.

The seed does not come up to suit us. The harvest does not seem worth gathering, it is so small. People have failed us. Our work, gifts, talents, sacrifices, have not been appreciated. And so time and again it could be truly said of certain servants of the Lord, "And it came to pass, that he opened the door and fled."

Sometimes in cases of sudden bitter disappointment, a really good run seems all that is left the sorely tried prophet, whether of ancient or modern times. We conclude the chapter with an incident after this order.

A young preacher burning up with zeal, told the Lord in prayer just before the annual session of his Conference, to send him wherever there was abundance of work to be done. Incidentally he had learned that a certain prominent church in one of the largest towns in his State wanted him as pastor. Naturally he put the two facts together, and concluded that God would send him to that aforesaid large, bustling City. According to the fitness of things, the manifest dove-tailing, of matters, he evidently should be appointed there. Why not? Here was a great church needing his consecrated activity, and here he was with zeal willing to be offered up so to speak, and indeed anxious to be a sacrifice. The two conditions in a manner supplemented each other. It would be strange, indeed, if everybody did not see it. Even now before Conference, he could almost feel the eyes of that clerical body, together with the gaze of its presiding officer turned in his direction as upon the solitary hope of that part of Zion, and the only possible proper solution of that portion of a grave ecclesiastical problem.

When on the second day of Conference our young preacher was informed that two telegrams had been sent to the bishop and Cabinet asking that he

might be appointed to Bigtown where the great church was located, he more than ever supposed that there was his future field of labor. He was a minister who never requested an appointment, and never elbowed or buttonholed a presiding elder or leading layman on the subject. Still these outside occurrences coming to his ears, and all in harmony with his own desires, unconsciously prepared him to expect the thriving city of Bigtown for his next work, even as the lips involuntarily pucker for a sugar plum.

To his astonishment, when the appointments were read on the last night of the Conference, he was sent to a town that was considered the most broken down and undesirable station in the whole list. The congregation had been divided by church quarrels, neglected greatly in the pastoral sense, and the house of worship was almost empty on the Sabbath.

The preacher concerning whom this is written, was almost knocked senseless as he heard his name connected for the next twelve months with this ruinous fold and scattered flock at Smallville. He could scarcely credit his ears. Surely there must be some dreadful mistake! Did not the church at Bigtown want him? Had not telegrams been dispatched about the important matter? Undoubtedly there must be a misunderstanding somewhere. Gifts and qualifications had been forgotten. Individuals in haste had been overlooked. Names had become mixed.

But no, there was no blunder. The large hall still echoed with the word Smallville! and his own name coupled with it. Then the Bishop read right on as if everything was right and no error had been made in the reading.

There was to have been a balloon ascension that evening. Our young preacher was to have gone up in the inflated globe in full sight of the brethren. We don't know but he had mentally fixed up the kind of meek yet triumphant smile he was to cast down upon the upturned faces of the preachers as they gazed at him soaring aloft.

But the balloon did not ascend at the hour expected. Some one had punctured it. Even now it was going down rapidly. Indeed, to all appearances it resembled nothing so much as a lamp mat, on which something exceedingly heavy had been placed.

Only think of it! Here he had come to listen to the appointments read that night, while his hopes had been spread out like the famous seven-tailed

comet of long ago, and behold, these seven appendages, had been folded into one, and that surviving one had the curious drooping curve of the comet of 1858. The single hope and solitary aim now left in his heart was to escape from the crowd without his disappointment and grief being beheld.

He thought of his distant, expectant family. How could he face that loving group which had prophesied a great promotion for him. He recalled the household that had entertained him during the Conference session, and who had repeatedly affirmed that he would receive the best appointment of the one hundred and fifteen to be distributed by the Bishop. How could he meet them with all the fiery tales of the comet gone, and hardly the head left. The blazing seven-tailed miracle of the ecclesiastical skies had been so stripped and shorn and reduced, that it was barely twinkling just above the edge of the horizon, an obscure star of the thirteenth magnitude, with unmistakable indications of reaching the earth and becoming a glow-worm.

Mortified and disappointed in himself, the man looked with dull, dazed eyes over a sea of heads around him, and called in vain on his fainting, sinking, suffering heart to arouse and be true and faithful to Christ.

He watched his opportunity, and while others were shaking hands, laughing and talking, congratulating each other over good appointments and saying good-bye, he took advantage of the confusion, slipped out, and sped away through the night. According to the Scripture "he opened the door and fled."

He wanted to run. He felt it would be a relief to run. And he did run. He reached the place of his entertainment ahead of the family. For this he was thankful. Leaving words of farewell with the servant for the household, he, with valise in one hand, and umbrella in the other, dashed out of the gate and ran again.

This time the course was nearly a mile. It was the distance to the depot. And so he ran. It looked like it was all that was left him in life to do, viz.: to run. He could do that when he could do nothing else. He could not go to Bigtown, but he could run. And he found that he had to do so. It was a necessity, and it also proved a luxury. He distributed a number of groans

upon the night air as he sped along the empty streets. Ambition had received a fearful stab. Pride had been dealt a stunning blow. Something was hurt in inner realms. All that seemed left to do was to exert vigorously and steadily the outside man, and thus take off some of the pressure and misery that was bearing on the inside man. The physical was called upon to relieve the mental and spiritual.

Reaching the train, the modern Jonah took a seat in the corner of the car where he could not be observed, and drawing his overcoat up so as to mantle his face, looked through the window of the flying train upon the still night, and at the distant stars, and fought silently with the internal wretchedness.

By and by an interior colloquy took place.

“What is the matter with you?”

“I am miserable.”

“What are you unhappy about?”

“I—ahem—well—things did not turn out at Conference as I expected.”

“Did you not ask God to send you where there was abundance of work to do for him?”

“Yes.”

“Did you not say in your prayer that it mattered not how great and difficult that work should be?”

“Yes.”

“Have you obtained what you prayed for?”

There was a silence of some moments and then the preacher said:

“Yes, Lord; but I thought it would be Bigtown.”

“But did you not say in your prayer that you left all that to Me?”

“Yes, Lord.”

This time the response came very humbly.

“Did you not ask for hard work and plenty of it for my sake?”

“Yes, my Saviour.” And the eyes were wet and the heart all softened.

“Has it not come to pass as you prayed?”

“Yes, Jesus.”

“What will you do about it?”

“I will go, Lord.”

And then there was a sudden gush of happy tears in the dark corner. The night air seemed filled with balm. The temporarily interrupted friendship with the stars was renewed, and they seemed to smile upon him from their great tranquil depths and say:

“It is only a little while you have to suffer for Him, and then you will reign with Him in the skies forever.”

And so it came to pass that another door opened and he went in.

CHAPTER 5

A GREAT EVANGELIST

There has always been considerable difference of opinion as to the time and place when the largest and most remarkable religious awakening occurred.

If we believed some of the reports we have read in church, holiness and even secular papers, we would have no trouble in running the elusive fact down, and nailing it, so to speak to the door, so that all could see, read and be convinced.

The expressions, “the greatest revival this country ever saw,” “the oldest inhabitants say this has been the most wonderful of all preceding meetings,” “the whole community was swept lay the revival,” “the city was stirred from center to circumference;” these and other well-known and timeworn sentences, however misleading to some, have lost much of their convincing power on the older and more experienced. They do not feel ready to admit, especially after having gone over one of the battlefields, that the greatest of Gospel fights and victories took place there from which the glowing bulletin was issued.

Some have attributed the most wonderful revival success to Luther, another to Whitefield, still another to Wesley, while there are writers today who would make Moody’s meetings in England, and the late movement in Wales as the first in rank of the long list of victorious achievements over men by the preached truth of God.

In this chapter we refer the reader to what we candidly consider the most remarkable evangelist and religious awakening the world ever saw, from the first century of human history, down to the present day of 1907.

A first noteworthy fact was that the meeting was held by one man.

With all the gathered helps and agencies possessed by the church today, it is supposed to be absolutely essential to have a goodly company of

people acting in concert to secure a public awakening and religious movement in the town, city or country.

Preachers from all denominations discuss the work for weeks beforehand. The community is divided into districts, committees are formed, workers appointed, and an evangelist is secured who is felt and known to be a general. All this is done, and the result three months afterwards of this regimental and brigade movement is too well known to mention.

The meeting we refer to in this chapter was headed and run by one man. He had no committees of any kind. He did not know the city well enough to district it, and if he had, did not have with him or under him a single helper to post in distant divisions. He had to run the meeting alone.

A second fact was that he had no singer.

This is not intended as a blow or reflection upon that strong arm or wing of Christian service. On the contrary, we all realize how much depends on good singing in our religious meetings, especially the revival service. In some union efforts of different denominations, a choral band of one or two hundred excellent voices is considered essential for the best success of the Gospel services.

And yet in the meeting of which we are writing, that transcended immeasurably in some particulars any other work of the kind ever put forth, the leader did not have a single leader of song to help him.

A third fact was that he had no hall, church, or any kind of building open to him.

As far as we have been able to understand the case, not a soul in the city wanted him. Hence there was no committee to meet him, and no arrangements of any kind made to welcome him, or to provide a place where his meeting could be held.

We have known many evangelists who were not desired by town or cities, and to whom every church was locked and barred, but there would be a handful of devoted or fully saved people who would gather around and stand by the faithful servant of God. And so there would be something of human fellowship and sympathy and a certain amount of human instrumentality allied to the unwished-for preacher to take away his sense

of utter loneliness and give him an inspiring consciousness of human love and aid.

But the man we refer to had none of these things. He began, carried on, and completed his meeting altogether alone.

A fourth feature of the case was that all the meetings of this God-sent evangelist were held on the street.

It is a pleasant thing to stand and preach in the nicely furnished and well arranged pulpit of a great church, where all sound is shut out by thick walls and heavy carpets, while thoroughly drilled ushers ward off from the speaker and prevent in every way all kinds of interruptions and disturbing happenings. In the great tent and tabernacle erected for revival occasions, the preacher is still cared for in the line of carpeted platforms, Bible stand, lights properly placed, altars conveniently constructed, and aisles covered with bagging or sawdust, so that not a footfall disturbs the messenger of the hour.

But on the street there is not a single one of these comforts possible. The audience is constantly shifting and changing, while noise, disturbance and confusion of every kind continually take place, requiring necessarily the greatest amount of faith, courage, love, good sense and general level headedness on the part of the preacher. In this last situation, alone and unknown, without a musical instrument or singer, or helper or indorser of any kind, the evangelist of whom we are writing found himself.

A fifth fact that comes out about this revival, is that the preacher had but one sermon, and presented but one subject to the people during the days and weeks of his active labor.

Numbers of evangelists have today a hundred or more sermons on the subject of holiness or full salvation alone, and are continually adding to the list; feeling the need of all this to keep in the front rank of freshness and usefulness. But the subject of this article had but one text and never changed it for another during the whole meeting.

A sixth wonder about the case is, that the preacher himself was anything but a naturally brave man.

As far as we have been able to study and understand this remarkable revival, its leader was undoubtedly a coward. The meeting had been appointed to take place at an earlier date, but the preacher was so impressed with the size of the city, the wealth and number of its population, that he fairly shrunk with a sense of his littleness and inferiority, and instead of being at the opening service as God had intended, he turned up hundreds of miles away, frightened, melancholy and miserable.

And yet in the face of all these things, when this same man did start in on the divine appointment, and when he commenced wielding that solitary text of his like a huge hammer, and preach that one tremendous sermon God gave him, he witnessed the greatest single community revival ever beheld on earth.

In the book, where we read all about it, it is stated that he reached all classes, rich and poor alike.

This in itself is quite remarkable, for the rule is that it takes different men to reach different ranks and conditions of society. This man touched all.

Again, his meeting struck and humbled the most prominent man in the large city. What other preacher can boast of such a triumph in his work? Who in London caught King Edward, or in Berlin captured the Kaiser, or in St. Petersburg led captive in Gospel chains the Czar? Whose meeting in Washington City has laid hold of the President? But the man of whom we are writing got the King, who was not only monarch of the great city itself, but the supreme head of one of the vastest empires of that age of the world.

Still again, the meeting moved the whole city; and this city numbered over one million people in its population! The entire multitude of them were down repenting, weeping, fasting and humbling themselves before God, through the preaching of a man who had one text, one sermon, and one subject, and not a soul to stand by and help him.

Let the reader remember all he ever saw in the way of religious awakening, and recall all he ever read about Gospel services and revivals, and say honestly whether there has ever been anything of the kind that could

possibly measure up to the meeting we have called attention to in this chapter.

That others might read and find out for themselves whether we have stated facts in regard to this amazing revival, we would say that the book which tells about it ought to be easily gotten hold of, as we have found it in nearly every home and house we ever entered.

The name of the city where the meeting took place was Nineveh. The preacher's name was Jonah.

CHAPTER 6

ABSALOM

Absalom was dangerously gifted. He seems to have been good-looking, and, in addition, possessed a pleasing address. As the son of a great King he received enough of honor and attention to have satisfied an ordinary heart; but the spirit of ambition crept in, and craving to be first, he laid his plans to dethrone his noble father and reign in his stead.

From his character, sayings, and achievements we are not led to believe that he was an intellectually brilliant man; but what he lacked in brains he made up in handshaking. Neither statesman nor warrior, he became a kind of politician, and taking his stand in the gates of Jerusalem, met all the country farmers, traveling business men, as well as people in trouble, coming to town for relief, and with affected interest and pity inquired into their burdens and busied lives and expressed most heartily his regret that he was not king, that he might personally help every one of them.

How sorry he was that their cases had been over-looked so long! How sad he felt that people of such merit and excellency had not been recognized at the first glance and given all they wanted. Oh, if he were only king! Etc., etc.

How plainly we can see the erring Absalom, who had bidden farewell to his self-respect, beaming down upon the small man, cuddling close to the strong man, and looking up with admiring glances at the tall man, while his right member was manipulated in the handshaking business with the regularity and monotony of a churn dasher.

As the young prince was at this work for several years, he doubtless became quite a proficient, and can be properly regarded as a kind of champion in the business, and a federal head to a large body of imitators who have followed in his steps.

At one time he thought that politics had captured and monopolized this most intellectual and deeply edifying art, not to say science, of shaking

hands. But the clergy in great numbers have adopted it, and can actually put the electioneerer and party man to shame in the way they use the right hand, and now the left, and sometimes both together, while a stereotyped smile is on the face, and throat ha! ha! ha's! and unctionless "God bless you" proceed in a ceaseless stream from the lips.

Moreover, we never saw a preacher post himself in the vestibule of his church and shake hands with his departing congregation without thinking of Absalom standing in the deep, cavernous gateways of Jerusalem while his arms revolved over the heads and around the bodies of people like a small-sized windmill.

We do not doubt that there are faithful servants of Christ who in some degree feel this is the only way they can get in touch with many of their members, and they do it in a right spirit, and with the best purposes in their heart. But even here we question whether it is the wisest and most effective way to reach and hold the people. The query may well be asked, Is it the way to reach them? And does it hold them?

The preacher called and anointed of God is an ambassador of heaven. He represents the holiest of causes, and the most exalted of kingdoms. He is an envoy from the King of Kings. His office is too great, his calling too sacred, to be brought down to lower planes. His appeals are addressed to the highest powers of man, and his messages affect the eternal interests of his hearers. His greatest influence is certain to be felt by the people, through his delivering the words of God and bearing himself as becomes a representative and messenger of heaven. The instant such a servant of the Lord changes, and from appearing and speaking in the pulpit like an ambassador from the skies, is suddenly seen in the vestibule or church door looking, talking and shaking hands like a politician, a great drop and let down has taken place, and the very congregation which our handshaking brother is trying to ingratiate feels it, and away down in their hearts think less of him, and wish he had not done so.

In a seventeen years' pastorate in city churches we had many thousands of devoted friends, and as true to us as members of the church have ever been known to be to their pastors, and yet we avoided playing the politician at the door, or reproducing the picture of Absalom seesawing his arms in the gates of Zion. The rule should be to escape to the Study after

the sermon and service are over, and leave the message to work in the minds and hearts of the audience. We should dread to dissipate it in any way, by a lighter manner, social chit chat, or even by questions and answers concerning the people's temporal and home affairs.

In the days that the pastor is drawn or compelled to remain awhile after preaching, it is better to stand inside the chancel, and have the people come to him. There is no pride or arrogant conduct in this, but to rush over the church after a few would be to grieve others; and to run after all would create the hand-shaking politician. So, remembering whose servant and messenger he is, let the preacher stand in his place, and receive kindly and indiscriminatingly all who come to him for counsel, comfort or assistance of any kind.

In making an analysis of the handshaking business in Absalom's case, we find there was in it treachery, disloyalty, falsehood, cowardice and selfishness.

In studying the practice as followed by the politician, we observe the elements of selfishness, falsehood and treachery. With an appearance of personal devotion, yet the office seeker does not care a picayune for the man with whom he is gripping hands. And as he is using him and his vote simply as a means to a personal and selfish end, both untruthfulness and duplicity are in the handshake.

As for the man in the pulpit, it would be wise and well if he stopped to consider and weigh the motives which have turned him into a hand manipulator in the church gate. What is really at the bottom of all this apparent interest in and affection for the departing citizens of Zion ?

If the handshaking is for personal popularity, then there is disloyalty to the King, and lo! Absalom is before us! If the act is performed to smooth and soothe those who had been convinced and aroused by the message of truth just delivered, then there is treachery towards God, and cowardice towards man. If it is to stand well with the bread and meat providers of the church, whom when treated to unusually cordial handshakes give beaver hats, gold watches, and trips to Chautauquas and seashore resorts, then here is self again, falsehood and additional betrayal of the truth.

If still baser uses are made of the hand in the church door, then another son of David is made to appear who was even worse than Absalom.

What a tremendous moral difference there was between the hand grasp of Jonathan with David in the woods, and that of Absalom with the people in the gates of the city. The first was to help a good man who was persecuted and oppressed and all but overcome with his life of loneliness, sorrow and privation. The second was given in intense egotism and not only to help no one but himself, but also to pull down from his throne a better man than himself.

It is truly a fearful thought to see how a life of evil can be covered up by an appearance of sanctity; hate masked with a smile; deep inner dislike coated over with a sweet accent and sugary manner; and while one hand is laid in affectionate conciliation on the beard of an unfortunate Abner, the other hand of a Joab delivers the dagger of mortal hate into the vitals of his brother.

Poor Absalom! With all his handshaking he came to failure, defeat and a fearful death. The Bible says that "bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." He was a deceitful man, and died in the very beginning of manhood. He evidently did not reach the end of the first half of his days.

Our eyes have been for numerous years fixed with a melancholy interest on the handshaker. And no matter what he obtains by it, whether chosen governor, constable or bishop, or becomes the idol of a city congregation neither the elected seem to obtain security and permanence of position, nor the electors the great blessings they expected.

Popular favor soon passes away. Offices weary one, and wear out the wheels of life very quickly. Reverses are certain to come. The handshaking Absalom of the world and church cannot meet successfully the great battles and struggles that befall the human race. They speedily pass away; and then the temporarily forgotten Davids are remembered and sought after. And behold! men of character rather than popularity, of solid worth rather than showy, shallow gifts, are received through opening gates of welcome and enthroned with gratitude to God in the hearts of a true and faithful Israel.

CHAPTER 7

AHIMAAZ

After the great battle had been fought between the forces of David and Absalom, and the latter was killed, a messenger named Cushie was sent by Joab to bear the news to the King.

From the Scripture narrative it seems that David was some distance away, and Cushie appears to have taken the regular road to reach the stopping place of the monarch. At this juncture a strange occurrence, fathered by a peculiar character, took place. The name of the individual was Ahimaaz. About him several things are stated which command our attention, and that should bring to mind and heart some most profitable lessons.

In the first place we find him to be a man decidedly ahead of demand and time.

No one had called on him to discharge the grave and delicate duty of informing the monarch of the country of the tragic and fearful death of his son. And yet here he was demanding to be sent.

In this he represents a great class who push themselves forward where angels would fear to tread, and are more than willing to speak to certain men and deliver themselves on the gravest and most delicate matters, when the obvious conditions of success would be a wisdom, knowledge, tact, experience and judgment which any one can see they do not and have never possessed.

We have heard young and uninformed people deliver themselves on the unexplained mysteries of the Bible, and with most refreshing assurance and ease of manner declare the meaning of passages, and settle with a sentence doctrinal problems that have divided and puzzled the best Christian Scholarship of all the past ages. This was Ahimaaz come to life and settled in America.

Again, we observe that Ahimaaz ran without a commission.

Cushi had the real message; but this Racer, unwilling to be left behind, and craving publicity, shot forth on a rapid flight without invitation, command or endorsement.

This class of self-appointed runners are covering the land today. Their name is legion, and they are filling the minds of the people with confusion as regards themselves, their authority and the message itself.

Both in State and Church, the investment of power is regarded as a grave thing; and safeguards for the protection of the public are sought and secured in the line of mental qualification, social standing and a certain record of life and character. In the Methodist church a probation of four years is exacted of a preacher before he is ordained as an elder in the ministry. In all these months not only a course of study is required of him, but a blameless life, while he is made to feel that he is under authority, and amenable to courts and tribunals above him.

Mankind is so constituted that all such Safeguards are not only necessary, but indispensable. Moreover, a good man will never object to that surveillance of power, and amenability to law, which the preservation of society demands. It seems to be the thoughtless or the vicious who protest against precautionary measures instituted by God himself, and which men through the centuries of human history have seen absolutely necessary to be continued.

And yet over against this combined wisdom of God and man, we have the spectacle of individuals running over the country, accountable to nobody, responsible for nothing they write, say and do, insisting that we receive all they utter as an ex-cathedra finality, and gravely declaring that all who differ with them are ignorant, misguided, sinful or lost.

In addition we see groups of individuals here and there, with nothing and nobody back of them, "laying hands" on a few gosling-voiced boys and half-distracted women, add bidding them go forth into an office and work, which the Lord Jesus Himself did not enter upon until he was thirty years of age; which Paul did not take up until he had been filled with the Holy Ghost and had prepared himself by years of prayer and study; and which every religious denomination seeks to exalt and protect for the good of all, by the wise safeguards of character and study, and subsequent

accountability to those in proper authority for their deportment, teachings and life.

A third fact noticeable about Ahimaaz was that he outran Cushie.

According to appearances the true messenger was not true. He not only had a formidable competitor, but a successful rival. He had been turned down, so to speak, and left far behind. He, to all human sight and judgment, was an eclipsed man. Viewed purely in a physical way, and contrasted along lines of fleetness and agility, Cushie was badly defeated and Ahimaaz was the hero of the day.

The apparent victor seems to have taken some advantage in running, as it is said, "by way of the plain." Just what it was does not appear, but doubtless it was a short cut, and he did not hesitate to avail himself of what seemed so providential. Anything to outstrip Cushie.

The whole scene is full of associative power as we recall the plausible man, the outward show man, the tricky man, and the seemingly successful man.

The world, with its shortsighted view, lack of spiritual discernment and its general gullibility, takes to such men. The multitude likes fuss and feathers, glitter and display, and warmly receives the horn-blower and self-appraiser at his own valuation. Men seem to enjoy being bamboozled, rejoice in swallowing a cheat whole, and grow enthusiastic over a fraud.

The Ahimaaz of today has but little difficulty in deceiving the people. He has only to adopt a windy style, practically take issue with Paul about "bodily exercise profiting little," write a few mendacious reports about his labors and achievements, and a certain great company of individuals of the cormorant variety will swallow him, and all his asseverations, proclamations and conglomerations entire.

