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COMMENTARY

JONAH

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JONAH

BY

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CHAPTER 1

HIS FIRST APPEARANCE

In the Second Book of Kings we read that Jehu, a certain military captain in the army of Israel was sitting with other officers, in a house in Ramoth Gilead, when a prophet of God suddenly appeared before the group and said, “I have an errand to thee, O, Captain.” Then taking Jehu aside into an inner chamber he poured oil on his head and said: “Thus said the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel.”

When the messenger of God had spoken these and additional words he opened the door and fled.

This prophet, who came and went so quickly, and is not named, is supposed by many to have been Jonah.

It is wonderful to observe how the servants of God used to slip in and out in the discharge of divinely-given commissions. Just when needed to warn, rebuke, threaten or bring judgment from the Lord, they would suddenly appear as if they had sprung up from the earth or dropped from the sky. Their regular succession, faithfulness and timely appearance, coupled with their unsuspected presence, was an overwhelming declaration in itself, that in face of the intricate web and complex machinery of human life there is One who is evidently superior to it all, knows everything and everybody, is perfectly adequate for every occasion, and is unquestionably working and bringing the world to some great finality unknown to men, but seen and thoroughly understood by Him. In a word, the pilot is at the wheel; the engineer has his eye on the engine; the captain is on the deck; or, to put it as Ezekiel has described, a hand is in the midst of the wheels!

Thus it is that when a king of Israel needed a sentence of condemnation, there confronted him on a battlefield a disguised prophet who, with the invented history of an escaped prisoner, caught the king in a verbal trap as effectually as Nathan had entangled David.

Later, when Jehu needed a sign, touch or word to start him on his career, there suddenly appeared one of God's messengers, who took him into an inner room, anointed him, and delivered the message of the Lord.

Has not the reader noticed in his own life and that of others, that when counsel, help, warning or rebuke were needed they always came. That if some wrong was contemplated or had been performed, the next happening was the presence of some servant of God who sounded an alarm or uttered a grave reproof.

The first view, then, we have of Jonah, is a most excellent one of himself, for we find him obeying God, and doing so to the letter. He did just what God told him to do.

CHAPTER 2

HIS FIRST FLIGHT

We read that after anointing Jehu the prophet opened the door and fled. This flight, however, was all right, and took place in obedience to divine direction. The command given him was that when he had poured the oil and delivered the message, — “Then open the door and flee and tarry not.”

It is remarkable how often this was exacted of God’s servants in Old Testament times. The command to the young prophet who was afterwards slain by the lion was after condemning the idolatry of Israel at Bethel to straightway leave. In like manner all the prophets seem to have been kept on the march. They would appear, give some kind of warning, utter a prophesy and disappear as quickly as they came.

Under this strange and apparently unnecessary retreat was really an urgent need and a blessed philosophy. Happy the preacher or any servant of God who understands the wisdom of certain flights and withdrawals.

It is not every mouthpiece of God who, after delivering a faithful heavenly message, can remain in the social circle without undoing in a measure, the effect of the work just performed. All filled and fired with the subject, the man in the pulpit speaks as from the very door and court of heaven, and it has its tremendous effect on heart and conscience. Some wise and holy men can, linger and mingle with the people and still sustain the exalted character of the faithful ambassador or special messenger from the skies. Many of the Lord’s prophets cannot do so. It would be well for them and for the people and the message, if they had opened the door, fled and tarried not.

There is a danger of retracting or letting down. There is a peril of becoming anecdotal, humorous and even light and giddy with the different individuals who surge about the speaker in congratulating spirit after he has sounded the gospel trumpet and stands flushed and victorious in the altar. At such

times the drop is tremendously evident, and the deep impressions made in the previous hours are utterly wiped out.

Happy for certain congregations if there were a trap-door in their platforms and pulpits through which, the instant the sermon was over, the preacher could be shot out of sight into his study, private room, or own dwelling.

There was a minister in one of our Southern States who was so double and contradictory in this regard that a man said of him “that when he was in the pulpit he ought never to come out, and when he was out he ought never to go in.”

Truly, every devout soul may join in the prayer that the servants of God may so live up to and in the spirit of the heavenly world they represent, that their credentials will appear in their faces, God’s flaming endorsement will be on their labors, and at the conclusion of sermon, prayer or conversation, it will seem to the people that an angel had spoken.

CHAPTER 3

THE CALL TO NINEVEH

Nineveh was evidently an appointment which Jonah did not desire. Judging from his movements he preferred Joppa and Tarsus.

As the case develops it appears that the disinclination to preach at Nineveh sprang from the double cause of man-fear and a very strange kind of pride. Of the latter we will write later.

The city of the Assyrians was a very large one, and might well from its size and vast population frighten the man of God if he looked at these features; but his business was to fasten his eyes on God, and above all remember that He who called him to labor there was infinitely greater than this metropolis, the world itself, and all the other worlds besides.

This call to Nineveh came twenty years after the anointing of Jehu for the kingdom. All the intervening time God had been preparing the prophet for a larger field and greater work, and lo! when the moment for action arrived the man was unwilling to respond.

There are two kinds of prophets, preachers and servants of Heaven; those who are anxious to go to Nineveh, and those who are afraid to go. The first class fret because their talents and gifts are not recognized by the Lord and the church, and so are not shot forward into the prominence which they feel they deserve.

One of our bishops in speaking to a class of young preachers tinctured with this spirit said very gravely while steadily looking at them — “Have no fear about your promotion. If there is anything in you, the world will find it out and you will be called for.”