Washington took some flour barrels painted black, and logs of wood to resemble cannon, strung them along the banks of the Delaware, lighted scores of brush heaps to imitate camp fires, and so appeared to the badly fooled British to be on the ground and ready for battle, when the truth was that he was already twenty miles distant and retreating farther as fast as he could.

We were once deeply impressed with the activity, not to say agility, of a leading layman at a great camp meeting. He attended to everything, and waited on everybody. We saw him climb a great center pole that was forty feet high, to untie a rope. We were filled with admiration. Cushi was again outrun. Ahimaaz led the field. We wondered how the younger brethren could allow this man of middle age to so far outdo them. It was a shame that young men should permit this devoted servant of God to wear himself out after this fashion! So we blundered on in our judgment, crowning and praising Ahimaaz, and uncrowning and misjudging the Cushi on the ground, until suddenly, in the very midst of the meeting, we discovered that the secret of the activity of Ahimaaz was a thorn in his memory and conscience. It pierced him so that he could not keep still. He had committed a crime.

He was running by way of the plain. He was not dealing honestly with his soul and the world. He was running—but not by the straight road up which the faithful Cushi was coming. He was a fraud in spite of all his bodily exercise.

A fourth fact connected with Ahimaaz was that, after all his running, he had to stand aside and hear Cushi deliver the true and whole message.

It is easy to go through the motions of Christianity, but who can bring Christ Himself into our hearts and lives. It is a small matter to pose and attitudinize in the pulpit; to pound the Bible, scream, halloo, jump and even run about with our so-called inspirations and revelations; but who is it that can handle the Gospel in its sweetness, tenderness, unctuousness, forcefulness, and completeness, so that we will be purer, kinder and better men and women for all time for such a message and such a preacher.

Ahimaaz may fill the eye of the people for awhile; he may confuse the simple-minded, and obstruct the way of truth for a season but just as he was set aside in the olden times, and Cushi delivered the full tidings which reached every heart from the king down to the lowest peasant and soldier; so the blusterer and interloper of today; the man who thrusts himself forward in the work of the Holy One with carnal rashness and Jehu-like zeal, will finally see himself set aside both by God and man, and be compelled to listen while other and better men give the message of a full and perfect salvation.

CHAPTER 8

“LITTLE BENJAMIN”

Benjamin, as the Bible tells us, was the twelfth son and last child born onto Jacob. The birth of the lad cost the life of the beautiful Rachel. Before passing away she called him Benoni, the son of my sorrow; but Jacob named him Benjamin, the son of my right hand.

As the youngest of the twelve sons of Jacob, we can readily see the fitness of the title of this sketch; although, strictly speaking, the term Little Benjamin is used in connection with the tribe of that name. In the numbering of the children of Israel on two different occasions, the numeral figure of Benjamin is seen to be below that of most of the other tribes. And later still, under an almost exterminating war, the men left to the already small body of people were only six hundred. No wonder that the Psalmist, in looking at the congregation assembled before the Lord, said, “There is little Benjamin.”

About Benjamin, the twelfth son of Jacob, we offer a few reflections.

One is the great price it cost for his entrance into the world.

To bring his new and feeble life upon this earth, the beautiful Rachel had to lose her own. To win her as his wife Jacob had served fourteen years at hard labor, and yet such was his love for her, he said that they were as a few days. Yet this woman in the bloom of a lovely young motherhood was smitten with the cold hand of Death, and taken away from his side forever, to bring a helpless, weeping baby into the world. Death to one, and a crushing sorrow to another, were the two dark portals through which little Benjamin appeared to take his place in the household, and somewhere among the ranks of the children of men.

Such births are not as infrequent as some might suppose, and where known, a veil of peculiar sadness ever hangs about the tomb of the departed another, and falls in a sense around the one who bought his admission into our midst at such a fearful cost.

It seems to the thoughtful that no son or daughter would ever, and could ever, cast off the strange, sacred power of such a natal history. It would make life mean more to them than to others. It would occasion a sense of double responsibility—the feeling that they should live worthily not only for their own sake, but for the memory and honor of one they caused to leave earth, and in whose place they now stand.

We know of a child who was thus born at the sacrifice of the mother's life. This little girl was unusually intelligent, and was accustomed to lie on the lap of her nurse, and gaze at the portrait of her mother as it hung over the mantel in the parlor. She never seemed to weary looking up at the beautiful face that seemed to be bent upon her. She would beg to be taken to the room even in early childhood, and, nestling in the arms of the servant, fix her wistful, thoughtful eyes on the picture, and with a little sigh say, "Tell me about Mamma."

Poor little Benjamin is forever associated in the mind of the writer with that sorely smitten and bereaved band of beings who come into this world at the sacrifice of the life of the mother.

A second thought about the youngest of Jacob is, that he seems to have been a most lovely and lovable child.

There was no hatred for and plotting against him by his ten brethren who so cordially disliked his brother. While Joseph, dwelling in Egypt, and in high authority had his heart to melt in him at the sight of the lad. Then we read that Jacob fairly broke down at the first mention of Benjamin's being taken away from him and carried to the land of the Pharaohs. Who can forget his agonized wail: "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye would take away Benjamin."

He seems to have been a child that could be properly called an unconscious love inspirer. Here and there we find them in different houses and communities with this strange, sweet ascendancy over the affections of many, yet without any apparent effort. Others put themselves out to please and yet fail to win; but the character we are dwelling upon now, captures the heart and takes the life without any studied design or labor in that direction.

We fail to see what Benjamin said or did that made every one so fond of him, and so tender to him. We suppose it was something he was, rather than something he did, which knitted such widely different hearts to himself.

In like manner we have been called upon to witness this same gentle indescribable power cast by some over others, where the wonderful effect could not be traceable to remarkable words and deeds, but to a loving spirit, a lovable personality, a something that was the being or person himself. Wall after wall of our indifference and resistance went down before these gentle, gracious lives, the citadel was captured, and we became their willing subjects in the line of attachment and devotion.

Household tradition has it that such children do not stay long with us. They seem to belong to another world with their great, earnest eyes, odd ways, and utterances that we would expect from those who have dwelt much longer in this world. And so people insist upon it that all such die early. Many of them do. One of them dropped out of our own household fully twenty years ago, and lies on the cedar sprinkled hillside of the cemetery in Vicksburg. And he is recalled today as vividly, and is missed as sorely in the twentieth year as in the first or second of the bereavement. His words and ways are still remembered and rehearsed by a number of people; while the beautiful Christ-like spirit of the child is an undying recollection, and a heritage of blessing which will never pass away.

Very precious indeed to many homes in the land is the memory of a little one now in heaven, who in his brief life on earth interwove himself around each heart and life of the family, and became the Benjamin of the household.

In one of our walks lately we met such a child on the street. He was not over four years of age, if that. He came up to us with great, troubled, brown eyes and quivering under lip, and asked us to look at his hand, which he said he had just hurt. A little while later we saw him on the street again playing with another child. His hurt was healed or had been forgotten. We saw a number of people following him with their eyes. There was an attraction about him that drew attention and caused a dozen other children to fasten a strangely interested look upon him. We felt in our heart that we were in the presence of a "Little Benjamin".

Not all of the Benjamins die. Some live and carry with them through life the loving nature, and winning spirit, that draws and binds many hearts to them for time and eternity.

A third thought drawn from this Bible character is that he became the progenitor in a sense through his tribe of a very remarkable and checkered history.

The descendants of Benjamin had quite a small allotment made to them in Canaan. Then their army was less than that of their brethren. Moreover, they were almost exterminated by a war with their own countrymen, and were brought down to six hundred men. On the other hand, they possessed the most valiant of warriors, and for awhile were more than a match against all the other tribes in battle, although Israel outnumbered Benjamin sixteen to one with their standing army. They had seven hundred men who could sling stones to an hair-breadth and not miss. Following this was the history of a crime and cruelty in their midst which filled the whole land with horror, and nearly led to their annihilation.

Here one would suppose their history would end. But the mercy of men through God inclined to them, and the heartbroken remnant had wives given to them, their homes restored, and by and by lifted up their heads once more among the tribes. Then it is that David beholds them in the congregation at the Temple and cries, "There is little Benjamin."

After this honor is given them in the fact that the first King of Israel was chosen from their tribe. Their loyalty is seen in their faithfulness to the household of Saul after the King himself was dead, and many had turned from his son. Still later, when the ten tribes drew away from Rehoboam, they, with Judah, remained true to the house of David. Still more remarkable honor was laid upon this tribe by the Lord in that he chose St. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, from their midst.

The teaching of all these varied events, with grace triumphing at last over all things, is most comforting and helpful to us all who read the sacred narrative.

All lives are mixed, and the strangest, saddest jumble and confusion have been beheld at some period in the history of many who today are true and devoted to God. If misfortunes, reverses, humiliations, mistakes, error and

failure comes to those we call “Little Benjamin,” we certainly ought not to be surprised to see sorrowful things happening to Simeon, Gad, Asher and Judah.

And so these histories do abound. But the ray of comfort which streams over and through all is that if we repent and turn to God, the depleted rank can be refilled, the lost glory of the tribe be restored, and the smitten and absent one be seen again in the sanctuaries of grace in devout worship of the Almighty.

This interpreted means that God can overcome the world, destroy the flesh, and rout the devil He can bring victory out of defeat, laughter out of weeping, purity from uncleanness, and plant the lowly, depressed and cast-off of earth upon a throne of glory and power. In a word, a Paul can come out of Benjamin, and Shiloh Himself from Judah.

CHAPTER 9

DAVID

Both in the Old and New Testaments it is said that David was a man after God's heart. This was not the opinion of the Bible writers, a kind of deduction drawn from observation of life and character, but the remarkable sentence was uttered by the Lord himself.

Spoken before the great sin of David's life, the statement cannot possibly be used as certain perverted and ignorant minds have endeavored to quote it, as a kind of condonement, apology for and covering up of iniquity.

Leaving out the black deed of later years which temporarily eclipsed the man's soul and spiritual life, and for which he bitterly repented and fearfully atoned; the character of David abounded in such superior moral qualities, and he was such an eminently noble man, that the sentence first spoken of him was still truly descriptive in days and years later down to the close of his life. Among a number of most excellent features connected with the man we mention only three or four.

One was his industry.

When first seen he is diligently employed. And his work as a shepherd not only required activity and faithfulness, but entailed great hardship, much exposure to the elements and constant danger. The allusions in Scripture are unmistakable as to the fact of the complete measuring up to every requirement of temporal duty on the part of this youngest son of Jesse.

It is worthy of notice that when God called Elisha to his sacred work, he was a busy man in the field. And when Jesus selected his twelve disciples all were actively engaged. And so in perfect harmony with his dealings in other ages, the Lord called David from his care and guidance of sheep to the leadership of the people of Israel. The Almighty has no premium or chromo for laziness, but states plainly that faithfulness in lesser things shall pave the way to success in greater things.

A second fact about David was his liberality.

In his gifts and preparation for the building of the Temple, he gave more money than all the churches of the United States contribute in a year. While his speech at Araunah, in regard to the purchase of the sanctuary site, "I will surely buy it of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing," is like the man, reflects his character and has been admired and quoted on countless occasions since that hour.

A stingy, miserly nature is the moral opposite of God, who is the Father of all mercies, the God of all comfort, and is constantly giving to the children of men. Such is the goodness and benevolence of the Divine Being that He is kind to the evil and unthankful and pours out His temporal blessings upon the unjust as well as the just, the wicked as well as the good. Hence, a close-fisted, picayunish man is utterly unlike the Divine Being in spirit and practice, and we do not wonder that he knows little or nothing about Him who is always doing good and who declares that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

David had a munificent spirit. He had a royal nature within as well as a royal robe and crown without. He loved to do generous things toward God, and scorned to sit on a seat, worship under a roof, and take part in a worship that cost him nothing. He thus put himself on record, and proved it by his life, and so gave to the Lord another reason for saying he was a man after His own heart.

Men today in the Christian life are wondering at their dried-up experience, and marvel at the prolonged silence in the skies above them. If they would become liberal, the Bible says, their souls would become fat. If they would go to distributing and handing around, they would awake with a delightful shock of surprise to find they had twelve baskets full of joy on hand instead of the little old dried up loaf and fish blessing of other days. If they would act more like God, they would hear oftener from and receive more blessed things from God.

A third characteristic of David was his prayerfulness and devotional habits.

In one place he said, “Seven times a day do I praise thee.” At another time he said he arose at midnight to give thanks unto God. The frequent prayers, the supplicatory spirit in the midst of all his psalms, is an additional confirmation of the profound spirituality and devotion of the man.

Every thoughtful Christian must have observed that whenever men get into a real agony of prayer, they invariably use the language of David. They adopt his identical expressions, feeling somehow that they cannot be improved upon.

There is no question about the transforming influence which goes on in the soul through the power of prayer. A mighty uplift as it is of the thoughts from this world to a higher and better one; the directing of the life to nobler purposes and energies; a channel for the grace and glory of heaven to sweep through; and a fellowship with the highest and holiest of beings—of course such a divine communion is bound to illumine, broaden, exalt, bless and actually glorify the man.

We are not much surprised that David knew God so well, inasmuch as he was so frequently in His presence and talked so much with and so long to Him.

Boswell wrote a marvelous biography of Dr. Samuel Johnson. Its minuteness and completeness sprang from the fact that he literally lived in the presence of the man. There have been and are such men today in the Kingdom of Grace. They talk not only frequently, but almost continuously with the Lord. No wonder one of them wrote the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians and another the Book of Revelation. No wonder that we have men and women in our midst in these days who are able to tell us so much of Him who died and rose again and ascended into the heavens; for that same Christ still continues to talk and walk with men who will walk and talk with Him.

We knew a banker once, who spent one hour every morning on his knees before his family had risen from bed or breakfast had been announced. All the rest of the day he carried a happy look and a pleased, meditative expression, as if he was recalling what Jesus had spoken to him in the early hour of the day. His household matters and business affairs never

upset him, and in the light of that early prayerful season we can readily understand the reason.

We also recall a Methodist local preacher, a very poor man and utterly without education. We are confident that this man never spent less than five and six hours on his knees every day. The consequence was that not only was he the gentlest, humblest and most lovable of men, but the skin of his face actually shone!

David talked about lifting up his face, and compassing God's altar. Both are expressions full of deep meaning, and thoroughly understood by the man who spends much time alone with God in praise and supplication as well as voiceless communion.

A fourth feature of David's character was his magnanimity.

This is a compound word from the Latin, and means literally a great mind, or soul. The expression "small," "little," as used by men to describe a low, narrow, contemptible transaction or personage, refers to the very opposite of what is meant by a magnanimous man.

What is called littleness of conduct comes from one who is diminutive in character and life. He is morally incapable of a noble emotion and generous act. He is a petty retaliator, a perpetrator of wrong, and a repeater of idle gossip. He is a betrayer of confidences formerly reposed in him, a rock thrower from behind a fence, and a stabber in the dark. He has unworthy, suspicious thoughts of others whom he dislikes, and he is the habitual performer of actions that are contemptible from their very smallness. He is faithless to friends, unrelenting to his enemies, and finds it impossible to forgive an injury, slight, or disappointment of any character. The man is simply little.

David was great-hearted and large-minded. He had noble thoughts, and did noble deeds. He was noble man.

Thirsty as he was, he poured out on the ground the water which three of his soldiers had brought him at the risk of their lives. He exclaimed that he could not drink it. He tried to cheer with his harp the man who hated him without a cause. He could not endure to listen to the narration of the ruin and death of his own bitter enemy. He had his worst foe and most

powerful adversary in his power, and would not touch him. One of his captains called upon him to draw his sword and kill the man whom God had placed in his power; and he cried out, “God forbid!”

When he at last became king, and the family of the man who had brought almost a lifetime of suffering and distress upon him was scattered, dethroned, some destitute, others in the grave, he asked: “Is there any of the household of Saul left that I may show them kindness?”

These are only a few of the many great spiritual traits and acts of David; and as we reach them, and ponder upon the princely soul and royal nature back of them all, we can readily see why God said about him in the long ago that he was a man after His own heart.

CHAPTER 10

DOEG

A certain famous and mystic writer discovered what is known as the Law of Correspondence. According to his idea the animal creation stood for something besides an arbitrary exercise of power; that each one was intended by the Creator to represent some virtue or vice in man. So this running, fighting, flying, crawling, hissing, cooing, snapping, snarling lower world of beings constitutes a kind of looking-glass, if not text-book, by which we can see, study, and know ourselves.

In like manner God has brought forward certain men and women in the Bible, thrown a strong light upon them here and there, that we may learn still more deeply concerning ourselves as we see human nature at its worst and its best, and so be enlightened, admonished and warned in order that our own salvation might be secured.

Among those who seem casually mentioned in the Scripture is the man whose name forms the caption of this chapter. Incidentally spoken of; barely stepping upon the platform of Bible history and then disappearing; yet like a hideous face, seen one moment on a crowded street and then disappearing but never forgotten—so Doeg, beheld but for an instant, can never cease to be remembered. We would gladly drop him from mind, but his very contemptibleness sears his name somehow on the memory.

We can not but think that a mistake was made, however, by his parents in naming him. Evidently there is one letter too many. The “e” should have been left out, and then name and nature would have agreed. This, however, would have been a slander on good dogs; for we have known some noble canines, while the being we are writing about seems to have been filled with the very essence of meanness and cruelty, and without a single redeeming trait. God evidently revealed him to fill us with disgust and horror.

First, Doeg appears as attending the Sanctuary at Shiloh with a sinister purpose.

It was not to get good, or do good from the ministries of the priests and the holy influence of tabernacle and altar; but evidently the man was there with plans of evil.

This is no new fact in moral history. The devil himself was found among the worshipers when Job was waiting on God. The Scribes and Pharisees hovered around Christ when he was preaching, with hate in their souls and murder in their hearts. Repeatedly we have heard complaints on the part of the preachers and camp ground boards at the presence of men and women in the congregation who came with most sinister motives; these parties being not what is known as the worldling or unconverted, but persons professing great light and grace, and so all the more dangerous in their work and influence.

To this day many camp meetings and revival services in halls and churches are attended by individuals who come for no other reason than to pick flaws and find occasion for future trouble. Well does the evangelist understand the meaning of the bowed head, and flying pencil in the notebook of the black-robed, beaver-hatted gentleman on the back seat. He knows it is data to be expanded into a letter to a bishop, or still further enlarged into an attack through the columns of one of the Advocates.

Doeg is not without posterity, but God wants his children to see the family likeness.

A second ghastly feature about the man was that he was not only a spy, but a talebearer.

He came to the sanctuary to find cause of complaint, wormed himself into a crowd of men, every one of whom was better than himself, thought he had obtained what he desired, and posted off at once to tell King Saul about the matter.

This is a dreadful revelation of fallen human nature. Not only does the mind of the observer perceive that moral foundation is gone here, but the soul actually sickened at the sight feels that it has looked into the mouth of the bottomless abyss.

Even in war, where men say “all things are fair,” yet they hang a spy. As for the village and society tattler, or talebearer, men and women of character have no words to express their loathing and contempt.

Who has not had the experience of being visited, and actually drilled and bored for facts of individual and family history which, if obtained by one of these descendants of Doeg, would be repeated from house to house, and town to town, until beyond all possibility of recall?

One would think that the prayers, songs, testimonies and sermons of a revival meeting would engross, enchain and charm away the soul to better, purer and nobler things; but the children of Doeg seem actually helped rather than hindered in their dreadful course amid such surroundings of grace and heavenly power. And so they talk, and whisper, and question, not only between services, but after services. Their eye seems to be on David and his thirty and not on the Lord.

While it is true that all of us are growing in grace who love and follow Jesus, and can see room for improvement in our lives the closer we get to the Saviour; yet there are some things which are morally impossible for any of us to do and retain self-respect, much less the favor of God. One is an impertinent curiosity, or the vulgar prying into the affairs and lives of others; and another the betrayal of a confidence made sacredly by one individual to another. One is disgusting and the other horrifying.

If a preacher should reveal the heart histories told to him, through trust in his sacred calling, and because of his being a brother and friend, this fact should sweep him from his position as unworthy the respect and regard of the community. So when a preacher gives to the public what was confidentially related to him in his Study in the desire for relief and instruction, he betrays the faith reposed in him and shows himself base and untrue. The Catholic priests in their faithfulness here might prove a profitable study to such a character.

We have had many confidences entrusted in our keeping. Those that reposed them may remain our friends or become enemies; but the disclosure will be sacred just the same. To take advantage over one who has ceased to be a friend, by the use of a secret given in days of trust and

friendship, would be to rank us in contemptibleness as a Doeg of the first class.

A third fearful feature about the subject of this chapter was that his tale-bearing tongue not only condemned innocent men, but brought about the death of eighty-five priests who had done nothing to deserve death.

In the 21st and 22d chapter of 1 Samuel the whole history is given; how Doeg saw the priests give bread to the fugitive David, and also hand him the sword of Goliath; how he told Saul about it, though the priests did it with no feeling of disloyalty to the King. Then comes the shocking scene of Doeg falling on eighty-five defenseless men of God, who had done no wrong, and slaying every one of them with the sword. After this he put to death a whole town of people, with children and animals included. Well may his name be handed down in horror by one generation to another.

The trouble, however, is that the descendants of this man still live. They are the people who condemn the good, suspect the innocent, slaughter with their tongues the reputation, influence and sometimes happiness of Christian men and women against whom God has not laid a single charge.

We have seen the shrewish tongue of women separate a man from his family and kindred by false charges. The gossip has been known to set a community together by the ears. We have witnessed a revival set back for days by unscrupulous lips, and a camp ground put in an unholy boil and stew by the tongue of a single individual.

A preacher in one of our Southern States languished for years under a foundationless accusation. The accuser confessed his crime on his death bed, but the man of God had been hurt for twenty years just the same, and hundreds had believed him guilty because of the misrepresentation of one of the sons of Doeg.

One of the most horrible murders that ever occurred in the native State of the writer was brought about by a woman's complaint to her husband of a purely imaginary insult. It was all proven too late, for the causelessly infuriated husband had stamped and beat the life out of the man who was trying to explain as he was expiring at his feet.

The murder of the body is a dreadful thing, but there are sadder and more fearful deeds than this to contemplate when Doeg and his crowd invade the realms of reputation and influence, and with false and pitiless tongues cut, slash and wound with intent to kill not only all who oppose them from character reasons, but all they do not like, and that do not follow or go with them. A sacred office or holy life will not deter the Doegite. All he wants is a human being in whom to sheathe his sword! and so beginning with the few, he finally ends in a general onslaught. He gluts his vengeance on whole meetings and entire communities. This is always the history of unchecked sin.

A good epitaph over such a man or woman would be I. Sam. 22:19, "And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen and sheep, with the edge of the sword."

Twice in one verse is the edge of the sword mentioned. Swords bounded the life on all sides.

A last feature of this dark character was his transparent wickedness.

When David was told of the frightful murder of the priests and the wholesale destruction of the town of Nob, by the hand of Doeg, he said:

"I knew it that day when Doeg, the Edomite, was there, that he would surely tell Saul!"

What a revelation this is, not only of facial handwriting, but of the fact that the real man, however hidden, is bound to come out and be known. Not even sitting or standing among the ranks of worshipers in the sanctuary can conceal the character of a Doeg. Not only is the face and spirit out of harmony with the surroundings, but life itself has out-traveled the body, and the people recognize the actual presence in their midst, while Davids still say by virtue of character-discerning powers, "I knew when I saw him, or her, there, that he would write, or say, or do, certain things."

This outward revelation of what is within, while shocking enough to the transgressor himself if he would think, is full of comfort to the child of God. It is one of the Lord's helps to His people. It is a signal to keep the

bars up and the gates locked. The warning is not to show the riches of Jerusalem to the strange visitors who come down with smiling faces and gracious and ingratiating demeanor. It is an argument against reposing confidences in every one who comes around, even though they be in the sanctuary. It is but a reflection of a truth in the Gospel, where it is said of Christ Himself, "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man."

CHAPTER 11

HAMAN

The **first** fact we notice about the individual whose name forms the caption of this chapter is that he was a prominent man.

It seems that he was one of the princes of Persia. Whether he was in this exalted rank through birth and inheritance, or by the direct appointment of his monarch does not appear; he is seen at the opening of the sacred history to be in a high temporal position.

This very prominence naturally would throw a strong light on his life, and cause every movement to be watched. High position brings with it publicity, and things which would be overlooked and unmarked in an humbler life are stressed and unduly emphasized in men occupying distinguished rank and office. We doubt not that many millions of men have been guilty of the very faults and weaknesses of Haman, but through the obscurity of private life their deeds were unnoted, and will remain unknown until the Day of Judgment. Such persons are usually pitiless judges of human character, and excoriators of other people's conduct; but at that hour they will be dragged out of their hiding places and exposed to the double contempt of the universe under the charge of hypocrisy added to the specific guilt which they condemned in their fellow beings.

It seems a great pity that as a prince in station this man could not have been a prince in nature. Maybe this kind of sequence was known in earlier days, and the words king, prince, nobleman stood for something higher and better than outward trappings, and represented an inward dignity, a royalty of character far outstripping a band of gold on the head, and a robe of silk or velvet on the form. If so, sin has made sad havoc in this realm, and produced most heart-breaking divorces between certain words and terms in what they once stood for, and what they mean, or, rather, do not mean these days as sported by a number of individuals in high places. Princes are often found to be contemptible. A king who cannot rule

himself is undeserving the title. A noble-man in a vast majority of instances is far from being a noble man.

At once we begin to see the dreadfulness of being in an exalted position, and in character and life the moral opposite of what we profess and are thought to be by the public.

Second, the man, Haman, for quite a while was very fortunate or successful.

Every enterprise flourished. All his plans prospered. Each ambition was gratified. Good fortune, as men call it, fairly upturned its cornucopia upon him. The king promoted him; the queen invited him to her banquets; riches increased, and the nation honored him. Everything seemed to come his way in the line of temporal glory and prosperity.

We see such things happening today to men who are as undeserving of these bounties as was Haman. David saw it in his time and said, they had all that heart could wish, and that their eyes stood out with fatness.

Christ said of them that such people “laughed now!”

In like manner as many of us have observed such life currents as promotion, dignity, honor, riches, public favor and unbroken good health, setting steadily toward people in the world who were enemies to God and his cause; and not less amazing, have seen the same benefits coming upon individuals in the church who were anything but spiritual, who compromised the truth, and were friendly with the carnal crowd; astonishment and bewilderment have also filled our hearts.

David confessed to a like temporary confusion of mind; until he went into the sanctuary of God. There and then he declared the problem was solved, and from the conclusion he drew we are taught not to wish for a single second, at the risk of our souls, for the material abundance and earthly honor which we have beheld in the seemingly fortunate classes of this world.

Haman’s case is a proof, where we note that when at the highest flood of success he was nearest his ruin.

Third, Haman was a braggart.

There are few things in life more detestable and unbearable than the practice of self-praise or personal horn blowing. The custom is not only disgusting to hearers, but in addition to the conceit shown by it, is proof positive of the absence of the very greatness which the ambitious but shallow person wishes the public to think he possesses. Really great and superior individuals do not brag.

It is certainly one thing to see an audience cast flowers upon a deserving individual, and it is quite another to behold a person throwing bouquets at himself. One thing to hear a man's praises constantly sounded by other mouths, and the sickening reverse to listen to one constantly voicing his own fancied gifts, achievements and greatness. Even if he had possession of such endowments, the self-laudation would disgust every hearer, and make him contemptible in all eyes.

Haman had this vice in the fullest degree. As we see him sitting at his table, and compelling his wife and household to listen to his monologue of self-praise, his solo on a brass horn about himself, we confess to a perfect nausea toward this bugle-blower of ancient times, and to a spirit of congratulation for the wife that she was so soon to be left a widow.

But, unfortunately, Haman has left a numerous posterity of husbands who are never so happy as when they are "holding forth" about themselves to their wives, and causing these same long-suffering members of the household to tilt back their heads and gaze upward at their intellectual greatness, as one would uplift the eyes to see a statue on a lofty pedestal.

All this is exceedingly trying on the neck bone and muscles; and when, in addition, the statue insists on furnishing music for the occasion, and the instrument is that everlasting old horn, with the same solo about the man in person,—who wonders that there are so many prematurely broken-down women today, and that the self-trumpeter finds it first difficult and then impossible to obtain an audience to hearken to his windy strains?

A pastor of a certain church in a large city had such a way of boasting in the preachers' meeting about his large and red-hot Wednesday night service that he quite disheartened one of his fellow ministers. This latter preacher concluded to leave his own meeting and attend Bro. Hornblower's prayer service in order to study the factors and elements of

success of his more fortunate brother. To his amazement, when he entered, he discovered that the audience did not equal his own in number, and fell far behind in genuine spiritual interest and power. The instant he walked down the aisle and took his seat, he saw the feathers of Bro. Hornblower drop as if in a drenching rain, while something like a veil fell from before his own eyes, as he recognized a common blowhard before him, enswathed and arrayed in the coat of a clergyman.

In like manner today, when a man writes that he has calls enough to employ one hundred men; that three hundred souls were saved and sanctified in one day; that the whole city was stirred; that the oldest inhabitant never witnessed such a meeting, etc., etc., Truth alone might classify him with Ananias, but Truth and Mercy together would agree in calling the individual a skillful player on a certain wind instrument well known to self-praisers and advertisers, and also that he was a direct descendant of the original hornblower, Haman, who blew solos about himself in the reign of Ahasuerus, the King of Persia.

We shall never forget a remark made by a Bishop to a class of young preachers about to be ordained. He said: "You need not be uneasy about men's recognition of your worth. If there is anything in you the world will find it out." This one sentence ought to have smashed every horn in that class of thirteen.

Fourth, Haman was an envious man.

Envy is a spirit of malice, spite, and grudge over the success and prosperity of another. It is difficult to conceive of a more debasing trait and despicable sin. And yet its commonness is something startling.

It was a towering iniquity with Haman, and as such fell upon him in a sense and crushed him. With his cup running over with temporal mercies; with honor, glory, promotion, rank, wealth, power, all this yet because one man named Mordecai refused in his character superiority to do him homage, he was miserable as well as furious. He said that all he had availed him nothing, so long as he saw Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate.

Who is not acquainted with this individual; the man who must rule or ruin; the person who wants the whole family, church or world, at his feet; who

turns green with envy at the success and prominence of another; and would crush anyone who dares to differ with him or get in his way?

Fifth, Haman was a cold-blooded plotter.

With a heart full of an infernal hate he laid plans to murder a good man, and destroy a nation of unoffending people. His arrangements were so skillfully made, and success was to all appearances so certain, that the plotter had a gallows constructed for his innocent victim. Already in his mind's eye he could see the form of his rival struggling and strangling in mid air with the rope around his neck, when, if he could have dipped several days into the future and looked closely into the face of the choking man he would have been horrified to see his own features.

In all our varied life, smitten with every kind of sorrow and wrong, yet we have never yet been able to see how a human being could deliberately lay a plot to injure and destroy another without having become completely infernalized in nature. It is so devilish and hellish that we cannot degrade the word human by attaching it to such a character.

And yet from the day when forty men bound themselves with an oath to kill Paul, to this hour, there are individuals who, utterly forgetful of Christ's mission to save that which is lost, spend their time in skinning, flaying, belaboring, abusing and injuring reputation and character, and trying to drag men's souls and bodies down to discouragement, despair, and ruin.

We once knew four stewards band themselves together to dethrone and crush their pastor. Today two of the four are in the graveyard, the third is a drunken bankrupt, and the fourth is a disgraced man, convicted by the courts for burning up his own steamboat. The man they wanted to undo is still living. Then we knew two evangelists to solemnly vow they would ruin a third. At this writing the two vowers and plotters are without influence and work, while the intended victim was never busier or happier in the work of God.

Unfortunately for the plotter on earth, and fortunately for the victim, there is One in the heavens who abominates all such high handed and Judgment Day proceedings on the part of fallible, excitable and incompetent men. He laughs at all councils against his anointed, and states

the blessed fact that He it is who setteth up one and pulleth down another. This power cometh not, He said, from the East or West. He is the only one able and worthy to exalt and to cast down among the children of men.

Finally, Haman was a terribly, but most righteously destroyed man.

Fearful was his end and awful his punishment, yet it is the verdict of the world that he suffered properly and justly. He died as he wanted others to die. He perished from a boomerang which he flung out with his own hand to destroy other beings. He usurped the throne of Deity, a place too lofty for him, became dizzy, slipped and fell into everlasting ruin. He had no mercy, and obtained none. He cried out for judgment and disaster on others, and obtained it in his own life, full, pressed down and running over.

To all who are living a life similar to that of Haman, the writer offers for suggestion, reflection, as well as prophecy, the following passages from the Word of God. They read as follows:

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand.”

“With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.”

“Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.”

CHAPTER 12

JEPHTHAH

Jephthah obtained an immortality of renown by fulfilling a vow he had made to God.

As far as the writer can see, this character is made to appear in the pages of Holy Writ, because he was a man who could make a pledge to Heaven and keep it. The other events of his life sink into insignificance before this act, which is viewed in such a light by the Almighty that He declares in his Word that it would be better for one not to vow than to vow and not perform. He does not say it is best not to make a vow to God, for there is no entrance upon, and advancement in the spiritual life without such heart and lip pledges on the part of man. The alarm bell sounded in the sentence is not in the making, but in the non-fulfilling of the covenant.

Evidently great must be the moral effect upon the nature, of doing what has been promised, for the Bible has it down in unmistakable language that he who disregards his vows to the Lord is a fool.

Many may smile at the statement, and judge the remissness struck at as of little consequence and not worth giving serious thought to, especially as we see so many guilty in this regard. But there are passage in the Bible, and pages in history, and certain chapters in one's own life, when properly reflected on, which will make the smile die from the face of the careless and anxious concern to spring up in the mind of the thoughtless. Sooner or later every man will find out and even on this side of the grave, that he who makes a vow to God and pays it not, has been guilty of a piece of most consummate folly. The Lord, summing up such a character, says, "I take no pleasure in fools." He calls a man a fool who acts this way; and that is just what a man who has reaped the consequence of such an act will finally say of himself. If one would have a glimpse of what is meant to the world by the fulfillment of vows made to God, let him suppose for a moment what would take place if such human faithfulness could be held.

Let it be remembered that such pledges are made to a Holy God, and at a time when men feel their duty and dependence on Him most. That such promises could and would only be for good. Their fulfillment, therefore, would be a perfect flood of relief, gladness and blessedness to this world. It would mean multiplied millions and hundreds of millions of dollars given to the cause of Christ and humanity. It would be the rectification of wrongs, the reconciliation of estranged friends and the coming together of divided households. It would bring an army of men out of the professions and trades into the ministry of the Son of God. It would increase the saved membership of the church a thousand fold and usher in a revival that would be like the beginning of the Millennium.

The Lord is not spreading salvation by physical omnipotence, nor by storms, clouds, floods and plagues. The Gospel is carried by men and women. A revival does not burst up out of the ground, nor is it left deposited by the fogs and dews. It comes through certain words and deeds of people, with God's blessing thereupon. The Lord does not bless nothing. His Spirit always falls on something. So when we bring what we should to God, and especially what we have promised, Heaven will take instantaneous notice, the fire will fall, and happiness and blessedness will be the portion of man and the glory will belong to God.

To keep back from the Lord that which is his due, is to see withheld in turn, not only blessings of good, but salvation itself from others. These "dues" may range all the way from the gift of money to the consecration of the entire life to the service of God, but the principle is the same, and in any and all cases we see the physical, mental, social and moral welfare of the race is affected.

There are starving bodies all over the land today because of unfulfilled vows to God. There are hungry hearts and perishing souls in multitudes around us, because multiplied thousands of men and women are not true to their covenants with Heaven. It will be fearful to have them pointed out in surging thousands at the Judgment Day as those we could have relieved and blessed, and did not.

There is another aspect of this non-fulfillment of our promises and pledges to God, which may have escaped some; and that is the effect felt and seen in our character.

Let the reader ask himself what must be the consequence to his own moral nature if he made a habit of promising to meet certain bills, accounts and various kinds of business obligations, and then failing to do so as regularly as they were made. Unreliability, falsehood, dishonor are all seen in such a course, and the final result would be a moral wreck. It is impossible to make false promises, and lie to men, and keep integrity and character. If this is, so with men, how much graver the offense and surer the disaster when we treat God in such a manner.

The argument of the Divine longsuffering and mercy as an excuse is met with the confronting fact of the Divine Uprightness and Truth, and his own command, "Pay thy vows unto the Most High." God is preparing a people after his own heart and image. He wants no frauds in the skies.

We have known persons who completely ignore solemn promises that were made to God in times of sickness, sorrow and peril. When summoned by conscience and the power of the Word, to get right with God, they commenced whining and whimpering and said they threw all their unpaid vows under the Blood! But in doing this they do what God does not tell them. He says, "Pay thy vows."

Of course there are some promises that through certain circumstances, can never be carried out; the time is past, the people dead, and all possibility of rectification on earth departed forever. All such cases we may cast under the Blood. But there are others we cannot so treat, because we can fulfill them. Hence God looks to us and points to them and bids us, "Render unto God the things that are God's."

What would we think of a man who, while able to pay his bills, would go whining and crying to his creditors, begging for release. Some, perhaps, would give him his account, others would not, but all would entertain a profound contempt for such a character.

The whimperer is prominent in church ranks today. He bemoans that he ever made a covenant, regrets that he uttered promises to God, and fails to pay the vow once breathed to the Almighty.

The effect of such a life is bound to tell on the character within, and as truly affects the man's standing with God. Moreover, people feel it and see it.

The whiner may have escaped by his lachrymose complaint the payment of various bills he should have met, but somehow after that his notes are not honored in commercial circles. They know the man. His business character and credit are gone.

So men may shrink from the discharge of certain duties, neglect the payment of vows solemnly made to God, saying, "It was hard to do so," and that "They threw it all under the Blood," etc., etc., but the soul life has been stabbed all the same, the character has been hurt, and the man's lowered standard with God becomes evident to many eyes.

Out in the world, when a man cheats his employer by taking advantage of a kind, unsuspecting and benevolent nature, he is called "sharp." In this instance the wronged party was deceived, he did not know he was being wronged.

All this is reversed in the spiritual life; so that to rob or cheat God and then to shelter one's guilt with the thought of his goodness, is to ignore the existence of other divine attributes of Truth and Justice, and still more startling, the fact of his Omniscience! Hence it is that God never calls a man "sharp" who treats him that way, but pronounces him as we have already quoted, "a fool."

The cause of failure to "pay the vow" with many is the value of the object or thing dedicated or given up to Heaven. On reflection they could not see how they could give it up, pay the price, perform the deed, or yield the idol and ambition.

Jephthah again comes into view here in a most blessed transfiguring light, in that we see him yielding his daughter and only child to God, never to look upon her face again. There was first a natural cry of anguish on his part when he saw her running down the road to meet him. He cried out, "Alas my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me." But the next words of the loyal soul was, "But I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

No wonder God had this man's life recorded. Tell the ages to come He said to the sacred pensman, that there lived a man once who could vow to God and fulfill his vow, though his heart broke in doing so. Tell all the generations of earth that he lived in Israel and his name was Jephthah.

CHAPTER 13

JOAB

It is remarkable how many who see the necessity and place for the biographies of good men and women in the Bible, fail to recognize the significance in the recorded lives of characters who were perverse and wicked. If God had a design in holding up the virtues of his servants, he certainly had a motive in revealing the dark nature and deeds of the followers of Sin and Satan. And yet it is surprising to see how people slur and skim over these descriptions of the ungodly, failing to perceive that such individuals are shown up in the Scripture with as real a purpose to warn and deliver, as others are to cheer, strengthen, and confirm in righteousness. Hence it is that we hear scores of sermons on Abraham, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel and Paul, but who ever heard a discourse on Doeg, Shimei, Ahab, Jehu, Haman or the subject of this sketch. And yet their characters and lives are full of lessons, which, while sad and dark enough, are all important and essential for as to know.

We call attention to a man who, aside from a certain brute-like courage, and considerable military talent, does not seem to possess a redeeming trait. The whole life was one of almost unrelieved iniquity.

First he was wicked while filling the first rank and position in the nation under the King.

Wickedness is a dreadful spectacle anywhere, but it seems to gather enormity in proportion to its elevation in the social and civil scale. A drunken man is a pitiable and disgusting sight indeed, but a drunken general, President or King is far more revolting and unbearable to look upon. Theft, lying, uncleanness, all seem to gather in blackness as they appear gazing at us from high places. An unholy God would be the most frightful spectacle of the universe.

Joab was the chief captain or general of David's armies. He was one of the famous "Thirty," and one of the still more celebrated number called "The

First Three.” His place was the highest next to the throne, and yet he was as evil as he was prominent and great.

Second, he was wicked while possessing what was called the best blood in the land.

He was akin to royalty. He was the first cousin of David. He was what is known as one of the leading families in Israel. And yet there was not a blacker heart nor a darker life in the whole country than that of Joab.

It seems that this is brought out in the Scriptures to knock to pieces the silly boast about family blood, blue blood, good stock, etc. There is but “one blood” among the nations, declares the Bible. And a dreadful poison was infused into it in the Garden of Eden under a tree, and now all is corrupted until another Blood trickling from a tree planted on Calvary, can fall upon our ruined natures, and make them pure and white. Until such time we are told in the Scripture there is no difference, for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

So sin has revelled in palaces as well as hovels; and blue blood has been no match when pitted against the black fluid of iniquity. The most abominable crimes have been perpetrated in high places, and the most revolting immorality and criminality were discovered among the nobility of England only a few years ago. Joab was as vile in his character as if he had been born in the lowest of slums, and had never known anyone in his life but the most depraved of criminals.

It is wonderful how the sin nature declares itself in this terrible fact; that one may be raised amid the most cultivated and refined, and yet break away through it all and in spite of it all into every kind of rowdyism, corruption and degradation. Truly the genealogical tree is a poor one to look to for the fruits of decency and morality, much less those of salvation.

Third, Joab was a cruel man.

He had a heart of iron when it came to pity and compassion. His deeds were those of an incarnate fiend.

There is no excuse for cruelty. It need never be coupled with courage, and is not with true bravery. It is animalish and infernal. The subject of this

sketch possessed this spirit in a frightful degree. Nothing seemed to touch his marble nature. The sight of Absalom dangling helpless in the tree only moved him to thrust a dart in his heart. The trusting, unsuspecting faces of two other men, as he hurled them into eternity without a moment's warning, is additional proof of the man's complete induration of soul. It is noteworthy that after the commission of such diabolical deeds, he strode away or would ride off as if nothing at all had occurred, much less a crime of cruelest nature and blackest dye.

To this day, a man with a hard, pitiless, unrelenting nature can properly lay claim to kinship with Joab. The times, through the humanizing influence of the Gospel, will not allow such murders as Joab committed to take place with impunity; but other things can be slain besides the human body, and the cruel man is as clearly an object of vision today in church and state, in pew and pulpit, in slanderous tongue, and editorial pen, as once beheld in a living, moving form at the head of David's army.

Fourth, Joab was a treacherous man.

He was not only bad, but he was sly. He was cunning and deceptive in his wickedness. He carried a double face. He shot from ambush.

If he had given Abner and Amasa a half chance they might have escaped, and he, perhaps, been the one left on the ground, a dead man. But he slew them under the guise of friendship. Feigning to have a pressing message from the King, he took Abner aside in the gateway of Hebron, and while speaking with him in a most confidential manner, smote him under the fifth rib with his weapon, and Saul's general fell dead at his feet.

In the case of Amasa, he overtook him on the road, and, crying out, "Art thou in health, my brother?" laid his hand upon his beard as if to kiss him, ran his sword through his body, and left him wallowing in his death agony on the road.

With a smile of cordial greeting, the pitiless man approaches his unsuspecting victim, and watching for the moment when the unfortunate being is entirely off his guard, murders him in cold blood. No lion or tiger ever crept more cunningly upon the prey, then leaped like a thunderbolt upon the surprised, horrified man or animal, than did this bloodthirsty captain of David begin and accomplish the destruction of his victim.

That a smiling face, and friendly exterior are still used to mask a hating heart and cruel, murderous spirit, is a fact too well known to need proof. Its frequency should not lessen the horror of such a course to all right thinkers and doers.

We once knew a couple of men to pay a morning call on a preacher with every appearance of interest and friendship, when the hidden object of the visit was to entrap him into saying something that could afterwards be used to his disadvantage and injury. These two men were direct lineal descendants of Joab.

All social wiles, and sinuosities of demeanor, all honeyed smiles, ingratiating conduct and flattering utterance used for some selfish and revengeful motive stamp the employer of such methods as one of the family of Joab.

Fifth, Joab was an unprincipled man.

His soul, mind and body seemed to be for rent. He could be hired or commanded to do wrong, and wrong of the most terrible nature.

David sent him word to put Uriah in the front of the battle at the hottest, and then retire from him that he might be killed. This dreadful order was fulfilled to the letter, and the world has never ceased to talk about the innocence and rectitude of the victim, the cruelty of the command, and the infamy of the general who put it into execution.

People need not exhaust their shuddering power over this black deed of early days; for just as foul wrongs are going on today. He who lends himself to evil of any kind is no better than Joab. He who circulates a damaging report without absolute proof of its truth; he who consents to wrong and injustice done another; who abets the evil thing, or helps it on in some way, is nothing but a Joab.

When a presiding elder will oppress a preacher to please a bishop; or a pastor bear down on a church member to gratify a congregation; or smite in any way a servant of God to “please the Jews,” and stand in with a carnal crowd—such a man is a Joab.

The duty of every one is to refuse to do wrong. Joab should have protested against David’s order, and resigned rather than carry it out. He

should have exclaimed, as a better man did before him, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" But he did not, and so the devil branded him as his own, and an infamous piece of moral history was made forever.

The final lesson in Joab's life was that he went the way of Retribution, according to the certain prediction of the Bible.

The Word of God declares that they who live by the sword shall perish by the sword. It was literally fulfilled in the case of David's chief captain. He died as he lived. He got in abundance that which he had so freely given to others. He was struck by his own boomerang. He drank his own bitter medicine. He was fond of running his sword into the bodies of other people, and he had one run into his own shrinking, quivering flesh. He granted no mercy and obtained none. He killed others and was killed himself. He hacked and stabbed men until they died, and one day Benaiah stood over him and stabbed and hacked him until he died.

It seems like a dreadful law in the universe, the working of a certain retribution. Men might as well try to arrest the Force of Gravitation, or stop the blowing of a great wind. It is sure to come. It seems to know its victim, and is not only able to find him, but perfectly able to overwhelm him. This strange, just and yet fearful law sees to it that people receive in this life what they were so liberal in bestowing upon others. It is a ghastly recompense, a grizzly kind of justice indeed.

Hence it is that the man who had no mercy finds no mercy. The excoriator, after skinning others, is skinned himself. The slanderer gets lashed to pieces by human tongues, even as he served others. The oppressor is crushed. The denunciator is covered up with denunciation. The wrongdoer gets wronged. The cheater is cheated. The biter is bit. The man who laid a trap for his fellowman gets caught in a snare. The digger of a pit falls headlong into it himself.

It was vain that Joab ran to the sanctuary and clung to the horns of the altar. The sword of a just vengeance drank up his life blood even there. The Spirit of Retribution cares not for place or position, but strikes the person it is after, no matter where he is to be found.

He that lives the life of a Joab will end it as Joab. There is a perfect judgment to come in the skies; but there is also a judgment on earth for transgressors. The wrongdoer may go on in a headlong, triumphant way for a while; and he may get the better of Absalom, overcome Abner, and lay Amasa low in the dust. But there is a Benaiah on his track with a sword in his hand, and he will yet go down before him and under the weapon of judgment, in confusion, defeat and death itself, though he seek refuge in the church, cover himself up with good works, and cling with loud cries to the horns of the altar.

CHAPTER 14

THE HAND OF JONATHAN

Of all the members of the human body, there is scarcely a more wonderful one than the hand. Volumes could be written about its beauty, strength, dexterity, grace and almost countless abilities in the line of every conceivable kind of performance. From the most delicate of workmanship to the heaviest and hardest of labor, it seems to be equally at home. It handles the sword on the field of carnage, and manipulates the pencil and brush in the most exquisite of paintings. It uplifts the sledge hammer and guides the plow, and yet also touches the keys and strings of musical instruments with such tenderness and melting power that tears stream down the cheeks and love and pity swell the hearts of the stoniest and most immovable of men.

It is when we see the hand, however, brought into the humane, helpful and Christian life that its highest beauty and most transcendent power is beheld. This feature of the nobly and divinely reclaimed member is seen in the case of Jonathan when he visited the lonely, persecuted and deeply wronged David in the depths of a wood in the wilderness of Ziph.

The king of Israel had robbed David of his wife, chased him from home, tried repeatedly to take his life, and had his soldiers hunting him down everywhere. As the pitiless lines of Saul's officers and servants, and even troops, gathered closer each day around the fugitive, David, all exhausted, sought refuge in the town of Keilah. But, being told by the Lord that the people of that community would surrender him to the king, David fled again, and this time to the wilderness. Here, all dispirited and discouraged, he plunged into the depths of the woods, and doubtless there wrote some of those pathetic psalms which move men in reading to this day. It was at this critical hour that Jonathan sought for and found him in the heart of the great, lonely, sighing forest. The hand of a noble, fortune-favored man reached for and clasped that of another noble man who was smitten with sorrow and going down under misfortune and wrong. The strong

remembered the weak. The favored and blessed visited the rejected and discouraged.

Very beautiful looks the hand of Jonathan as it glistened for a moment in the flickering light and shadow of the woodland, and wound in loving, cordial clasp around the wearied, sunburned fingers of David. The hand of his father, the king, may have been adorned with jewels and may have held a golden and begemmed scepter in its grasp, but it never looked as attractive, and never did as royal a thing as was performed by the member of his son when far away in a lonesome, dreary wilderness he cheered and strengthened the sinking heart of a man driven from the palace, ejected from his home, oppressed by the highest power and authority in the land, and hunted by numerous bodies of men like a wild animal in the woods.

The Bible says, “And Jonathan, Saul’s son, arose and went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.”

Many have need to pray for just such a Christ-like hand; and many will envy its possessor, indeed, when the day of judgment comes, and the King of all the earth arises to reward men for the deeds they have done, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

It would pay us all to have a kind of hand inventory, and as we look at these members, so qualified to bless, and yet so able to afflict, and ask what are they doing for God and man in this life.

Are they lifting up or pulling down people? Are they dragging one away from a palace, or drawing one out of the woods? Are they cheering and strengthening the discouraged and smitten ones of earth, or are they hurling javelins and spears at better men and women than themselves?

As we study the situation on earth, and get to know the hearts of men better, we are convinced that it is not the hand of Saul, but of a Jonathan that is needed. It is not the clenched fist of a Jehu that will right the world, but the outstretched palm of Jesus. So we ought to ask ourselves, honestly and repeatedly, what is my hand doing? What kind of hand do I possess and wield?

Is it a praying hand?

Is it often uplifted to bring down blessings from heaven upon the children of men?

Stonewall Jackson in the midst of battle could be seen galloping up and down the lines, with his right arm upraised. He drew victory and success down upon every brigade, division and corps he commanded. What about our battles of life? Are we going out in our own strength, or do we obtain triumph for the truth, and deliverance for those oppressed by the devil by the steadily uplifted hand of prayer?

Have we a liberal hand?

As God has given to us, do we love to bestow upon others? Have we a perfection like our Father in heaven, who pours His mercies on the unjust as well as just, puts the sunlight and rain on the fields of the evil and unthankful, and even gives bread to his enemies and bids us do the same if we would be like Him?

A godly man in the State of Mississippi exercised just such a helpful hand from boyhood until he was nearly ninety years of age. He allowed no suffering of a temporal character anywhere in the circle of his social and church life, and these orbits were not small. The hearts of many widows and orphans were made to sing for joy on account of his benevolence, and during the civil war no wife or mother of a soldier lacked bread or garments in a radius of twenty miles around, until the bloody strife was over.

We are not surprised when a file of soldiers was called out to shoot him down for his Southern sympathies they could not pull a trigger against the white-haired saint and Christian prince before them. The Word of God was his shield at this time, which says, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve and keep him alive—and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies."

He had helped others, and now the Lord helped him. His hand had assisted the needy, and now the divine hand was outstretched to deliver him in a season of still greater need.

Then is our hand a helpful one to the sorrow-stricken and life-burdened and crushed of earth?

Are we making the world happier or sadder for our being in it? Are we putting heart loads on people, or taking them off? What are we doing to make men and women have a brighter, happier, easier and better time while they make the long, toilsome journey between the cradle and the grave?

We have known women who gave not less than an hour each day to the care of their hands in all the mysteries of manicuring, and the result was the possession of snow-white, pink-nailed, comely members that their social circle admired and complimented. But the world was no better or happier for their being in it. They wiped away no tears; they lifted no sinking head; they reached bread and money to no needy, starving soul. It would have shocked the dainty owner of these useless appendages very much to have had the dirty finger of a street waif or the feverish grasp of a dying wretch touch them even for an instant.

One night in Jerusalem we shrank suddenly from the touch of a loathsome-looking beggar who arose from the dust in a dark corner. We felt greatly rebuked, and as we walked with humbled heart up the narrow street towards the hotel we recalled One who never drew back from any palm outstretched to Him, even though it was the grasp of a leper. Then in addition He would lay His hand upon the poor, unfortunate being and say, "Be thou clean."

Now that we recall the past, we do not know any man who wears gloves in summer for the beautifying of these same members, who ever possessed the hand of Jonathan. They do not seek out the Davids of sorrow in the wood. And even if they should meet, before the glove can be taken off, David is gone.

We knew a lady whose right hand became paralyzed. She used to put several handsome diamond rings on the cold, dead fingers, and then resting the white, lifeless member on a pillow, received company that way. We can never forget the shock and then the nausea we experienced as we looked at this dead, useless part of the body, arrayed and made prominent in the manner described. It not only had never benefited anyone, but even now was keeping a little fortune on its unprofitable self from hundreds and thousands of needy beings, who otherwise could have had bread for the body and salvation for the soul.

We recall another pair of hands that were once shapely and beautiful, but in the service of others became hard, sunburned and wrinkled. The thimble and sewing fingers at the ends were rough and had been pricked, it seemed, a million times with the needle. She had raised a large family of her own and three sets of grandchildren. She had made garments until they could not be counted, and sat up nights with the sick beyond computation. In explanation of a stoop in her shoulders, which came in later life, we heard her say once, in the quietest of voices, that it had come from bending over and lifting the many children that God had sent into her life to care for and train for Him.

We saw this same woman in the coffin with her hands folded over the pulseless heart that had loved so long and so much. We looked deeply moved at the yellow, wrinkled hands, thought of what they had done for others, and they seemed very beautiful to our eyes. We know full well that they were lovely in the sight of God.

They were aged and emaciated-looking, but they were the hands of Jonathan. In view of the day of judgment, and what Christ says about helping others, we would far rather have such members now, and in the coffin, and at the judgment, than the manicured and gloved fingers of the beau and belle and the gem-sparkling but dead hand we saw on the pillow.

CHAPTER 15

JUDAS

There are two utterances of the Savior which grow in awful meaning the more frequently they are read and mentally dwelt upon. One was spoken to a backslidden church, the other to a fallen disciple.

To the first He said, “I would thou wert cold or hot. So, then, because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

Here is the deliberate statement that the Lord would rather see a man spiritually cold and utterly departed from Him, than that he should mock and insult Him with a neutral stand, a middle ground policy, or, in other words, a lukewarm Christian life.

Think of it! If not hot for Me, declares Christ, then be cold towards Me! And this coldness means, of course, spiritual death! The heart state and life attitude of the lukewarm Christian, for reasons evident to the thoughtful mind, is more abhorrent and intolerable to the Son of God than the condition of life of the man lost and dead in sin.

The second astounding statement of the Lord is heard in His farewell words to an apostate disciple. Chosen from a number of other followers to be of the twelve, yet he had become a devil. Once saved, he was the only one lost from the band that the Father had given Him out of the world. Surely we cannot believe that the Father would have presented a devil to His Son. Nor would the Son, who refused the testimony and praise of such fallen beings, have allowed one to have been enrolled in a company whom He called branches of the true vine, servants, followers and apostles.

From the pen of St. Matthew, in the tenth chapter of his Gospel, we learn that the Saviour “gave the twelve disciples power against unclean spirits to cast them out.” He names every one of the chosen band, and so in the fourth verse says, “and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.” But the

Lord distinctly said that a devil could not cast out a devil; else the house of Beelzebub would be divided. So the conclusion is unanswerable that at one time the twelfth apostle was all right. But he became a devil; and the steps of a fall are plainly given in the four Gospels.

Judas, the smart business man of the twelve, was made the Treasurer of the Board. He fell into repeated sin; and in due time came up to the culminating act of the betrayal of the Son of God.

While sitting at the table with the rest of his brethren, who, in their lack of spiritual discernment, had failed to see the moral wreck, and to recognize the traitor in the camp, the Savior reached over and handing the hopelessly fallen man a piece of bread dipped in the sop, uttered the solemn words, "That thou doest, do quickly "

Here in this sentence is a cluster of striking truths.

One is the recognition of man's moral freedom in the words, "that thou doest"; an ability to go counter to the divine will and defeat the effort of God Himself, also would keep him from transgression and ruin.

Then there is the additional fact taught that God knows what we are going to do in the line of evil!

Further still, that this divine foreknowledge has not the slightest influence upon the man in the commission of his sin. Christ is clear in this in the words, "that THOU doest."

There is also the fearful teaching of the complete cessation of divine effort in the diverting, restraining and opposing of the soul in its determined course to ruin.

But the most dreadful of all the group of truths in the sentence is not only the permission in a sense of evil from heaven, but the actual command to the fallen disciple to hurry up, commit the wickedness resolved upon, and enter the hell which he had chosen to be his eternal dwelling place. The natural and inevitable conclusion from this life scene is:

First, there is a time in the history of some men when the Lord gives them up.

The individual thus forsaken may live on for years, may travel, go into business, become engrossed in certain kinds of pursuits; but he is a lost man. Not only is the time of salvation past, but the day of conviction is ended.

The life that now follows is much easier than the other, because a withstanding God was in the way, and swords of threatening flashed before the eyes, and the man had little rest or peace, no matter what he did or where he went. As God steps aside at last from the perverse course of the follower who is bent upon evil, the long strife of months and years is over naturally and necessarily. A sense of relief is felt at once by the forsaken soul. But it is an ease entirely misunderstood by the person most interested. He thinks he has solved some great spiritual and life problem and entered into rest, when the truth is that God has left him; and the quiet he experiences is the death of conscience so far as this world is concerned, and the final silencing of the voice of God.

We find such people all over the land. Nothing and no one can arouse them from the condition in which they have settled. Perfectly satisfied now, they smile or wonder and even pity the persons who seem so concerned and alarmed over their cases. They marvel at their extreme views, their persistency, their anxiety and their distress when they see nothing to be troubled about. What a pity it is for such alarmists to be allowed in respectable pulpits, and for individuals to have the audacity to thrust themselves, so to speak, in private lives and disturb well-bred, well-educated and beautifully cultured members of the Church and of society.

As we look at their placid faces, note the busy church life, the devotion displayed at times to the temporal side of the Kingdom of Christ, and yet never aroused, never disturbed any more by the solemn, awful truths of Christianity, we feel in an overwhelming sense the magnitude of the disaster that has come upon the soul when given up by the Spirit of God.

We have marvelled as we viewed the physical nature that was left, saw signs of the intellectual man, but not an indication remaining of the spiritual life. Where had the soul gone? Were the ears that Christ spoke of stopped so they could not hear? Was the spirit materialized or drowned in lard, or suffocated in flesh? What had become of the soul? It rises up in the

face no more. It looks out of the eyes no more. It seems to hear no more. What has become of it?

As we mark the future progress of such a man, we feel that life lies out before him all the way to the Pit, and nothing is in the way to hinder him from falling into Hell. God has left him. The angel has been withdrawn from the road. The sword that had been waved in warning has been sheathed. There is no muttering thunder and no lightning flash from a cloud lying low upon the horizon; no mourning whisper in the wind! No! Everything is open and clear to the coming destruction. Even bright-hued plans and expectations are piled up like a golden sunrise instead of the stormy-looking sunset that we have mentioned.

A second lesson from this piece of life history is drawn from the divine command to the transgressor to be in a hurry in the termination of his apostate life— and enter hell quickly.

We cannot make anything else out of this awful sentence. Here was a man with whom the Lord had struggled for years and to no avail. This being had surrendered himself to evil and the devil. His case had become hopeless by his own successive acts of sin, until he had reached the culminating deed, the guiltiest, most horrible transaction ever committed in the Universe, the betrayal and consequent murder of the Son of God. Redemption was a failure so far as he was concerned. The Omnipotent God had come to the end of all means allowable with a free moral agent, and stood baffled and defeated before a being determined to do wrong.

The man was now in the rapids of an Evil Life just above the Falls of Death. It was only the question of a short time when the end must come anyhow. His lingering in time was not only piling up a greater woe and damnation for himself, but meant the dragging of others by his influence down with him to ruin. It was best that he should go at once, as he was going anyhow. So the awful sentence was uttered— “That thou doest, do quickly.”

He who spoke these fearful words knew that his fallen disciple was going then to give him up to his enemies, with whom he had already plotted. He knew that after the crucifixion, remorse, not repentance, would set in, and the wretched man would hang himself, unable to face the world. That from

the sin of self-murder he would plunge into an everlasting hell! And yet He told him with this perfect knowledge of what was coming to do quickly what he had determined on doing. Paraphrased it read, You are going to sell me, betray me to my enemies, give me over to an awful death, and actually reveal me to those that hate me, with the kiss of a hypocrite. You will take money in your hands, the cost of my blood and life; will hang yourself, and dying enter upon an everlasting hell. It is all unspeakably horrible, but you are going to do it, so do it quickly. Get through the fearful succession of crimes as fast as you can. Rid the earth as swiftly as possible of a devil in human form. As days count nothing in eternity, then leap over the few that are left by nature and enter at once into the world that is inhabited by a population like unto yourself; an abode filled with men and women who would not allow God and His Christ to dwell in them and reign over them; who would not be saved.

All this is very dreadful, but the Bible in some respects is a dreadful book. It tells of frightful things. It speaks of a fearful fall into sin, of an awful Deluge that drowned the race, of a crucifixion at which men shudder today, and of a coming Judgment when the moon will turn red, and the sun will become black, and the nations wail in the midst of rocking mountains and a world on fire. It tells of a bottomless hell, wherein men sink forever because it is bottomless. It speaks of a flame that burns in the breast and a worm that eats the heart forever. Yes, the Bible tells of terrible things—and they are all true.

It is a dreadful thing to be given up of God, but the Bible says it is so!

It is a fearful thing to be turned loose and actually commissioned to end a sinful life in some culminating act or acts of wickedness, and sent to hell ahead of time! But the Scripture teaches it, and we do not doubt that many thousands since the time of Judas have trod the same dark and doomed way to the world of the lost.

More than that, we are continually beholding such instances. God seems to have given them up to believe a lie. They feed on ashes. They cannot say there is a lie in their right hand, and they are powerless to deliver their souls.

In some way they have sold Christ, betrayed the innocent Blood, joined His enemies, and taken other things in lieu of what the Savior would have given them. About them God seems to have said they will not turn. They will never repent or change. Set in false doctrine and false living, they will not have His salvation. They do not wish Him nor His. Everything He has done for them has failed. The divine hand is lifted and taken away. The road is swept clear of every heavenly obstruction. All that is left now is the final leap and the plunge into everlasting darkness.

We say we have met such. We repeat that we are continually meeting them. The handwriting is gone from the wall. No Daniel comes any more to interpret and warn. The Angel of Withstanding has been called back to Heaven. Only a little more blood money is to be received. Only a kiss or two of betrayal remains. And life has been narrowed down with them to the brow of a lonely cliff, the limb of an overhanging tree, a night of gloom all around, and an open hell beneath.

What a pity to go that way when Heaven is open for us; when Christ died for sinners, and for the chief of sinners! When the Bible makes it clear that it is not the fact that we have done wrong which keeps us out of the Kingdom of Glory; for all have sinned; but the sadder fact that men refuse to give up their iniquities, that they cling to them and turn from the only One who can save from all sin, cheat a yawning hell of its prey, and land us justified, sanctified and glorified in the skies, to abide there forever.

CHAPTER 16

THE WIFE OF PHINEHAS

The four words heading this chapter were uttered by one of the lovely female characters of the Bible. Ruth, Rachel, Esther and this nameless young wife of Phinehas, the priest, make a remarkably attractive quartet. Possessed of physical and spiritual graces, the shadowy times in which they lived are lighted up beautifully as well as pathetically by what they said, suffered and did.

Concerning the last of the four, while the record is brief, yet it is eloquent in its suggestiveness. Like a window suddenly opened, a few sentences penned long ago reveal in a flash the love, loyalty, devotion and spirituality of the daughter-in-law of the old priest Eli.

She was married to a very bad man to begin with. She, a spiritual woman, was consorted with a hypocrite. Yet that she still clung to and loved him appears in the Scripture narrative. At the time the scene opens here she was a desperately sick woman. Then a great anxiety was upon her because Israel had gone out to battle with the Philistines. Her husband was absent with the troops, and the Ark of God had been taken from the Tabernacle in Shiloh and carried to the front in order to encourage the warriors of Israel.

The Ark contained the Tables of the Law, the Golden Pot of Manna, the rod of Aaron that budded, while over it the two cherubim stretched their wings, gazing downward at the sacred chest. Here was the Mercy Seat, and from which God spoke to Moses in giving direction and commandment to his people.

For fully three hundred years the Ark had been with them in the Tabernacle, and in the heart of the camp. Now it had been taken from its long resting place and carried to a place where war was raging, and their enemies were numerous and powerful. Well might Eli watch by the wayside, and with trembling spirit wait for tidings from the battlefield.

While in a tent not very far away thought, prayed and suffered the woman whose heart was, in spite of her physical suffering, far distant with that same Ark which rested in the midst of poor defenders and faced a great army of ruthless enemies.

The tidings at last came. A man running from the battlefield brought it. The battle was lost; the two sons of Eli were killed, and the Ark of God had been taken by the Philistines.

Eli dropped dead from the news. Then the tidings, increased by the added statement of the death of her father-in-law, reached the young wife and daughter-in-law. Her heart seemed to break with the hearing of the melancholy history.

Later the nurses, at the time of her death, told her that she had borne a son. But the Bible says, "She answered not, neither did she regard it. And she said the glory is departed from Israel; for the Ark of God is taken."

Here is a high state of grace indeed, that can turn from the news of the birth of a child, that refuses to consider one's own special agony, and ranks the loss of husband and father-in-law with all the sorrow and loneliness thus brought to her, far beneath the spiritual woe and bereavement which had befallen Israel in the loss of the Ark of God. What was the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and Israel itself, with the Ark captured, the Mercy Seat gone, from which the Lord had so often spoken to his people. So, repeating the words again and again, "The glory is departed from Israel," the beautiful spirit of this lovely woman passed away.

The speech of this wife of Phinehas has been uttered, and the truth that it stands for has been beheld, felt and grieved over times without number since that hour.

First it is spoken by the man of the world when he comes down to old age without the consolations of Christianity.

As he stands in the shadows of time, with his mind disabused of early dreams and fancies, and his heart disenchanted of youthful impressions by the hard, bitter experiences of life, he says, looking out over the years that are gone, and the few that remain to come, "The glory is departed."

It would be hard for him to explain the depths of meaning that are in these words; but he knows that a strange, sweet light has died out on the hills as if some kind of sun had set; that the drawing charm of the distant bend in the river has vanished; that the fascination born of new scenes and faces has taken wing and fled, and something which gave an indescribable charm to life and a bewildering beauty to the world itself has departed, and now he stands not reluctant to go down into the grave, or sweep past the horizon, into the beyond where everything worth having seems to have disappeared.

Second, the words of the dying woman are applicable to the state of the church when its true glory in the presence and saving power of God has been taken away and gone like the angels back into heaven.

The tabernacle, altar, tables of incense, curtains, lamps, priests and robes are all very well, but what if the Mercy Seat, with God's face and God's voice speaking to the people, be taken away! What can fill the place of the absent Creator, Redeemer and Preserver?

And what, if we possess stately cathedrals, stained windows, rolling organs, scholarly ministry and wealthy membership, if salvation is not rolling like a river of life and light in our midst! The church cannot save if the Savior is gone. Ordinances, ceremonies, liberalities, orthodoxies, moralities, decencies, brotherhoods and sisterhoods cannot change character and redeem the soul. What if the Redeemer, the only one who can transform and save be gone? What have we left worth speaking of? What is the casket with the pearl missing? The scabbard with the sword dropped out? The body with the spirit fled? The ship without oar or sail or steam?

What is to become of us if we have lost the presence and power of God in the church? What do the candlesticks amount to if the Son of God is not walking in their midst? What are the preachers called the stars, if they are not in His hand? What is the Word if the Spirit is not there to fall on it? What is the Blood itself if there be present no Divine Agent to apply it? What are all the signs and trappings of Redemption if the Redeemer comes not up to the Feast, refuses to walk in the Temple, and shuts himself up in the Heavens?

Then to think of multitudes going to hell through the church, passing by images of the Savior on the windows, the Bible in the chancel, past crosses on the spire, and through countless hymns and sermons about Him sounded from choir and pulpit, and yet coming at last through all to the Bottomless Pit! And this wholesale destruction because “the glory is departed”; because the presence and power of God has been withdrawn from the tabernacle and temple!

What a bitter thought it must be to the lost soul in hell to recall that it came to perdition through the church, every step of the way ! And this must be, for the symbols of salvation are not salvation, the church is not Christ, and the tabernacle, altar, laver, vessels, ark, cherubim and the Mercy Seat itself are not God. None of these things can deliver and save when He is gone.

So the people of Israel who stayed at home at Shiloh found that the Tabernacle was a mere shell; and the men of Israel who went forth to battle discovered that the ark was only a box, when the presence and power of God had been lifted, or when, in other words, “the glory was departed.”

Hence it is that those who know what the Christian religion is, what Christ can do, and what ought to be happening in the churches at every service, find no better language to express their shame and sorrow at the ecclesiastical mummery and flummery going on, than the words of the dying wife of Phinehas—”The glory is departed.”

Third, these words can be spoken and a certain sad fact felt to exist in connection with persons and places where Full Salvation has been preached, professed and experienced.

No one who recalls the gentleness, patience, longsuffering, humility, sweetness and perfect love which characterized the holiness movement some twelve or fifteen years back, and now sees what is preached and lived in its stead today in numerous quarters, and by many individuals, but will stand indebted to the dying woman in Shiloh for a sentence that perfectly and painfully covers and expresses the situation—”The glory is departed.”

When we obtained the blessing in 1889, and at once identified ourselves with the Full Salvation movement, its people, meetings, camps and literature, there was not a division that we can recall among them. There was no strife about non-essential doctrines. No breaking up into sets and cliques with watchwords, modes of worship and exclusive ways and teachings peculiar to some school or following. There was no ugly spirit nor unkind speech over honest differences of opinion upon matters that do not affect the soul's salvation and entrance into heaven.

We attended many holiness meetings in those days, where unity of spirit, genuine brotherly love, and the tenderness and unction of hymn, prayer and sermon made the place like an ante-chamber of Heaven.

Holiness people suffered those days at the hands of the world and the church peculiarly and bitterly; but they kept sweet, were uncomplaining, did not strike back, and with the glory of God shining out of their faces, with victory at home or abroad, laughed, wept, preached, prayed, sung, clapped their hands and shouted their way through the ten days of their camp meeting, and after that kept the same glad, holy triumph in their souls for the other three hundred and fifty-five days of the year, until they came again to their Feast of Tabernacles in South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi and Texas.

The holiness papers were not mustard plasters and fly blisters in those days, but rather like the leaves from the Tree of Life for the Healing of the Nations. They did not shoot at their own brethren who were in the hot firing line at the front. And because when gates were shut against them they departed like their Lord from one town to preach in another, they did not publicly brand them as "cowards."

Holiness preachers did not charge each other as backslidden in those days, nor hurl mud and filth at men whom God honored on every battlefield. Instead, as they met and labored with each other, the fact which impressed all beholders was, "See how these people love one another."

But the movement grew large; and people came in who knew not Joseph; and a mixed multitude like that which followed Moses out of Egypt got in the ranks somehow, and something beautiful and divine and Christ-like left many who came out in the true Exodus. And so we repeat, in looking on

different persons and places here and there, we have to say with the sorrowing woman of the olden days, “The glory is departed.”

CHAPTER 17

THE EYE OF SAUL

There is hardly a more remarkable member of the body than the eye. After all the explanations of science about pictures being formed on a certain inner plate, and the carriage of impressions by nerve telegraph lines to and from a great receiving office in the brain, yet how we see through the eye still remains a mystery.

It is equally remarkable, as a telltale feature of the man inside, and will inevitably locate him morally and betray the hidden indweller in spite of every precaution to the world.

The holy eye is unmistakably not only in the expression which comes to abide in it, but in the way it looks, or refuses to look on certain objects. The instantly averted gaze from that which is wrong, forbidden, and suggestive of evil in its character, is the peculiar possession of a clean heart.

The unclean eye literally hangs out of the head. It cannot conceal the unholy flame which burns in its gloating vision. Repeatedly we have been puzzled to know the truth concerning a man, and suddenly would obtain a lightning flash revelation of where he lived in the character realm, by a glance of his eye.

The look of pity and love has such a kindly, tender beam in it, such a warming light, that all can tell it instantly from a nursing child up to a hardened criminal. It seems as natural that tears of the sweetest nature should fill such orbs we are describing, as that the atmosphere touching the earth, would leave mark of its presence upon it by the shining, beautiful dew.

The envious gaze is the one mentioned in this chapter. The Bible describes it in the words, "And Saul eyed David." As a full length painting of Envy it could hardly be surpassed. On one side of the picture is the figure of a devout young man who had been signally used and honored of God, whom

the nation was properly praising, and yet still remained modest, humble and spiritual in the face of his great success and victories. On the other side is an older man, who was prominent, had won honors in his own life plane and position, and yet was inwardly raging in his heart because the people were giving merited praises to one who had helped them, as well as the man himself who stood gazing at his fancied rival all devoured and consumed by a raging jealousy.

Of course the form of the king was stiff, the hands clenched, the teeth set, the brow was like brass, and the face like a flint. But the eye itself was of all the rest, the most sickening manifestation of the fearful spirit which had taken possession of the unhappy monarch.

Whoever heard of an envious stare being anything but hard and cold and dry. The hell flame burning in the soul scorches up the reservoir of tears and leaves not a single drop for the eye of the man and brother hater. Then the coldness of the gaze chills like an icicle, and the hardness smites upon the victim like a hammer. We can even feel the wrench of the twisted glance; while the gleam from under the drooping lid is like the flash of a half drawn dagger.

We have been a fairly close student of human life and character for a quarter of a century, and we have never yet known a man or woman who had the practice of looking out of the corner of the eye, who could be trusted. It is a sneakish act to begin with. It betokens slyness, cunning, cowardice, and general meanness. The organ of sight was never made to be thus used, as is evident from the strained sensation arising from such a perversion and prostitution of this window of the soul.

Then such a look is a facial lie. The person is trying to create the impression on others that his attention is in one direction when the fact of the case is, it is in another.

Truth has a square, open look for everybody, the face that acts otherwise belongs to a man who may well be dreaded.

We have often heard colored people on the plantation and hostlers in stables say, "Watch out for the horse or mule who looks out of the corner of his eye. He is waiting his chance to kick and kill you." We have found it to be the same in human life. Watch for the descending blow, the wagging

of the bitter tongue, and for injury of some kind from the person who turns a side glance of a hard cold nature upon you.

It was after Saul threw such a gaze at David that he cast a javelin with his hand to transfix him to the wall. Then followed an onset of spears and swords, and finally a whole army set in motion to capture and destroy the brave and faithful son of Jesse.

The man filled with envy is not satisfied with hurling a hating, withering look, but quickly follows it up with deeds of animosity and cruelty.

It is certainly a sad commentary on poor, fallen human nature, and a marvellous confirmation of the Scripture statement of the wickedness of the heart, and the remaining evil in the soul after regeneration, to observe the malevolent looks that men fling on one who has never done them any personal injury, but has committed the mortal offense of being morally better or intellectually superior to themselves.

We have had our attention called on Annual Conference occasions, to the faces of some who were listening to the fine report of a successful brother. Or we have heard remarks, attended with certain facial expressions, made upon a great sermon, while the eye was being used as Saul scrutinized David. And the heart fairly grew sick at the sight.

We wonder if it ever occurs to a man why he withholds public praise from a brother who so worthily deserves it; but instead, in a sly secret way hurls a verbal or written javelin at one who has done well. If the eye had been kodaked at the moment when the detracting and stinging sentence was being spoken or penned, it would have shown the same horrible likeness to the glare which Saul threw upon a man who was nobler and better than himself.

It is proof of a magnanimous (*magna anima*) mind; a great mind in the best sense of the word; to recognize and then commend the virtues, abilities, labors and victories of another man. The person who can see no good in his brother, and seeing it, would pass over it in silence, or slur at it, or strike the possessor or doer in some way, is bound to be an inwardly mean being.

A thought of comfort to those who have been wronged in this fashion is, that envy on the part of another individual, need never hurt, much less destroy the object at whom it is directed. If it did who would be left standing in any path of life or realm of duty today!

It is simply dreadful to realize that an army of people on earth spend much of their time and force in casting the javelin glance of Saul at men who are doubly honored by earth and heaven. No one who ever did anything for state or church; no one who ever soared in any way above his fellows, but at once beheld the glitter and heard the whiz of these spears and arrows of the old-time King of Israel.

But as we have said, no one need go down under a single one of them. Most of these javelin shooters are impotent in themselves; and can only wish the injury of others without being able to bring it to pass. Then many are the objects of amusement to the multitude who see very plainly what the matter is with them. While with all it is evident that such a spirit hurts the caster of the unfriendly look more than the one at whom it is thrown.

We marvel that men do not see that to entertain a wrong spirit, and practice an evil habit is certain to injure the soul in which it originated and is nourished, more than any one else.

Saul suffered far more than David, as both their histories in the Bible plainly indicate. Joseph's brethren came out badly worsted at the end of their envious life, while Joseph was not only far ahead of them spiritually and able to help them financially, but was over them politically, and the acknowledged and honored prince of the whole country.

Sin or wrong aimed at any man is a dreadful boomerang that comes back with awful retributive force on the hand, heart and life of the perpetrator.

Let each reader lay it to heart. We need only be right with God, and He will see to it that we shall not be delivered over into the will of our enemies. Men may try to put us in pits of their digging, but the Just One will get us out, and then cause the hater and plotter to fall in the well he had dug for others. People may throw the javelin at us with tongue and pen and look, but the same faithful hand will cause the instrument of evil to glance harmlessly over us, our vacant seat will be made to plead eloquently and pathetically for us, while we ourselves will be found safe

and sound elsewhere, still loving and beloved of God and still doing the whole will and work of Heaven.

CHAPTER 18

SHIMEI — THE CURSER

A curse in any shape or form is a dreadful thing. It may be fulminated from a great ecclesiastical institution, proceed in profanity from human lips full of unreasoning hate and fury, or be invoked in fearful solemnity upon the head and life of some flagrant transgressor and wrong doer.

Whether based on right or wrong, is uttered by a church or flung forth by an individual, no one with proper sensibility cares to hear, or be the object of such an awful invocation.

There is but one who has really the right to bring blighting, blasting and ruin upon nations and persons, and upon body and soul. It is the one whose mercy and love and justice and power are in exact proportions. They all harmonize. He is as kind as he is great, and pitiful as he is omnipotent.

The trouble with human judgment and punishment is that power leads to oppression, and prejudice and wrath to downright injustice and cold-blooded cruelty. Men have a way of only listening to one side of a case or history. They in their haste hang the accused prisoner and then ask the corpse if he has anything to say why he should not be put to death.

We have long ago seen a significance in the words, “Power belongeth unto God,” because through all the ages, and in all countries, and in every walk of life men have shown their utter incapacity and inability for its proper wielding. We have yet to see a man who exercised the tremendous thing long, who was not spoiled by its conscious possession.

So in regard to the manipulation and visitation of a curse, we have not yet beheld the individual or the body of people who could be trusted with the deadly formula; and yet all of us are compelled to note that they who are least fit to handle such a verbal anathema do most abound in such utterances.

It is simply frightful to listen to sinners cursing themselves and others. They ask God to damn their friends, damn the church, damn the world, damn their family and damn their own souls. What if God should answer their prayers?

It is almost as terrible to read of the many curses by “bell, book, and candle” called down on nations and individuals by a great ecclesiastical hierarchy which thought it could ruin men both in time and eternity. What if it could have done what it wanted to do in that line? What hundreds of millions would be today writhing in agony in the pit, who are instead rejoicing in heaven!

Perhaps it would be unspeakably startling to many of us to know the number of persons who curse us in their hearts, and secretly yearn, and impatiently wait, for our misfortunes, troubles, backsliding, sins, and ruin of body and soul.

Such a man came into David’s life. He appeared at the time of the greatest trials of the king of Israel. He drew near with hate in his heart and curses on his lips. He filled the air with his denunciations and imprecations. The sight of the angry, raving, white-haired man, as he walked along the side of the hill above David, and cursed the silent man of God, is one of the most vivid, impressive and significant pictures in the Old Testament.

And yet it is a scene that is repeated in the lives of many of God’s people until this day. Such is the nature of the world we live in; such the different character of the people we meet; such the rebuking power of a good life; and such the violence of sin, that if a devoted Christian escaped without abuse of all kinds, it would be the miracle of the age.

A consecrated evangelist had a saloon keeper to curse him to his face for half an hour on the street of a Tennessee town. Another had a man to strike him until the blood gushed, while the attacker darkened the air with his oaths. Still another had an angry individual to ram his pistol in his mouth and then proceed to rail upon him. The most terrible tongue-lashing of profanity the author of this book ever received was on the streets of the city of New Orleans, and in a town in Nebraska. The latter lasted about ten minutes and the former over half an hour. Both were horrible beyond

words to describe, and both came to the victim of the abuse after he was sanctified.

The Savior was cursed and reviled. So were his disciples. While John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was accused of having broken all of the ten commandments, and had oaths rained upon him as a daily experience.

Many are walking this strange road of persecution today. Women are abused by their husbands for their devotion to Christ and the church. Faithful followers of Christ are branded with the vilest of epithets. Holiness people are made to feel the ban and doom of a church interdict, a conference excommunication, or preachers' meeting set of resolutions. Misinformed and prejudiced citizens of a town sneer at the full salvation tent meeting, while adjectives of the darkest and most profane character are freely used to voice and emphasize opinion as to the people and the religious movement itself.

To this great company and fraternity of the much maligned and vilified we offer several thoughts of consolation.

First, the curses and hate of men cannot possibly affect our standing and relation with God.

It is not what people say that causes God to change his countenance toward us. This is the way that men are influenced and act, but God, never. His altered bearing must and can only proceed from our actual life and conduct and moral condition. Words of men about us amount to nothing to him. It is our own words and deeds that he weighs and judges, and through them alone we get the divine sentence.

There are few persons indeed who can listen to or read a scurrilous attack upon another without feeling somewhat affected and biased by it. But to God it is equivalent to nothing. He looketh on the heart, and does not turn to gossip and bitter attacks for his opinion of men. He studies character, and not that changeable, variable thing called reputation.

So it must have been quite an experience to John Wesley, and all like men, to read what his enemies said about him in England, making him the vilest of creatures, while God kept smiling upon and blessing his soul in spite of

the slanderous book and pamphlet. Second, the curses of men are powerless to injure us in reality.

If they could, where would be the world today; and the church; and, indeed, all of us?

We have only to read the Scripture to see that not one of the maledictions uttered by Shimei was allowed to fall on David.

It was certainly a very blessed thing to feel and know that men saying we are vile and wicked does not make us so. Their curses do not cause us to be accursed.

The Georgia Evangelist once said that the only man who could hurt Sam Jones was Sam Jones. There was a world of good sense and truth in the speech, and the fact voiced must have been full of Comfort and strength to that cordially hated and constantly abused man.

Third, the curses of men are turned into blessings by the power of God, if the victim will revile not again, but leave the whole matter in the hands of the judge of all the earth.

Hence it was that as Shimei went along the road abusing the King, David himself was silent. To his followers who wanted to run a sword through the insulter, he replied, let him curse on God will requite me a blessing for it.

Truly if the enemies of God's people could see their black missiles of death turning into white-winged mercies; and their imprecations transformed into benedictions alighting upon the head and heart and life of those they sought to injure and destroy, they would certainly change their tactics and mode of warfare. Behold! cries Balak to Balaam, I sent you out to curse this people, and you have blessed them three times.

A fourth fact about curses is that they have a very strange and horrible way of returning to the curser.

There is an old saying that obtained its birth from the long observation of men, viz., that "curses, like chickens, come home to roost." The Bible is clear about this in statement, and in illustration. It speaks of the digger of a

pit falling into it himself, while the stone that is rolled to injure another crushes the one who started it.

It shows David in prosperity and power, and then dying in peace, while Shimei, his attacker, was a prisoner in his own house, for years, and finally met a violent death. Elisha was cursed by forty young people but they were torn and slain while he remained unhurt. They met a fearful judgment, while the man they assailed lived to a good old age, blessed many thousands, died in peace and triumph, and swept upward to everlasting glory and reward.

Wesley survived the abuse of Bell and Owens, who themselves backslided and went to ruin. The mayor in Texas who attacked and vilified the Georgia preacher sank into shame, oblivion, and then the grave years ago. The person who cursed the Evangelist in Tennessee, lost his business and money in a year's time, and in eighteen months begged for crusts of bread in the back streets and alleys of his own town.

Other men of God whom we know and who have been shamefully treated by infuriated individuals are happy and useful today in the service of Heaven, while the bodies of their attackers are in the grave, and their memory is rotting from the face of the earth.

Both the Bible and Life agree in showing that it is a perilous thing to touch God's anointed, and to do his prophets harm. The Lord has a strange and dreadful way of taking up for his servants.

CHAPTER 19

SHIMEI — THE STONE THROWER

There must be some kind of perfection in the character and life, or there would not be such a general and continued insistence by men of one another that some high standard of living should be reached and then preserved thereafter.

The universal prevalence of criticism is one of the evidences of this expectation and demand. These verbal judgments may be kind or unkind, but the ready deliverance of the same is a wonderful indication of how much light is possessed by all classes, grades and ages in the human family, inasmuch as all are so ready to pronounce upon motive and conduct, and upon the good, bad and indifferent which appears or seems to appear in individual, family, ecclesiastical and national history.

Many refuse to join the church because of the inconsistency of church members. Then there is hardly an outbreking sinner in the land but can glibly tell you how a Christian ought to live, and even how a preacher should deport himself. All this shows a wonderful amount of light in the critic and judge, for which he must give account at the Last Day; and also proves again that a model moral standard has been erected somehow in his mind and before his spiritual vision, and all unconsciously he is insisting by his criticisms that men measure up to the rule of pure, high and noble living.

We do not believe that with the heart, and the world in their present state, we can ever hope or ask for deliverance from criticism, be it kind or unkind. The former is necessary, and the latter can be overruled for our good; so both may be endured and even welcomed.

Mud flinging as it is termed in the newspapers, and stone throwing as practiced by a man named Shimei in the Bible, may have had criticism as a starting point, but in its strange, swift course, the character is often most fearfully transformed, and a judge of conduct is metamorphosed into a

murderer of individual reputation, happiness and usefulness, a would be executioner of his fellow beings.

Scandal or slander is human judgment turned to vinegar, gall, and poison itself. Stone-throwing is criticism changed into a devilish anger and hate. The rock-flinger not only has malice, but murder in his heart: Let the reader ask himself what feeling could be dominant in the breast of a man who hurls a dangerous missile at a fellow creature, but the dark spirits already mentioned.

About the stone throwing of Shimei we have several suggestions to offer.

First, his act was not to help David, but to injure him.

We have nothing to say against true and just criticism and even censure of men by men. If we do wrong we must as moral creatures expect to be reproved and rebuked by moral beings. The point we make is that, as judges of human conduct, we ought to be sure of the uprightness of motive and Christ-likeness of spirit that animates us. Do we really desire to help or crush the erring one? Is the object in view benevolent or malevolent? Is it love and pity that directs the blow or dislike and revenge? Christ came, he said not to condemn and destroy, but to save. What have we come for? Not to save, but to condemn and destroy? Then are we little like the Savior.

The spirit of Shimei is plainly evidenced not only in the stones he threw, but in his casting of dust, and hurling of epithets at the exiled King. And not less plainly is the dominant sentiment and passion in the breast declared in tongue and pen onslaughts on men today. Under the beautiful name of righteous indignation, we have marked the spirit of the vendetta, and caught the gleam of the stiletto. Dust was cast before observant eyes to hide the real truth, but wrath was felt zigzagging its fiery way through sentences that were declared to be honest criticism and candid judgment.

A second fact about Shimei was that he cast stones at a man who was better than himself.

David had sinned, it was true, but he possessed such a cluster of virtues and noble qualities as few men have been able to call their own. The man who misjudged and ill treated him was a being of the most despiseable

nature. The Bible does not attribute to him a single redeeming feature. And yet this was the person who cast stones at a king.

This is not an unusual occurrence in the strange jumble of the affairs of life. It is amazing what brutes we have had on the throne who sentenced true and noble men to prison or exile. It is curious to hear a judge commit a man to jail or penitentiary for infractions of minor laws when his own soul is stained with deeper, darker crimes. It is simply breathtaking to read the harsh criticisms and denunciations in secular and even religious papers of men who walk and talk with God, and have lead thousands and tens of thousands of souls to salvation, duty and heaven, while the faultfinding letter or article writer can point to nothing like such usefulness and victories in his own life.

As we have read the attacks of an ungodly press on a host of noble men of God, our heart has ached while we have wondered at the divine permission of such an outrage of truth, and such a false show of justice and judgment. Then we would see that history was repeating itself. We were simply looking at the Shimeis of today throwing stones at better men than themselves.

A third fact about the case in hand is that while Shimei was trying to injure David, it was in the power of his victim to have had him slain.

We read in the Bible that Abishai, one of the first warriors of that time, begged David to let him cut the head of his attacker off with his sword. Just a single sign from the king and the deed would have been done. But David refused to speak the word of death, and the poor ranter and raver on the hillside little dreamed that his life was spared by the very man he was maltreating.

Neither is this remarkable state of things unusual in these times. The silent lips over this land that refuse to speak the exposing and destroying word against those who are trying to injure them, are far more numerous than some would suppose. It is certainly an experience to hear of tongue abuse and read pen excoriations, and at the same time be in possession of facts that would completely turn the tables on the attacker and abuser.

We know of pastors who have been treated cruelly by members of their flock, and who could with a few words of divulgence utterly overwhelm

them before the community and church, and yet for reasons blessed and honored of God, keep their lips from sending forth the merited punishment. We also know of an editor and preacher who lives in the South, who has been repeatedly outraged by the pen, and tongue, of a preacher of his own denomination. The assaults are cruel and unjust; and all these years have been born silently and patiently. And yet that same would-be victim could utterly ruin his detractor with a disclosure of guilt if he would.

There are Abishais of natural retaliation that would cause men to act in these and other instances of a similar nature, and say, strike back, and have revenge on those who have striven to hurt you. But if David was a better man than Shimei who stoned him, then he must prove it by still acting as the nobler man after he has been stoned.

A fourth fact coming out of this piece of Bible history is that David accepted the stone throwing of Shimei from a sense of his own personal unworthiness before God.

Guiltless of what Shimei accused him, and undeserving this ill treatment from such a man, yet the king doubtless remembered heart defections and life failures that only God knew, and so all humble in his own sight, he said in the privacy of his breast, let the stones come, let the dust be cast, and the abuse be hurled at me. He went farther than this, and trusted that God would accept his patient submission and requite him a blessing for the sore treatment of that day.

Neither is this crisis in life peculiar to the times of David. God has servants and followers today who feel that gross injustice and wrong have been done them repeatedly by fellow Christians as well as fellow beings, but who accept the false judgment and accusations in silence, because they know that if perfect justice was administered by a Holy Omniscient Judge on all—then the whole race of man would be stoned to death.

So the soul, mindful of its past blunders, ignorances, errors and imperfections, if that soul be really in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, will accept the wrong treatment of others quietly and humbly. It will recall its own unworthiness, and remember at the same time, there is but One who is worthy in the highest, holiest and truest sense of that

word. So let the stones come; who can tell but God will bring a blessing out of the cursing, and a beautiful mercy out of every flying rock.

A final lesson we draw from the scene is that while Shimei threw many stones, not a single one struck David.

The exiled king got back to his throne and lived a long time after this occurrence in peace, plenty and happiness. The man who cast rocks at him on the hillside became a suppliant to him later for his life, had it granted by the man he had wronged, and still later met a violent death through the orders of King Solomon.

Suffice it to say that the missiles of human fury fly thick, but they will not destroy. The dust of misrepresentation will soon blow away. The anathemas and maledictions will die in empty air. Curses like chickens go home to roost. Absalom will not prevail. Jerusalem will be the final home of the persecuted and the faithful servant of God, who, like David, in spite of the abuse and rocks of Shimei, will be kept in safety, live in peace, die in triumph, and go to Heaven to live with Christ and the angels forever!

CHAPTER 20

SHIMEI — THE HATER

In addition to the long line of saints in the Bible, there is as clearly exhibited a Rogue's Gallery. The first is intended to touch us in one way, and the second in another manner. Over against an Abraham, Job, Joseph and Daniel, we behold the dark faces of Balaam, Saul, Doeg, Judas and Shimei. As the patriarchs illustrated some noble trait or blessed virtue, so this latter class are made to show forth vices and moral failings with all their history of defeat, disaster and ruin, that the soul might be doubly helped by proper example on one side and fearful warning on the other. Shimei belongs to the last class.

Two preceding chapters about him do not exhaust the study of this dark character. Several additional features of the moral or immoral makeup of the man claim our attention.

One thing about him was that he was a groundless hater of another man.

For no justifiable reason he despised a person whom God had called a man after his own heart. The wrath of Shimei against David had commenced long before David's fall.

This is certainly a very unlovely feature of the soul which cherishes bitterness to people who have never personally offended, but have simply gone on in their faithful way serving the Lord. The Athenian who cordially disliked Aristides and voted for his expatriation, said he did so because he was tired of hearing him called "The Just." Righteousness stirred up unrighteousness by its calm face and correct life, and got a blow for being virtuous. This Athenian evidently was of the family of Shimei.

It is lamentable that this household of unreasonable haters are far from being extinct, but seems to be multiplying. All individuals who hate others without cause belong to the family of Shimei. Paul evidently met numbers of this interesting home circle when he prayed to be "delivered from unreasonable men."

After all the “unreasonable man” may have a reason for hating a fellow creature. The causeless fury has a cause. The Athenian’s rabidness was born of the fact that Aristides was called “Just,” and was just. And so the godliness of a man may so condemn the ungodliness of another, that resentment at once arises.

We have known successful men, detested by unsuccessful men. We have heard preachers who never had a revival, violently attack other ministers or evangelists whose labors were honored of God everywhere by the falling fire of Heaven, and whose altars were not only constantly filled with seekers but as continually swept empty by tides of free and full salvation.

The question suddenly put to one of these unhappy critics, “Why do you dislike this man so much?” would, if truth was spoken, bring the answer, “I am tired of hearing of his victories and success.” Verily, Athens, Israel and America are strongly linked together. And after all the causeless hate had a cause.

A second grisly fact about Shimei was that he was a secret hater.

He seems to have been as cunning as he was bad; and realizing that just at the moment he could do nothing against David, he kept his hellish anger bottled for future use. All this necessitated the hypocritical spirit, the dissembling face and supple knee, while there was an inward grinding and gnashing of teeth.

It is fearful to think that a Mt. Pelee of volcanic hate and fury can slumber under a smiling face and friendly exterior. It verily seems to the writer that it took the entire animal world, and the completeness of Nature, for God to show forth in a pictorial external way all that can be, and is, in the soul. The same human spirit which can contain a heaven can also enclose a boiling, roaring, screaming hell.

What a shock it is to find some morning the peaceful looking mountain a dreadful volcano. What a horror to mind and heart to discover suddenly that the friendly face was but a mask, and back of it was a countenance dark, working, and engorged with the most malevolent passion and fury.

A third fact about Shimei was that he waited for years to wreak his vengeance upon David.

We read that certain animals will crouch for hours in a jungle to spring upon their prey; that savages lie in murderous wait for one another; armies plant mines and make ambushments; hunters arrange traps and pitfalls for their game; while the man of the vendetta pursues his victim for years in order at last to plunge the dagger in his heart.

None of these transcend the cruelty seen in Shimei, and those of his descendants, who for some real or fancied slight or injury deliberately and diabolically plan for revenge. The steady seeking and patient waiting for the hour of gluttoned animosity declares in darkest lines the turpitude of the act and the pure devilishness of the main actor. Even the courts distinguish between a murder wrought in hot or cold blood. A deliberate assassination is felt to have originated from the deepest depths of depravity. And yet this is the very spirit of the being who plans, watches and waits for vengeance.

A fourth feature of this man's case was that he cruelly sprung upon David in the hour of his sorrow and calamity.

The heartsick King, driven from Jerusalem by his own son, walked in grief over Mt. Olivet. It was an hour in which every reader of the history of the exiled monarch feels the deepest compassion, and yet that was the moment which Shimei selected to exhibit and vent his hate. The remarkable moral likeness to the devil is seen most strikingly here; for it is in the time of trouble which comes to us all sooner or later, that Satan endeavors to bewilder, oppress, torture and even bring into despair the buffeted and struggling soul. This is the hour that he casts stones and hurls curses; and this is the season in which the bereaved and worldhurt man hears and feels inward suggestion and urging to desperate and violent things. At the very time the soul needs pity, the devil is most pitiless.

He then who can strike a tottering, falling man; who can cast missiles at a being who can scarcely keep his feet under the awful pressure of the sorrows of life, is a horrible compound in spirit of Shimei and Satan. Through some kind of transmitted nature he is the son of the former and the grandson of the latter. And yet there are such, who seem to wait for

some sign of temporal misfortune to appear; some indication of waning influence; some rising up of an Absalom and a consequent going forth of David, to gather stones of abuse and commence the chunking, wounding and killing business.

A fifth view of the subject of this chapter reveals his profound ignorance of religious character, and of the Providence of God.

He knew neither the Heavenly Master, nor the servant of that Master.

He confounded temporal trouble with life failure. He failed to distinguish between a providential chastening and a divine rejection and overthrow. He entirely overlooked the humility and submission to God in the man he was abusing, and dreamed not of the peculiar and everlasting love that God bore his afflicted servant.

David, even in the hour of his suffering and heaped up insults, knew more of God, and enjoyed more of his presence than did his hating enemy in a lifetime. In his soul he realized that there was no sundown, nor eclipse involved, but a cloud had come which the Lord in his good pleasure would sweep away. In fact, he told his followers not to take vengeance on Shimei, for God would requite his curses with a blessing.

A sixth view of the man shows the utter contemptibleness of his character in the way he cringed and fawned at the feet of David when that King returned triumphantly to Jerusalem.

It is perfectly sickening to see the man eating dirt at David's feet, and resuming the old mask of pretended friendship which he had worn so long.

No one who has studied life at all can affect astonishment at this incarnation of double-dyed hypocrisy and polished piece of depravity. The scene is beheld, over and over again in the business, political, social and religious world.

Few men in state or church but have periods of unpopularity. Their star seems to be declining. Sorrow, sickness and losses may droop the head and take the spring out of the foot for a while. David seems to be going, and Absalom is forging ahead and forcing him out.

Now, then, for the Devil and Shimei! Now, then, for stones and curses! Now, then, for a long hidden hatred to burst forth like a Mt. Pelee with hot lava of accusations and abuse, and suffocating gases of falsehood! Who has not seen and heard Shimei going along the side of the hill over against David, railing upon him, and throwing stones at him !

But then comes the sudden recovery and rise of the assailed individual! And who has not beheld that? If the servant of God be true, the vindication and exaltation are certain to take place. Then what of the hater and abuser?

Who has not seen the second sudden change in such characters and the resumption of the old, smiling mask which had been blown aside or dropped, and thereby revealed a countenance of such malignity that the very shock it gave seemed to blister it on the memory.

Such incidents reveal alike to politician and Christian who are their true friends, and gives to the soul student a glimpse into the human heart that makes him feel as if he had peered into a bottomless abyss.

A seventh and final view of Shimei shows him entering into his own death trap.

The besetting sin of a person is usually the way in which he "walks the plank" into his everlasting ruin. Shimei had so many sins that it is hard to say which one was the worst; but in the violation of his word to Solomon, and the eager pursuit of his fugitive slaves we behold the same old false and cruel man. His sins made the snare which sprung, caught and killed him. He who had laid in wait for others was captured himself. He who invoked death and disaster upon others, got disaster and death for himself.

It is still so. Life is full of such instances of retribution.

We knew of three preachers who tried to keep down a rising young minister in their Conference. They even brought him to trial. Today he is a Bishop in the M. E. Church South, gave them their appointments for years and did what he would with them according to his position and power.

We have repeatedly known individuals to make a coalition to crush some other person; but when the intended victim was a servant of God we never

knew the plan and plot to succeed. God is down on such things. And so it happens that the pit men dig for others becomes their own grave, and the stone they cast to injure a fellow creature is set up at the foot of their own sepulchre as a kind of monument of their folly.

David and Shimei have both passed away from the shores of Time, to be confronted again at the Judgment Bar of God. And we do not doubt a moment but that every being on earth who has read the history of these men in the Bible but would infinitely prefer to be David than Shimei.

It is apparent, even here in Time, but will be unanswerably shown at the Judgment that it is better to be cursed than a curser; to be stoned than a stoner; and to be hated rather than to be a hater. Better to be a good man than a bad man; in all countries and ages; world without end; amen.

CHAPTER 21

THE SOOTH SAYING DAMSEL

The preacher who becomes filled with the Spirit and swings out in the active work of soul-saving, finds that he has an illuminated edition of the four Gospels and the Book of Acts. The events, especially of this latter division of the Word of God, assume a vividness and take on a significance never before realized. Occurrences in the lives of the Apostles are seen to be marvelously like transactions and happenings in his own. And even individuals that shoot for a moment before the view and then pass away into oblivion have a remarkable similarity to persons who sweep across the path of the servant of God who has received full salvation and is trying to spread it among men.

The false testifiers, Ananias and Sapphira, are seen and heard in other towns and cities besides Jerusalem. Elymas, the deluding teacher, has not remained in Salamis, but has moved to the United States. While last, but not least, the Soothsaying Damsel of Thyatira, who followed Paul around breaking into and interfering with his preaching, is far from being unknown today.

It is remarkable that the young woman spoken of in the sixteenth chapter of Acts spoke right words, but was possessed of the devil nevertheless. She would cry out, "These men are the servants of the most high God which show unto us the way of salvation"; and yet she distracted attention from the very Word she commended, drew notice to herself, was defeating the purpose of St. Paul, and so finally drew down upon her own life a blistering public exposure. The Bible says Paul was grieved and turning at last upon her cried, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."

It is remarkable how adroit the devil is in preventing the people from hearing the Word of God. He knows what the Truth will accomplish if listened to and received; hence his constant effort to hinder that hearing. It is dreadful to see from the parable of Christ about the Sower, how much of

the seed he scattered was lost. Stony ground, choking thorns and hovering birds took away three parts of the grain.

The Adversary once had the Bible locked behind the walls of monasteries. When it was rescued by Luther and thus restored to the world, the next attack was, and is, to fill men with prejudice to the truth so they will not read the Word or hear it preached. This, of course, accomplishes the same result as though the sacred volume was once more behind brick and stone barriers. If his second movement fails, and the people are flocking out to hear the Truth, then the adversary brings his Soothsaying Damsel into the audience to create merriment, divert attention and destroy impressions made on the soul by the Word of God. The writer has been amazed and all but awed as he has been compelled in his ministry to notice the presence of people in the congregation who were evidently used by the devil to retard and defeat the work of the Gospel. Satan does not care whether a storm scatters the audience or a magistrate or minister forbid the meeting, or whether foolish, thoughtless people draw all eyes and attention from the preacher and sermon upon themselves. The same end is accomplished in each case that is, the seed is caught away, the Word of God is not heard.

At one of our meetings the services were seriously hurt by inappropriate and continued bawlings of the words “hallelujah” and “salvation.” By inappropriate we mean ill-timed. The vociferation came at the wrong moment, and the steady, senseless prolongation of the outcry completely and effectually drowned out great portions of the sermons that were being preached to instruct, help and save the people. The Soothsaying Damsel was with us in force, and the devil was delighted that she was there distracting the people’s attention from the preacher to herself and from the faithful unfolding and exposition of the Word of God to a series of blatant outcries.

When remonstrated with kindly and privately, our Soothsaying Damsel felt aggrieved, thought her freedom had been denied her, and departed for other regions where she could bawl unrestrained in a fancied full liberty of the Gospel.

There were some on the ground who, like the Damsel, had gotten the beautiful words, freedom and liberty, mixed up and confounded with the dangerous word “license,” and showed by their unthinking, expanding

countenances that the movements and utterances of this erratic individual were highly grateful to them. But the large majority of the audience was disturbed in their worship, and genuinely grieved over this incarnated specimen of mistaken zeal and stereotyped bawls and whoops. While they were more than willing to rejoice at the sight and language of men and women filled with the Holy Ghost, yet they felt that another spirit, very different from the Holy One, was being embodied and exhibited. Even a parade of self was manifested, with such evident intent to arouse laughter and excite attention by a repetition of things picked up in other places, that these same hearers felt they had a nuisance on hand and wished for a Paul to turn about and say, "Come out of her."

We are confident that we have described a type of people so well that numbers of readers will locate the circumstance narrated above as happening on many different camp grounds, or anyhow in as many States and Territories. The Soothsaying Damsel who attended Paul's meeting in Thyatira is well known today in America.

At another meeting a very witty man sat near the pulpit. He was a Christian and wanted to see salvation strike his town and sweep his neighbors into the kingdom of heaven, but actually put himself in the way of the accomplishment of this very thing by loud-spoken, humorous observations and comments on the sermon. He may have intended to help on the cause, but the facts were that he sorely tried the preacher, made his heart sick and mind wander, while in the bursts of laughter the funny remarks would elicit from the audience, good spiritual points from the speaker were lost, the Word was unheard, and impressions made by the Spirit upon the listening crowd utterly wiped out and forgotten. This man was the brother of the Soothsaying Damsel. He was doing the very thing his sister did in the Thyatira meeting centuries ago; he was preventing the Word of God from being heard.

In still another place resides a brother who, the instant the evangelist begins to pray at the altar for struggling souls to get through into pardon and holiness, uplifts a stentorian voice and, commencing a prayer made up of outcries and repetitions that have no connection whatever, completely drowns out every word of the supplicator with God for the weeping penitents.

This man is a nephew of the Soothsaying Damsel. He is doing exactly what his aunt did in a meeting held by Paul two thousand years ago in the city of Thyatira.

It is regarded by all right-thinking Christians as a grave thing to “call one down in meeting.” Some have suffered in doing so and the Spirit of God grieved. And yet there are times when it should be done. Nor is that all, for we have the highest authority or example in so doing. The occasion we refer to took place when the Saviour was on earth. He was preaching when suddenly a woman cried out in the audience, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps which gave thee suck.”

Multitudes of preachers would have taken this as a compliment and been highly gratified; but he who reads the heart and cannot put endorsement on error of any kind, brought the woman up all standing with the rebuking and correcting words, “Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.” Here had cropped out in the guise of a religious outcry what is known later as Maryolatry or the worship of the Virgin Mary. The Savior not only struck the error a crushing blow in his reply, but located true blessedness without regard to rank or locality in any individual who heard God’s Word and kept it.

More than one important lesson is to be drawn from the above occurrence, not the least of which is that Jesus did not say “Amen” to every testimony offered in His meetings. He never put approval on error, but rebuked Satan in Peter, would not allow devils to honor Him, and called a rattle-pated female down from a false testimony.

But the striking feature of the incident was that the woman’s interruption of the Saviour’s discourse, with what appeared to be deeply pious exclamations, plainly allied her in spirit and deed with the words and actions of the Soothsaying Damsel of Paul’s time.

Let the reader turn to the eleventh chapter of Luke, and, commencing at the fourteenth verse, read on to the place where the woman broke in on our Lord’s discourse; and he will discover to his surprise and even awe that Christ was talking about casting out devils, their return to men who were once cleansed, and the last state of that man being worse than the first!

Here were true and very terrible things being uttered, leading to the exposure of the devil, and the danger attending the soul, even after salvation. Anything now, thought the Adversary, to divert attention from the convicting and illuminating Word and wipe out impressions of the Spirit by the sudden introduction of other thoughts and subjects entirely irrelevant! And so Satan, looking around, found a person, who interjected the startling interruption which turned men's thoughts from the truth in hand to an idle, unprofiting, questioning and wondering about the Saviour's mother and His family connections.

This woman must certainly have been the mother of the Soothsaying Damsel who interfered with Paul's preaching a generation later. Anyhow, the family did not perish with these two remarkable females, for their descendants, both of sons and daughters, make a large company. The family likeness is simply unmistakable, and we find them everywhere.

CHAPTER 22

THE FOUR O'CLOCK TRIBE

It is not without interest as well as profit to notice at what hours of the day and night certain remarkable events have taken place in Bible history.

We would not stop to speculate upon certain parts of the day and night in their natural effect upon the mind and soul, but simply call attention to happenings in the spiritual life that are made memorable as well as forcible by being coupled and connected with certain hours of the twenty-four.

We read in the Gospel narrative that Jesus sent His disciples away in a boat across the Sea of Galilee while He remained in a mountain to pray. Occurrences of that night bring into clear view a body of Christians whom we call the Four O'Clock Tribe.

One fact suggested by them is that God has a band of people sent out to do His will in the face of remarkable toil and difficulty.

There is a delusion abroad that to be found in the divine will and work is to have everything easy and pleasant about us. But the Bible and life both contradict the vain notion and expectation. It is true that inwardly, if we have full salvation, there is a delightful peace and harmony; but testimony and experience agree in recording outward storms, winds, waves, black nights and toiling in rowing as we make for ports and shores to which the Savior has directed us.

To the unspiritual and thoughtless these very difficulties and oppositions of a natural and spiritual nature indicate that we are out of the divine order. These same reasoners might as well plead that the ship at Joppa was a providential opening for the escape of Jonah from his dreaded mission to Nineveh. Very clearly it is brought out in Scripture that wide open doors leading away from duty may be set ajar for us by the great Adversary, and fearful storms to hinder us in our course and blow us back from havens of duty may be stirred up by the same enemy of God and man.

As far as we have been able to read about the disciples, and the great apostle who followed them, they passed through endless difficulties in bringing salvation to the world. Wesley and his preachers lived in a tempest churned up by the powers of hell, a hating world and formal church. While every evangelist, aiming for a genuine revival, reaches that longed-for shore, so to speak, and resting place after the darkest experiences, the most violent of opposition, and a labor in rowing that threatened to exhaust and overpower the toiler—heart, mind and body. He could then read the Bible narrative with a new light upon such expressions as winds, waves, rowing and toiling.

Not all seem to have a hard time in the Christian life. Some even appear to have an easy experience, Conflicts, oppositions, persecutions and Satanic hindrances mentioned to them seem to awaken a kind of mental surprise, whether they say much or not.

Of course, this would naturally lead to the questions, Are they really Christians? and Are they fully doing the will of God? This would likely explain some cases; and yet there are those who have the winds against them and know of a toiling in rowing that they do not make public property.

A second fact about this Tribe was that, in spite of all their exertions and labors, they seemed to make no headway.

A ship's crew can stand a tempest if at last they sail into a harbor and drop anchor; but if, after weeks and months of stemming awful tides and plunging through raging hurricanes, they find by accurate reckoning that they are still in mid-sea, and not a foot nearer the shore striven for, we can well understand where heart sickness and despair would come in.

The body of people living this way in the spiritual realm is not a small one. For years they have done God's will and suffered at the hands of men for so doing. For years they have pulled in the direction where the Saviour's voice and hand directed, and yet the unsaved family, the unaroused community, and the cold, lifeless church are still before them as they have ever been. It looks to the toiling rower that he or she is not one foot nearer the port of answered prayer than when they first began to

pray and labor for the great end in view, the salvation of loved ones and the revival that should sweep the neighborhood or city.

A third and most pathetic as well as inspiring fact concerning the Four O'Clock Tribe is their faithfulness to duty in face of every discouragement.

Just as the disciples kept on rowing, though they seemed to be making no headway, so the people of whom we are writing today remain at their posts, keep their hands on the oars of duty, and bend to the service of God and man as though everything was on their side instead of nearly everybody and everything in their home, church and social circle being against them.

The Spirit of Him of whom it is said no matter who denied and was unfaithful, he was faithful and could not deny himself; His Spirit evidently fills this class of his followers.

Let the reader bear in mind that if we give up in face of trial, opposition, difficulty and long deferred hope, we do not belong to the Four O'Clock Tribe. They kept on rowing, although it was evident they were not making a landing or getting anywhere.

A fourth fact about this following of the Lord was that the Savior was watching them in the midst of all their distressing surroundings and all but despairing labors.

If the tempted, tried, overworked child of God could only realize that Jesus was looking at him full of love and sympathy, what an inspiration this would be to the flagging strength and what comfort and gladness to the drooping soul! The temptation is with toil-worn spirits that God does not behold their labors and sufferings for himself and mankind, and this, of course, adds to the load of the already heavy burden.

We know of young women who provide for the entire household of which they are members, and it is, in numerous instances, an ungrateful recipient of their unselfish labors. We know of men who have been pushed into the grave by the heavy load of work put upon them by a business firm, a thoughtless family, and by an inconsiderate church. We are acquainted with a professional man in the South who, in addition to the support of

his home, takes care of a half dozen of his poor kindred. The sacrifices he makes to meet the demands upon him can be imagined, and yet we are convinced from what we have seen of these beneficiaries of his that there is scarcely any appreciation or gratitude for what he has patiently and uncomplainingly done for them for years.

In all of these instances if, in addition to the toiling in rowing, the feeling in the heart is uppermost that the Lord is unobservant and all but unconscious of what is being done and endured; we can see very readily not only where discouragement steals in, but where despair itself falls with leaden, paralyzing weight upon the soul.

Very beautiful and comforting, then, is the teaching of Scripture that Jesus is in the Mount, and that His loving, pitiful eye is upon the lonely toiler, the rower against desperate odds, the faithful battler with all the untoward, adverse forces which would hinder happiness, usefulness and salvation, in this present life and world.

It is wonderful how soldiers can fight when the eye of their chieftain and general is upon them. "Hold my hand," says the white-faced sufferer to a friend, "and I can stand the cutting of the surgeon's knife."

So only let the soul feel the loving, pitiful, compassionate glance of Christ from heaven upon its lonely, toilsome, painful lot in life, and then it can linger in the field, endure the long storm, and even bear with a smile the entrance of the knife into the heart, that will be pointed and thrust there repeatedly by the hand of false friend and open foe.

A fifth fact about the Four O'Clock Tribe is that Jesus finally came to them.

And He came to them out of the night they dreaded, through the storm they feared, and walking on the very billows which threatened to engulf them. And He appeared to them in the Fourth Watch of the Night. Surely everything He did at this time in their behalf was full of significance and rich in comfort and promise to all whose lot and life are like those old whom we are writing today.

The teaching is unmistakable that help and deliverance will finally be brought to us. That Christ will appear with personal and immediate relief

and blessing. That He will come to us walking on top of the very troubles and difficulties that have dismayed us so often and so long.

It may be in the fourth watch of the night. Faith, patience, courage, love and loyalty may have been deeply tried by the long rowing, weary waiting, and by the very silence and solitude which belongs to the time between midnight and daylight. But in that hour He will come, and it will be when the soul feels and knows it cannot possibly bear the burden much longer.

Ah, the toilers, watchers and waiters of the Fourth Hour! Men and women praying in vain for the salvation of loved ones; individuals making sacrifices without recognition and appreciation; grief-stricken faces bending over dying loved ones, while the world is asleep, and the dreary light of the dawn has not yet come up in the East!

How we love to tell these members of the Four O'Clock Tribe that when Jesus came into the ship there was a great calm, and that immediately the disciples found themselves at the place where they wanted to be.

There are blessings even in this life which will interpret themselves to the soul in language identical with that we have just quoted from the Scripture. They are coming through the winds and over the waves to the tempted and tried. There will be a great calm! Then there is a greater calm still coming. And finally, awaking in Heaven, we, if true to Christ and our souls, will find ourselves in the very Country and City which we have dreamed of and talked about so many times, and where we have longed so often to be, from the midst of our toiling and rowing on the seas of this billowy and tempestuous world.

CHAPTER 23

THE NINE O'CLOCK TRIBE

It was a great thing to receive John's Baptism, accompanied as it was, according to Luke 1: 76 and 77, with the remission of sins. But it was and is still far greater to obtain Christ's Baptism, which is not of water, but of the Holy Ghost and fire and which, sweeping past pardon and peace, brings purity, power and a continuous upwelling joy to the soul.

Not all Christians receive this wonderful grace for reasons known well to themselves and to God, but to be understood thoroughly by the whole universe at the Last Day.

But there is a body of believers and obeyers who do come into this heavenly gift, and as a consequence never know a commonplace religious experience again. They move on high, exultant, victorious planes of soul life, that they once never dreamed was possible in such a world and in such an existence as ours.

The first group of individuals who obtained this blessing was the one hundred and twenty who were gathered for that purpose in an upper room in Jerusalem. The blessing came at the third hour of the day, which is 9 o'clock in the morning. So they may properly be called the Nine O'Clock Tribe; and all others securing the grace since that day have the right to the same title.

In truth it is a peculiar tribe or class of people who bind this greatest gift of God; and their tribal or spiritual features have to be met and are immediately and invariably observed in all who experience this transforming grace, no matter in what century they live or in what country they dwell.

One fact we notice about this body of people was that they evidently wanted the great gift of the skies which they sought.

Their leaving home, coming so far, forsaking their business and callings, sacrificing their temporal interests and tarrying patiently for ten days, evidenced clearly that they desired this blessing above everything.

In like manner all those who would feel what the disciples realized that memorable morning, who would know what was communicated to them, and be blessed and transfigured as they were, must choose, decide and act as they did. God never forces this crowning blessing on any one. He who receives it must desire it above his highest early ambition and chief joy. Home, business and every earthly affection and interest must be made secondary, laid on the altar and dedicated to God, while the heart yearns and fairly breaks for the full salvation.

We have often noticed attendants on our services sitting far back or rushing away at the sight of an approaching worker, as if bodily proximity of their own, or the touch of the hand of one professing the blessing would give them the experience as one contracts contagious diseases. We thought with a melancholy feeling in the heart how these same people, if they ever sought it, would wish others could give it to them, before they at last obtained it at the altar; and how they would have to sigh, struggle and groan, and would be tempted to despair a hundred times before the glory flashed upon them, and Heaven settle finally in the soul.

To all such we say, you need have no fear of sitting up near the pulpit. And you need not run when some overflowed saint goes with shouts and clapping of hands down the aisle towards you. They cannot put the blessing in you. They cannot baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire. And the blessing comes not to one running from it, but to him who flies to meet it, who craves it above his chief joy, and seeks it with the whole heart.

A second tribal peculiarity of this people was that they were all of one accord.

The Bible says so. This does not mean as the Third Blessing people would torture it, that they were already sanctified, and were waiting for a Baptism of Power alone. Peter knocks that idea and fancy in the head by saying that when the Baptism with the Holy Ghost came that day they were “purified.”

The “one accord” was the unity that existed among them as to the purpose of the meeting. They were now in harmony of spirit and purpose for one thing they wanted the baptism with the Holy Ghost. There seemed to be no exception in their ranks. All were gathered in “one accord” to have Christ’s prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John fulfilled in their case, and be wholly sanctified by the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire.

The meeting was not like some of our big camps today, where a half dozen other things are made prominent and even preeminent: Education, Church Extension, the Missionary Cause, and the Exhibition of star preachers and lecturers. The one object in view, and to that end every prayer ascended and every labor was directed, that the Holy Ghost might fall upon them, purifying their hearts by faith, clothing them with power and witnessing to the great double work of purity and power as is embraced in the blessing of entire sanctification. With “one accord” they were gathered together for this purpose and object, and were not disappointed. There were no sidetracks; no seeking after or stressing nonessentials; no asking for the gifts of the Spirit in this first Holiness Convention. They wanted the Holy Ghost himself. They were in “one accord” as to the obtainment of the crowning blessing of the Christian life, the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

The expression “one accord” rules out the possibility of any quarrels and dissensions among them. So the words stand also for that harmony, kindness and spirit of love which we must feel for all of God’s creatures if we would obtain the blessing of entire sanctification.

This is what Christ referred to when he said: “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

We must get right with man before coming to God for this great grace. We are in no condition to lay the gift upon the sanctifying altar with an unreconciled and wronged brother on our hands. We must be in accord with men in that sense if we would hear from God in the Upper Room through the Baptism with the Holy Ghost.

The writer had to get in accord with those who had aught against him, before the fire fell from the skies in sanctifying power upon his soul. This is a tribal peculiarity of the Nine O'Clock Brigade.

A third feature beheld in this group of seekers is that of a perfect consecration.

Peter had voiced this truth before in the words: "Lo, we have left all and followed thee." Here it was really done in the journeying far from their Galilean and Samaritan homes, in forsaking their earthly business and temporal interests, and in coming to this distant city of Jerusalem at the command of the Lord.

It was a long trip for those days; and the home and the fishing net and the sail boat had been left far behind. They placed themselves in a land of strangers and in a community filled with enemies. Christ's desire and command was uppermost with them, and at his bidding they were here in an upper room waiting day after day for the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them. Family ties, business, reputation and life itself were all placed upon the altar, while the devoted one hundred and twenty tarried for the Promise of the Father.

Fourth, the feature of insulation should not be overlooked here as a most important and indeed essential condition in seeking and finding the pearl of great price.

They pulled away from the street corners, the market places, and even the Temple Square. They withdrew from the din and Babel of human tongues and waited patiently and persistently to hear the voice of God.

This is a marked characteristic of the Nine O'Clock Tribe. They leave the wrangling places of men, and linger at the Mercy Seat where God speaks. They do not care to hear from earth, but from Heaven. And so they are not found disputing and arguing and angrily vociferating upon sidewalks and public squares, but linger humbly, pleadingly and trustingly at the throne of grace until God opens the Heavens and gives them their soul's desire.

Fifth, their prayer for the blessing was importunate and continuous for ten days.

There seems in the dealings of God with the soul, this plan, that there must be a fullness of waiting on the part of the human seeker, as there is a fullness of blessing itself on the side of the Divine Giver. Hence it is that many never get initiated into the fraternity or admitted into the body of the Nine O'Clock Tribe. They stop praying too soon. They break down on the second, third, or some other day this side of the tenth, or the time when the hour of Pentecost has fully come, when the Heavens open, and the Spirit falls with a flaming rapture and glory upon the soul.

A sixth and final fact appearing in connection with this body of people is seen in the hour in which the blessing came upon them. The Bible says it was the third hour of the day.

This we know means nine o'clock in the morning and it is full of significance. It shows that the meeting opened still earlier in the day. And this reveals the fact that the one hundred and twenty were so anxious to obtain what Christ had promised, so desirous of being filled with the Holy Ghost, that late morning naps were not indulged in, a tardy dawdled over breakfast had been given up even if that morning meal had not altogether been sacrificed.

In the sweetness and freshness of the day's beginning they had gathered together, making everything secondary and subsidiary to the obtainment of the crowning blessing of the Kingdom of Christ.

The atmosphere through which the heavenly fire fell was one made up of human unity, importunity, sacrifice, devotion and patient, humble waiting upon God. It was undoubtedly a consecrated praying, believing body of Christ's followers, who at nine o'clock in the morning were suddenly filled with the Holy Ghost. They instantly became a peculiar people, purified unto himself, zealous of good works, and whether doing or enduring, whether living or dying, were always filled with joy and the Holy Ghost.

In following this tribe from New Testament times to the present day, we discover that in every land and age, they possess the peculiarities we have mentioned, and these marks make them a distinct and separate body of people.

In judgment they rank things of time and earth as secondary. In duty they go forward regardless of the approval or disapproval of men. In prayer

they wait on God until the heavens open and the Spirit falls upon and fills them.

Time, talent, property, reputation, physical comfort, home and all pertaining to this life are kept on the altar. And when men would threaten or command otherwise, their answer is the same today that sounded from the lips of the disciples on the streets of Jerusalem, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to harken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye. But we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

CHAPTER 24

THE ELEVEN O'CLOCK TRIBE

The Eleven O'Clock Tribe is full of interest. It first appears in the parable of the laborers who came into the vineyard at a time when the day's work was about accomplished. We are told that they received a penny also. Commentators explain in part that reference is here made to the Gentiles being brought into the light and knowledge of the Kingdom of God long after the Jews had so to speak, tilled and occupied the vineyard. Still others would see that a man turning to God for the first time in the evening of life obtains the same salvation, that his brother who had been earlier and longer in the field had enjoyed. The "penny" here is not made to represent final reward, but the redemption common to all who enter upon God's service.

But in addition to these explanations some of us can see the Eleven O'Clock Tribe in still another and less enviable light.

Very plainly this interesting company appears in the time of Gideon. On this valiant man and his three hundred rested the destiny of the whole country, and yet tens of thousands of able-bodied men of the Eleven O'Clock Tribe were at home with their wives and children. Over thirty thousand had forsaken the devoted little band and, going back to house and farm, left the handful, as they considered, to a hopeless fate.

But God was with the Truth and true men as He is now, and tremendous was the victory of the band who sounded their trumpets, waved their lanterns, broke their pitchers, and cried, "The Sword of the Lord and Gideon."

Great was the victory of the Gideonites and overwhelming the defeat of the Midianites. The enemy fled in the wildest confusion. It was a Persian Marathon and a French Waterloo.

Now then, that the battle is about finished and the victory won; now then, that the main labor is over and imminent peril past; make way for the

noble battalion of Eleven O’Clockers! See them beautifully described in the Bible in the words—”And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali and out of Asher and out of all Manasseh and pursued after the Midianites.”

How brave this was! How sublimely courageous! The poor Midianites were already badly whipped, and were doing their best to get out of the country at a two-forty rate, when lo! the Eleven O’Clock Brigade, which had stayed at home so closely during the real fight, suddenly became very heroic in spirit, ardently devoted to the cause of the Lord, and so uncontainable in their boldness to run a flying enemy over the borders of the country, that they made a series of brilliant charges upon the gasping, fainting, tongue-lolling and eye-protruding fugitives. They “pursued after” the panic-stricken, scared to death Midianites, and followed them, we learn from the Scripture narrative, as far as Abel-Meholah!

We have not the time just now to locate this place, but one would naturally suppose it to be a great community and a vast distance off, for the name sounds so big! Abel-Meholah!

If on investigation we find it to be a small settlement, and only ten or twenty miles away, we shall regret it, for these facts might seem to reflect on the Eleven O’Clock Brigade.

Then there are some who are convinced as they read the Word of God that the main battle was fought by the hill and in the valley of Moreh; that the victory was there and not at Abel-Meholah at all. So all such people, in the light of the corroborating circumstances mentioned, would unquestionably be strengthened in their opinion that Gideon and his three hundred won the conflict, and not the late comers from Naphtali, Asher and Manasseh.

This Eleven O’Clock Tribe is a well-known body of people in every church revival and victorious camp ground. It is not one of the Lost Tribes. It is only invisible for a certain number of days and nights during a hard Gospel battle in a lifeless church or spiritually dead community.

When a faithful band of God’s servants have fought on in the face of all kinds of difficulty and discouragement, have braved unfavorable weather, and kept sweet in the midst of every thing; have sung, prayed, testified,

preached, wept and shouted their way through to victory, then it is that the Eleven O'Clock Brigade puts in a valiant appearance.

If the ten days' meeting is to end on the night of the second Sabbath, then the Eleven O'Clockers begin to come in strength on Friday, the eighth day of the battle.

If the conflict has been a very hard one, and is almost like a drawn fight, this remarkable tribe does not come out in full force, but only in small detachments. It requires a sweeping victory after a desperate struggle to bring out the Eleven O'Clockers in their complete numbers and with their approving nods, smiles and patronizing airs and speeches.

It does not seem to occur to an Eleven O'Clocker that the battle he calls a hard one, or a drawn conflict, or a defeat might have been changed to a tremendous victory for God and the truth, if he and all his set had come forth and joined the Gideon Band and met the battle at Moreh, where there is always a hill and a valley and that in the deepest significance of the words.

The Eleven O'Clocker is a well-wisher on general principles; is an interested observer of the Gospel war from the porch, sitting room and rocking chair of his pleasant home; and hence a fine judge of how all soldiers and officers should conduct themselves, and the struggle or campaign be carried on. He is also a cordial endorser of the Gospel side when it wins, and has been known to valiantly pursue a retreating enemy a whole day at the conclusion of the meeting.

Unfortunately for the cause of God, and the good of the community, the Eleven O'Clocker never gets his fighting blood up until the fight is about over. His spirit of toil and sacrifice comes to the front when the enemy has gone to the rear. He appears when we can easily get along without him.

It would be very easy to give some photographic as well as panoramic views of this strange body of people. But they need no description; the housekeeper who comes at eleven when the service opens at ten; the business man who drops in at ten o'clock at night when the long, hard conflict is ended; and then that Friday crowd who hearing that the meeting lasts only two days more, now rush in, trying to look knowing, interested, up-to-date, free and full of the spirit, when they have sneaked and dodged

the heavy marches and desperate battles of most, if not the whole campaign.

Behold all of these are written in the Books of the Chronicles.

When a lad the writer of these lines was taken by his Mother to see a panorama. It was intended to illustrate the history of the Deluge. One of the views represented a long line of animals going into the Ark. The lowering clouds, and black tempest could be seen rising and gathering in the distance. Then just as the last living creature which was to be saved crossed the threshold and disappeared in the hold, and as the great door of the big vessel was being slowly and solemnly closed, suddenly a large alligator came out of a neighboring swamp and made a rush for the portal, when with a loud noise made behind the scenery the door was shut in his face.

Two things we distinctly recall as a child concerning that part of the panorama; one was the loud burst of laughter on the part of the audience; and second, the sneaking way and downcast look with which the alligator retreated and disappeared in his muddy morass and tangled jungle.

Of course it could be said that this member of the crocodile family was amphibious, and so was in no danger from the Flood; and that this fact mainly occasioned the laughter of the crowd.

But the deeper truth remains, that he was shut out from the presence of the highest and best forms of physical, intellectual and spiritual life, and was hurled back to keep company with creatures of his own kind, and to be surrounded by the floating carcasses, both of men and animals of a dead and ruined world.

So there is a parable in the panorama to which a number need to take heed. Look out! Mr. Alligator! We beg pardon. We should have said Brother and Sister Eleven O'Clocker! Look out! you may make too late a start. Your rush may occur when not only the meeting is closing, but when the gateway of the mind is being fastened by the power of disease and insensibility: when life is ending; when probation is concluding; when the Saviour has ceased calling; and when the Spirit has stopped striving and departed from the soul forever.

Very much like this state of affairs, sounds the words of the Saviour in Luke.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord! Lord! open to us! And he shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not whence ye are. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are. Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.”

CHAPTER 25

THE TWELVE O'CLOCK TRIBE

The Twelve O'Clock Tribe is remarkable in the fact that it is to be found in every land, and has flourished in every age. Other nations have risen and fallen, but this body of people, with all their peculiarities and distinctiveness has remained unchanged and unchangeable in spite of famine, pestilence, war and every kind of earthly mutation and woe. Languages and customs have their alterations and deaths, but no power or influence whatever seems to affect this strange citizenship of earth. Their character, rules of living, and conduct towards God and Heaven always remain the same.

One most peculiar feature about this race of beings is that they never begin to attend to their souls until it is too late. They only start for the door of salvation when it is closing. They never knock and call until that same portal of mercy is shut.

The first glimpse we obtain of this people is in the time of Noah. One hundred and twenty years of faithful preaching by a devoted follower of God failed to move them to repentance and lead them into the service of Heaven. Then the long day of opportunity closed, and Noah and his family, with the animals that were to be saved, were brought into the Ark. The Bible says that then "The Lord shut him in." This, of course, meant that the rest of the people of earth were shut out.

We doubt not that many thousands witnessed that strange procession into the Ark, and that awful divine shutting of the door. We do not question that at the moment the downpour began, multitudes, frightened at the blackened skies, the bellowing thunder, the blinding lightning, cast away their mockings, deridings, jeers and oaths, and made a rush for the closed portal in the side of the Ark. We do not entertain a doubt that they beat upon it, screamed aloud in their fear, and called aloud to Noah, "Open the door to us."

But God had shut it, and what God shuts no man can open. They died in full view of a barred entrance that had been open so long. The Twelve O’Clock Tribe never get through the gate of pardon and salvation. The Eleven O’Clock Band may be saved, but the Twelve O’Clockers never!

We doubt not that many of this remarkable people perished in the Red Sea. Still others in Sodom and Gomorrah, though it does not please Heaven to give us a view of more than a mere handful of individuals in the catastrophe which came upon the doomed cities of the plain. That the shut portal was there cannot be questioned. Some died before it in the burning city, still others out on the plain.

In Pompeii, which evidently perished under divine judgment, there were those of the Twelve O’Clock Tribe whose attitudes of body and expression of face have been strangely preserved in the hardened ashes, and we can see from the form and countenance that they died beating at the Closed Door.

The Savior gives a parable in which the Twelve O’Clock Tribe figure most conspicuously and disastrously. He states explicitly that the hour of midnight had arrived. The long sleep of false security was ended; agitation and fright abounded, while as the cry from Eternity broke in, lamps that were not burning and vessels that had no oil were prominent and awful features of the scene. Again we see the shut door, again hear the despairing knock and call, “Open to us,” and again the sentence of doom that barred them from entrance into the Kingdom.

A still more startling view of the Twelve O’Clock Tribe is seen in the morning of the Last Day. The Lord is in the air on his Throne and come to Judgment. Time is ended, probation closed, and Eternity sets in. The Twelve O’Clock Tribe is out in full force at this tremendous hour. They have come from every nation, and have risen from all the graveyards as well. Not one of this strange body of people is missing. It is truly a family gathering and clan assembly where all are present.

And all are praying, but such a prayer! They are supplicating to mountains and rocks that cannot hear. Up to the last moment of time this body of people are found to be without salvation, and without proper knowledge. Think of praying to a rock. Think of escaping from an

omnipresent God by getting under a mountain! They are praying, but to anything and anyone rather than God!

According to the Bible not one of this great multitude is saved. In spite of the wailing, crying and knocking of that hour, the whole scene is one of despair, and the door of Heaven is closed upon them forever.

A gentleman in the North has a standing offer of five hundred dollars to a person who will show in the Bible where anyone is saved after Christ appears in the clouds. The simple fact that Christ's first coming was as a Savior, and His return is as a Judge, would naturally and easily establish that fact. He is not coming as a Saviour next time, but seated on the Great White Throne as the Judge of all the earth.

So the nations that "wailed" at His coming, at the close of the Judgment are "turned into hell."

The Twelve O'Clock Tribe, wherever seen and spoken of in the Scripture, is regarded and sentenced as doomed and lost.

"The Dying Thief" is readily classified in the Eleven O'Clock Tribe, who got in at a late hour. But the other thief unquestionably is to be numbered among the body we are now writing about.

There is a vast difference between a godly sorrow over having sinned against God, and the wild regret and despair at having hurt ourselves and brought judgment and disaster upon ourselves. There is an infinite moral chasm between the repentance of Peter, and the remorse of Judas. One as the Bible says leads to salvation, the other ends in death. It proved to be the case with the two apostles; and it works out that way to this day.

It is most distressing to note how large the Twelve O'Clock Tribe remains, after death has decimated, and fearful judgments have thinned its ranks. Others at once fill the lines, and volunteers from every church, as well as brothel, from every sinner's household as well as Christian home, rush forward to increase the proportions of this doomed and lost body of men and women.

Not all intended at first to come to the hopeless hour of the closed door. Many thought they would change when the clock struck eleven, and do as did the Dying Thief.

But such people forget that eleven was truly the first hour with the thief. This doubtless was the first time he had seen and heard Christ; while those who would claim to be like that brand plucked from the burning, have heard all the other hours of Gospel mercy, invitation and opportunity struck. So that the heart which has listened so long becomes at last as hard as the iron tongue which beats off the flying mercies, and lo! eleven o'clock sounds to find no disposition to change, no desire to be obedient to God and holy, and rings its alarm usually upon ears that do not seem to hear a single strike of this next to the last signal sent to the human soul on its journey to eternity.

It is certainly heart sickening to those who are spiritually awake, to remember as they look around at the sleepers all about them, that twelve o'clock is just sixty minutes from eleven!

Alas for the Twelve O'Clock Tribe, in whose ranks all of us have friends and kindred! Alas for men and women who, according to the Bible and to everyday observation, have evidently missed the road to Heaven, and are lost before they get to Hell.

Too late they will find the difference between prayer meetings held before the Lord returns, and that awful prayer meeting inaugurated by the nations when Christ is seen descending the skies and flashing through the clouds to Judgment. The first touches a Throne of grace, shouts in rapture over the cleansing Blood and longs to see His face. The latter finds itself scorched in the presence of a Throne of Justice, wails in horror and despair over its own condition, and prays for rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of Him who sits upon the Throne and from the Wrath of the Lamb.

Better far to know Jesus as the Lamb of God, than as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Infinitely better to have Him as our Savior in time and eternity, than to know Him first and only as the Judge who refuses us entrance into Heaven and bids us depart from His presence to abide in outer and everlasting darkness.

May God in mercy grant that none who read these lines will live and die and be judged in the Twelve O'Clock Tribe.

CHAPTER 26

THE THREE HUNDRED

In almost every age and country there have been bodies of men who by some deed or deeds rendered themselves immortal and so challenged the admiration of all succeeding times and nations.

Among them we read of Alexander's Phalanx, Caesar's famous Tenth Legion, Napoleon's Old Guard, Cromwell's Ironsides, and Stonewall's Brigade. With a more ancient record than any, we have presented to us in the Bible the history of Gideon's Band of Three Hundred. Concerning this company we would note several facts worthy of study, recollection and imitation.

First, they stood for God and duty in the face of the most tremendous odds against them in the form of the Midianite army.

It is true that over thirty thousand Israelites were with them at the outset, but what was even this number compared to a host of enemies so great that they covered the whole face of the country.

So it is today a great thing to stand up for Heaven and Truth against sin and the devil with the whole big world against us. Even counting the churches in the line of battle, yet the nations lying in darkness and knowing not Christ, and fighting goodness and holiness are so many in number, and so multitudinous in their ranks, that it means great courage to begin with, to stand up for God.

Second, this band of three hundred stood true when twenty-two thousand soldiers around them had deserted the field and departed for home.

This must have been a fearful spectacle and was beyond question, trying to nerve as well as faith. Two out of every three of their comrades marched or fled from the field. And yet the Three Hundred remained.

To be of this Company in spirit, character and attainment, we must be willing and able to stand by and for the Truth, no matter who and how many may leave us and forsake the post of duty. The Twelve showed themselves to be of this spiritual battalion when, although large numbers of disciples left Christ at one time, they held fast to Him.

As we have often observed how God's people are unable to confront a wrong public opinion, or oppose themselves to the world in its wickedness in any way, but would flee away to places of obscurity and safety; it became evident at once that they belonged to the twenty-two thousand, and not to God's Three Hundred.

Third, we see the three hundred emerging clearly into view under tests that were placed upon the remaining Ten Thousand.

In a mode of drinking at the river brink there was evidently set forth a type of humiliation. They lapped water, said the Scripture, like a dog.

We do not know all the declaring and separating tests which come upon the church in reforms and revivals, and in lines of suffering, duty and sacrifice. But as they come the division begins to appear, and where we saw one body of people we now behold two, and one is always much smaller than the other. The larger number which we can properly call the Ten Thousand, sooner or later after failing to meet certain ordeals, find themselves out of the battle and at home.

Usually the trial that sifts and separates is one of humiliation. We do not become dogs, but we have to be willing to be regarded and rated as such by a perverse, morally blinded and truth-hating world.

We do not know of any who was ever wholly out for Christ, and completely doing the will of God, but was graded by men among the low and despised things of earth. Paul said that the apostles were counted as the off-scouring of the world. Meanwhile all such divinely used men are willing to be so misjudged and condemned.

Certain it is, that if we are unwilling to be misunderstood and set aside; if we can not endure the pain of reproach and walk the humble way, we are not of the Three Hundred.

A **fourth** fact noticeable about this company is that they endured the loneliness of a separate post of duty.

They were to surround the camp of the Midianites. This necessitated their being placed far apart. They could not see each other's faces; could not touch each other's hands; nor could they move to the attack shoulder to shoulder. They were many feet; perhaps many yards apart.

In this we see their superiority to the Phalanx, Legion, Old Guard, and Stonewall's Brigade, all of which went into battle in company, breast against back, and shoulder to shoulder.

The Three Hundred in Gideon's time and our time are not numerous enough in the first place to go in crowds, and, second, the work of God is such, and the providences of Heaven so singular, that the servant of the Lord has often to stand alone in home, church and community.

In the Military sense it is a good deal to be in the army. But there is a greater call on faithfulness and courage to be on picket, where five or six soldiers constitute the entire company. But the greatest test of faithfulness, valor and steadfastness is to be found on the post of the vidette. The picket is a half mile maybe from the army, but the vidette is several hundred yards beyond the picket. And the man is alone, and there is no one to share with him the tremendous responsibility of watching for the enemy, and guarding a sleeping multitude. He is by himself.

The Three Hundred are called to such a work as well as to similar suffering; to enduring as well as doing.

When people tell us that they could not spiritually survive the lack of sympathy in a worldly home; or could not endure the loneliness of the formal church; or the abuse of the preacher, and so fled from the providential appointment or allotment; this confession at once reveals that they do not belong to the Three Hundred. A man who cannot remain on the vidette or lonely duty post in household or church does not belong to Gideon's Band

A **fifth** fact about this company is, that each one stood in his place.

If this could be observed all over the Kingdom of Christ we would behold the most sweeping and remarkable of victories. But it is because some are

out of their place of duty, absent when they should be present, that many a service has dragged and failed, many a duty has been undischarged, and innumerable defeats have come to the cause of Christ.

Again, if the Lord's people would stand in their own lot, occupy the niche, do the work, and fulfill the part designed for them in their mental creation, divine qualification and providential leading, we would see marvelous triumphs for the Gospel through their instrumentality.

In Gideon's band of long ago, every one stood in his place. But in the congregations of today, by the usurpation of place, the displacement of Spirit offices, and substitution of human orders and positions; in the posing of an exhorter for a preacher, and every preacher claiming to be a teacher; the square peg is seen in the round hole, and the round peg in the square hole; and a confusion is beheld, and an unmistakable doing nothing worthy of the name, and a getting nowhere to speak of, that is perfectly manifest to three worlds.

Finally the weapons of this remarkable body of men consisted of a pitcher, lamp and trumpet.

There was not a sword, javelin, spear, or bow among them. Now when these men at a given signal blew their trumpets, broke their pitchers, waved their lamps and cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," one can imagine the mental shock given to the slumbering Midianites and the panic which followed.

When out of a great wall of encompassing darkness, which seemed to have held nothing, suddenly came the crash of stone vessels, the blare of three hundred trumpets, the long line of waving lights which fear increased to thousands before the half awakened eyes of the terrified hosts, one can readily see in the general stampede which followed how and where the victory came to the Gideon Battalion.

In these figures of bugle, vessel and light we see the voice of testimony, the shining of life and the sacrifice of the body in the service of God. As it is expressed in Revelation, God's people overcame by the Blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

It is wonderful how little the Three Hundred of today depend upon carnal weapons for their victory and success. As we see them here and there over the land pressing the battle, it is simply the voice of testimony, the beaming of the devoted life, and the going to pieces of the earthen vessel as they push onward and upward the cause of their God, in face of every conceivable difficulty, and in spite of multitudinous enemies in the world. But it is also wonderful what a commotion and panic these three things produce in the conscience, heart and life of open transgressors and a formal dead church.

We once, while a pastor, had a great revival sweep down upon a part of the congregation in the early part of the week, and so between two Sabbaths. Over half of the members being spiritually dead, took no part in the protracted services, did not even attend the regular Wednesday night prayer meeting, and only came to the 11 o'clock morning hour of worship on Sunday. So when they gathered to the Morgue as usual to lay their dead faces and figures on the slabs called pews, they did not know what had come from Heaven to the Church in their absence and were totally unprepared for what followed.

After an introductory hymn and prayer, the pastor opened the service with a testimony meeting, when instantly over one hundred people, who had been regenerated, recovered from backsliding and sanctified, sprang up all over the house, several from the choir, and a number from the gallery, and began to testify and praise God for what He had done for their souls.

To this hour, seventeen years later, we recall the amazement and panic-stricken condition of that congregation. They looked terrified, and were ready to run, and some did run. A hundred shining faces, a hundred voices ringing out like trumpets telling what Christ had done for them, was like another Gideon's Band coming up suddenly out of the silence and darkness which had long reigned in that church, and sweeping everything and everybody before the unexpected flash and shout, and charge.

Moreover, the combination of the broken vessel, shining lamp and sounding trumpet are always observable in the Three Hundred. To omit one puts us out of the Gideon Band into some other tribe or company.

The man who belongs to the Three Hundred will sound plainly and clearly the testimony of full salvation. His shining and burning will be seen and felt. While the sacrifice of time, means, strength and life itself, typified by the broken vessel, will be equally apparent, and will clinch the argument of trumpet and lamp. One such man will chase a thousand; two can put ten thousand to flight; while the Three Hundred will not only be able to survive the defection and desertion of thirty-two thousand of their weak-kneed friends and comrades, but still remain more than a match for the vast hosts of this old sinful world, which lies out in darkness, wickedness, unbelief and rebellion all around them.

CHAPTER 27

THE THREE HUNDRED AND EIGHT

Secular history has great events so connected with the numbers of the people engaged in the achievement, that they are forever coupled together in the mind; and the deed or exploit is not only summoned to the recollection by the numeral figures, but is branded by it, becomes synonymous with it, and in a sense absorbs its own name. Hence it is that the band at Thermopylae, the light brigade of Balaklava and the company of the Alamo, though long since passed away, yet still live in an arithmetical, historical and character way. And to speak of the thirty thousand, the ten thousand, and the three hundred is to behold again with the mental vision the most astonishing, terrific and sanguinary happenings of the past.

In like manner the Scripture holds numbers that are eloquent of divine grace and blessing, and likewise of human faithfulness and achievement. To mention “the Three,” “The Twelve,” “The Seventy,” “The One Hundred and Twenty,” “The Three Hundred” and “The Five Hundred” is to summon up to the mind scene after scene, each with separate histories of grace, privilege, usefulness and victory, each one suggesting volumes of thought, and all furnishing topics that in mental and spiritual lines would be an inexhaustible supply for tongue, pen, brain and heart for all the years and centuries to come in our terrestrial life.

In the last mentioned class, “The Five Hundred,” we have discovered another number that stands as much for certain facts in the human heart and life as did the “Three,” “Twelve” and “One Hundred and Twenty.” For it is perfectly evident that while the original company has long ago journeyed into the silent, invisible world, yet the succession remains, and the things they stood for, or did not stand for, have as devoted champions or as faithful representatives as ever.

In regard to the Three Hundred and Eighty we would make several observations.

First, they were a part of the five hundred who were personally visited by Christ and invited to Jerusalem, where the Baptism with the Holy Ghost was to take place.

It seems that they had been summoned to a certain mountain in Galilee by His own appointment; and we read that He appeared to them and spoke face to face with the assembly of five hundred. Every one of the gathering looked on the same face, heard the same voice, and had extended the same invitation. It was the old picture of the divine impartiality, the fairness of the Gospel, and the love and goodness of God that would bless all who would come unto him.

A **second** truth appears in the fact that only a small proportion accepted the invitation.

One hundred and twenty journeyed to Zion, and faithfully waited in the upper room for the descending fire and glory of the promised blessing. But three hundred and eighty would not and did not go. And yet the same Saviour stood in their midst, the common invitation was to all, and the identical wonderful blessing awaited every one who would go.

This would seem very astonishing indeed to some of us, if we did not see similar conduct taking place all around us today. Some have affected surprise that such a large body should hang back from duty and privilege, and such a small proportion journey down to Jerusalem to receive the Promise of the Father. And yet these very wondering individuals not only fail to recognize like behavior in Christian ranks about them, but if they are honest will be compelled to admit that they have done and are still doing the same way.

When the pastor of a charge undertakes a meeting with full salvation in view for his people, he will speedily become acquainted with those two widely different bodies of people—the one hundred and twenty and the three hundred and eighty. And when the evangelist, after a sermon on the subject, and an invitation to the Christian audience before him to come to the altar and obtain the Baptism with the Holy Ghost and Fire, or entire sanctification, no matter how many will gather around the altar, yet he will see all over the house, and sitting in a solid block towards the rear, that strange, never dying company of the Three Hundred and Eighty.

The word has been sent forth and divided once more. It has the old double edge. It retains the twofold savor and some soften while others harden under it. A small body go up to Jerusalem to tarry for the great blessing, while a larger number will make no movement whatever in that direction.

A third lesson obtained from this peculiar company is their unwillingness to put forth any special effort or make any real sacrifice to obtain the promised Baptism with the Spirit.

We doubt not that the one hundred and twenty had as much to keep them at home in the way of material interests and physical comfort as did the Three Hundred and Eighty. But they were more interested in their souls than in their every day business, and craved salvation and likeness to God more than bodily ease, or bags and sacks, and bales, and barns, of earthly treasure; so they went up to Jerusalem and tarried for days in the upper room in prayer and holy expectation.

The Three Hundred and Eighty did not care to put themselves to such exertion, and run such risks to temporal interests by going so far from home. Perhaps they would not have objected to the reception of the blessing if they could remain in their boats or on their farms or at their houses and so obtain it. Then would not Abana and Pharpar do as well as Jordan? And why this long trip to Jerusalem? And everything was uncertain these days anyhow. And who would take care of the shop and field and house while they were gone? No! Prudence and good sense were against their going, and they would not leave.

Truly we all know this tribe. And what a sad, sickening sensation their heavy faces and solid, immovable ranks create in many a meeting undertaken for God and the salvation of the community. What they are thinking of under the powerful appeals and stirring scenes going on before them at the altar might be difficult to put on paper. Some faces show an utter absence of conviction or desire for anything better. Others apparently do not understand the message or the situation. Still others look fatigued and disgusted; while the whole body have not the slightest idea of going up to Jerusalem. The Upper Room Meeting has no attraction for them. Even if it has a measure of influence, there are so many other things at home and abroad that outweigh and outdraw, that they have not

the remotest notion of yielding and giving their souls the opportunity of a lifetime for the obtainment of Full Salvation.

A fourth lesson learned from the Three Hundred and Eighty is that a peculiar honor and glory can be forfeited by negligence and unfaithfulness at a critical time.

The first gathering at Jerusalem to seek and obtain the Baptism with the Spirit must in the nature of things have meant more than any subsequent meeting. The blessing had not yet descended on a single one of them. Hence the journey, the gathering and the waiting required more faith, and courage, and devotion to Christ, than any other meeting to follow.

For this reason God granted to the one hundred and twenty what was never given to other companies or to individuals after that, viz., a visible tongue of fire on the head. They in a sense deserved it, and God put peculiar and visible honor upon them.

Because of this, although Cornelius was a most deserving man, yet when he was filled with the Holy Ghost the plume of heavenly flame did not wave on his head. And when the twelve disciples at Ephesus obtained the blessing under the preaching of Paul, although they were filled with the Spirit yet on their brows no tongue of fire descended from the skies to flash and wave, and astonish the beholders.

The Three Hundred and Eighty, different from those at Caesarea and Ephesus, might have gone up to Jerusalem, and been with the immortal one hundred and twenty who were visibly crowned by the hand of God and thus exalted above all other followers of Christ. The Bible record would then have spoken of five hundred; and that number would be the glorified Gospel numeral today; and all the more amazing would have been the triumph of the Son of God in Jerusalem at Pentecost, when the streets of that city would have been struck with half a thousand human thunderbolts, instead of one hundred and twenty. But the Three Hundred and Eighty for some reason saw fit not to go. The Upper Room failed to draw them from the barn, dairy, shop and fishing boat; and so they missed the glory of a lifetime and a distinguishing honor for eternity.

Men are still imitating the example and following the footsteps of these laggards and delinquents. To this day persons are missing Mounts of

Transfiguration, and excellencies of knowledge and glory, by spiritual indolence, mental laziness and the slow clogging, deadening influence of an indulged and pampered body. There are local situations and spiritual crises; there are moments and days when for men to stand forth and do the right thing would mean not only blessedness to the people and glory to God, but a peculiar everlasting honor to themselves, both on earth and in heaven. But like Jerusalem they do not seem to know the time of their visitation, or, if knowing it, still, like that city, choose carnality rather than spirituality, prefer Barabbas to Jesus, and so their day, with all its privilege and salvation, goes by forever.

Finally the Three Hundred and Eighty, by their failure, brought oblivion upon themselves as individuals.

We know their number, but not a single name has been preserved and handed down. Many of the one hundred and twenty have their names both in the Bible and history; but those who went not down to Jerusalem and up into that famous Upper Room are all unknown today.

It is wonderful how faithfulness and devotion to Christ will bring one out of obscurity to be remembered, loved and blessed long after death. It is equally noteworthy how the names and lives of many, calling themselves Christians, fairly rot and pass away from the recollection of everybody. They did not do enough for the Saviour and humanity whereon to hang a memory. A sea of forgetfulness seems to engulf them, their sayings, doings, and their very names, and we know them no more forever.

But he who determines to have the Upper Room Experience, cost what it may; who allows neither his body, business, pleasure, nor the world to get in between his soul and Christ, is marked for honor and remembrance in this world and for glory and reward in the world to come. He has parted company for all time with the prudent, calculating and sluggish Three Hundred and Eighty, and joined the pure hearted, shining faced and soul burning band of the immortal one hundred and twenty.

CHAPTER 28

THE CONGREGATION OF THE DEAD

The caption of this chapter is one of the remarkable descriptive sentences in the Bible, where the condition and appearance of the spiritually dead are held up to view and consideration, under the figure of an assembly of corpses.

Death is the often repeated simile used in the Word of God to illustrate the moral state of the soul that is without God and salvation. In one passage we are told that the unsaved man is “dead in trespasses and in sins.” In another place, the words “quickenened” and “risen” are used to show what happened when the soul came forth from the region of sin and darkness and entered upon God’s kingdom of light and life.

When a child of God backslides, the Scripture teaches that he has gone back to the old death. The vision which Ezekiel had of the Valley of Dry Bones proves this. The long lines of skeletons that covered the surrounding hillsides clearly argue a previous life, and that the life had been lost. The skeletons make invincible logic here. While the statement of Heaven allows no dispute in the matter, as the words are uttered, “Son of Man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.”

But a crowning image of horror is in the sentence, “The congregation of the dead.” Here is not a vision of bones but of corpses, and the dead bodies with lusterless eyes, expressionless faces and rigid forms seem to be arranged in rank and file somewhere on earth or in the Pit; or maybe sitting in rows on cushioned seats in pews of walnut and mahogany in our own land and country.

These crescendo figures carry an increasing horror with them; for as a valley full of human bones is a more ghastly view than the spectacle of one dead man; so the sight of a great congregation of dead men and women filling a large building, and pulseless, breathless, motionless, lifeless, sitting

with glazed, vacant eyes, staring in one direction—would be unspeakably the most dreadful vision of all.

And yet all these ghastly metaphors and illustrations are used by the Spirit of God to properly portray the unconverted individual, the backslidden church and finally a congregation made up of sinner's and backsliders, all alike spiritually dead.

The Congregation of the Dead seems to be the Terminal Station of the Backslidden, because the whole verse reads, "He that wandereth from the way of understanding shall remain in the Congregation of the Dead." It seems to be a proper Dumping Ground, not to say Home, of the man who backslides from light, as well as the one who falls from grace itself.

According to the whole verse there is not much danger of any breaking up of this meeting. The strange, still audience will not be worried by the footsteps of any of their number leaving; for the passage says that the one who joins them will remain in the Congregation of the Dead. The man who had life enough to come and seek such a frightful fellowship, turning from the living to abide with the dead will be allowed to remain in this unspeakably dreadful cemetery.

When a person is physically dead, we know that something is gone that took note once of physical objects. We are powerless with earnest gesticulation and loud cries to make such an one see and understand anything. The face remains rigid, the eye glassy and the heart cold. Everything said and done with the hope of eliciting some kind of recognition or response is doomed to complete and utter failure. Corpses do not hear us!

Of course many try in the agony of bereavement to make their dead hear them, and cry, weep, wring their hands, fall down before them and call most heartbreakingly upon them. But the dead hear not anything, and by and by the living cease to make any more efforts that way and let the undertaker remove still another pulseless form to join the congregation of the white-faced sleepers in the grave yard.

In a still more startling manner we are made aware of the presence of the spiritually dead in our midst. Such people have physical life and

intellectual life, but the spirit made in the image of God, created to know and enjoy God, is in the sleep of death.

Such persons are wide awake and responsive to every appeal made to the mind and body, but seem to hear and grasp nothing on the soul side. They become intensely interested when approached on purely intellectual lines, and do not deny the animal nature a single legitimate enjoyment, and so are deeply concerned in what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and what they shall put on the body, and where they will take it next summer, and where they will carry it next winter. All this seems perfectly right, sensible, obligatory, and essential to them, but the instant we speak of and appeal to the spiritual nature within them, we discover to our wonder and horror that we are talking to dead people.

Look at the vacant, lusterless eye! Mark the unkindling, expressionless dead face! Note the silence which follows the illustration, explanation or exhortation of the servant of God. No icy form in the coffin is more unresponsive to the physical around him, bending over him, crying about and calling upon him, than the being we are describing is insensible and immovable to the spiritual teaching and appeal that is given him.

What husband does not remember trying to awaken such a dead wife, and after the clearest statements of truth, and directions as to the way of life and full salvation, be met with the chilling silence and the cold, dead gaze of a spiritual corpse? What wife has not gone down in despair by the side of such a strange sad coffin in her house, and her husband in that coffin? What father and mother have not wrung their hands and wept scalding tears over the religiously lifeless son or daughter, who were so dead that they could not see how they were breaking the hearts of those who gave them their physical being?

Transfer the scene to the church and watch a faithful pastor or a Spirit-filled evangelist trying to reach the hearing and attract the sight of the souls that lie hidden and buried back somewhere in the forms of the impassive-faced, cold-featured, richly-dressed and respectable audience before him.

Now it is that we find out, if we never knew before, that the soul has a hearing as well as the body; and that it is possible to reach the latter and not the former. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," said Christ. All

have physical ears, but He was referring to that inner ear through which the soul hearkens to God and receives the message of salvation. This hearing does not seem to be reached in the Congregation of the Dead.

All could have heard once. Some did hear at one time, but now do so no more. So the preacher is left waving his hand, calling aloud upon the moral sleepers, and is seen to have signaled and cried out in vain.

We have even beheld the man of God weep as well as agonize and plead in the midst of a great Cathedral Morgue; and there was no response, nor movement whatever. The cold, dead stare was fixed upon the speaker. His tears pattered upon the faces of spiritual corpses, and like corpses they remained in their coffins. There was no answering sigh or tear or moan. There could not be. The servant of God was in the presence of a Congregation of the Dead.

Of course there are Elishas here and there who stretch themselves upon the face and form of some of these beings, and after much prayer, great agonizing and repeated going back to the corpse and calling upon God, we see now and then the dead arise, come forth, and walk. Jesus is still able to bring a man up from the bier and out of the grave, though he had been dead four days, forty days or forty years!

But there are many dead people in the land; and many congregations of the dead; and the heartbreaking thing about it all is, that the vast majority prefer to remain dead.

Christ said once to the people, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." In another place he said, "Your sin now remaineth in you," and in still another passage uttered the fearful words, "Ye shall die in your sins."

This dying in sin necessarily perpetuates the Congregation of the Dead in eternity.

William Tennant in his autobiography gives a most frightful description of lost souls in hell. He gave it as the dream of a drunkard, who all horror stricken related it to him in his Study.

The doomed man in his narrative said that when he entered the Abode of the Lost, he looked around him and saw long lines of tables stretching away in a divergent fashion in the dim distance. On both sides of these

tables sat men with cloaks wrapped or buttoned close to their throats, and with high peaked hats on their heads, the broad brim being drawn down low so as to cover all the upper part of the countenance. And all were silent.

And now the poor visiting dreamer, fancying it looked like a convivial scene, said to the Devil, who was standing near, "Hell is not such a terrible place after all !"

When, horror upon horror! suddenly as he spoke the words, every face was lifted and turned towards him; and instead of eyes there were flames of fire in the sockets! Then, each lost man threw back the front of his cloak and in every breast was a roaring furnace!

Both visions of fire in the eye and breast, are figures of intense mental and spiritual suffering, and are very dreadful!

And yet to the writer the most awe inspiring, bloodcurdling conception and picture of Hell is found in the words of God Himself, who viewing the place in its eternal, moral and spiritual ruin, looks upon the vast assembly gathered there, and calls it the Congregation of the Dead!

For the Congregation of the Dead in Hell there is no hope. Cut off from God the life of the soul, they remain undone forever.

But in Probationary Time there can be awakening, and life and abundant life possible for every individual, and church and community and nation on the face of the whole earth.

Some Elisha may come around and stretching himself upon the poor lifeless sinner, agonize for and with him until he opens his eyes and is restored to the rejoicing arms of a household that had despaired of his recovery.

Or an Ezekiel all unintimidated at the spectacle of a Valley of Dry Bones in a church or city, may prophesy to the winds of Heaven, and call on the Spirit of God to breathe once and then again upon the moral skeletons all around him, and at the Second Breath, see an army of converts and fully saved people spring to their feet to live and work for God and humanity.

But greater and higher than all is the One who not only raised the sleeping maiden, called the young man from his bier, and brought the dead Lazarus back alive from the tomb, but whose voice at the Last Day will depopulate every graveyard, and empty all the cemeteries of this big world. This same Christ, if men would call upon Him, could fill every withered soul with a rush of delightful overflowing life, and change every congregation of the spiritually dead, into shining faced companies and cohorts of salvation. This same Jesus, if His people would let Him, would so transform, transfigure and fill with power that the church of God would become as fair as the moon, as glorious as the sun, and as terrible as an army with banners.

THE END

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