The second class, the fearful ones like Jonah, have to be dealt with in a very different way. They are so afraid of men that they fail to declare the truth of God, and to properly represent Him.

One thing is certain that if this be the case, the man who is so terrorized by men will have to be terrorized by God. The Lord must give him such a fright, and treat him to such a severe handling, that he will come to his senses, see things straight and walk what is called a chalk line ever after.

Hence it is that a certain work goes on in individual cases with a view to the thorough and proper preparation of that soul or the greater appointments, duties and achievements of life.

Nineveh is over the rim of the mountains yonder, or far beyond the sea. The place is needing us, waiting for us, and God is preparing us for the place.

When the call comes at last to go, happy is the man who can move at once to the providential appointment, and leave all results with Him who issued the call and clearly defined the duty.

CHAPTER 4

THE SECOND FLIGHT

Again we see Jonah running. The divine call had been sounded, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it.” Whereupon the servant of God shut his ears to the command, steeled his heart to all inner voices, and, turning his back upon the field of duty, fled.

It is true that the work given him was no little one. God, Himself, in the commission said that the city was “great,” and that “The wickedness had come up before Him.” The Almighty would not beguile or deceive His servants in any way.

Christ told His disciples that in preaching His gospel and teaching His truth they would be cast out of the synagogue, thrown into prison, dragged before kings, and put to death. The symbol of His kingdom was a cross, while the crown was made of thorns.

So the Lord was faithful to Jonah here, and revealed to him the greatness and gravity of the work. But at the same time He would have His servant remember that He is mightier than all of His enemies; that the ocean is in the hollow of His hand; and that Nineveh and all of the great cities of the earth are very insignificant affairs to Him. Great they may be to Jonah and to us, but they are small to Him. One of the burning chimneys of His world, like Vesuvius or Mt. Pelee, could wipe out any one of them in five minutes by the clock.

Jonah did not stop to consider this side of the case, but viewing the labor to be performed from simply a human standpoint, behold! “He rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord.”

Poor Jonah! There has been many a foolish person since that day to imitate his example, but surely there has never been a sadder heart in any breast than the one he bore the hour he tried to run from God and duty.

It was a big thing he had on hand. He had unconsciously undertaken the longest race known in the Universe. The fact is, it has no end. So the man started to do an impossible thing when he rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord.

David, in the Psalms, asks where can I go to escape Him? If I ascend to heaven He is there! If I make my bed in hell He is there! If I take the wings of the morning and flee unto the uttermost parts of the sea, even there He shall find me and His right hand hold me!

The company of fleeing Jonahs is much larger than some would imagine. Many are the men now in trades and professions whom God has called to the ministry. Young women have married and settled down in the ease and enjoyment of home life although Christ whispered years ago to them, "I want you in China, Japan, India, or Alaska."

Part of this fugitive band are overtaken in Revival meetings that deserve the name. In bitter tears they sigh and groan and confess at the altar, "I have fled from duty. I am running from God."

Not only the Word of God, but Sorrow itself coming to the door of the life, has a peculiar tap or knock that makes the blood rush back on the heart and the spirit feel as though it would faint away and actually leave the body. With its solemn eyes fixed on the faithless one, and the finger directed backward, the reproving lips of the newly-arrived grief seems to whisper, "Nineveh!"

Let the reader of these lines ask his own heart, Am I doing what God wants me to do? Am I obedient to the Lord in regard to the family altar, Sunday School, Church or some special duty heaven has laid upon me? Am I not forgetting it; turning from it; yes, running from it!

If so, the flying Jonah is not only alive and around, but is reading this book.

CHAPTER 5

THE NEGLECTED NINEVEH

Not all forgotten and renounced duties are taken up. Not all persons are spoken to that the Lord would desire. Not all families, neighborhoods and towns receive the instruction and warning that the Savior wills should take place. In other words some Jonahs never turn back, and so some Ninevehs remain unvisited, unblessed and unredeemed.

The Nineveh of the Bible was forsaken for a certain period of time through the faithlessness of the prophet; but at last it heard the word. There are Ninevehs out of the Bible, however, and existing in the form of families, communities and even generations that get into the tomb before Jonah comes!

It is exceedingly distressing, but we are compelled to admit the fact. Not only are the heathen unheeded and unwarned when they might be, but at our very doors ignorance, sin, sorrow and suffering abound where the ability to relieve is abundant, but fails to put in an appearance.

There are individuals whose faces, gifts, influence and life would be a benediction to others. For some reason they will not go nor do what the Spirit bids. So we are called upon to witness a more painful sight than that of a flying Jonah, and that is the spectacle of a neglected and forgotten Nineveh.

What some religious fields would be if tilled, and what some congregations would receive, become and perform afterwards if they obtained right messages from the pulpit, is a question that carries its own answer to every reflective spiritual mind.

There are great assemblies and conventions where thousands of our very best and most intelligent laymen or young people gather, and where there are speakers present who know the deep things of God, and yet utter them not. The Lord cannot but grieve over the silent Jonah, whose faithlessness is equivalent to absence. But sadder still is the sight of a Nineveh which

fills the tabernacle or great hall for days and nights with wide open eyes and ears, and yet finally leaves after all the platform display and financial outlay, without the message and blessing which God wanted the people to have.

A prominent preacher had received the Baptism with the Holy Ghost. On the second night of the sermon of the Annual Conference he was put up to preach to a crowded church, where, among others, one hundred ministers of the gospel were present to hear him. There was not only interest but a deep expectancy in the hearts of the audience. All supposed he would tell of his wondrous blessing, how he obtained it, and how others might sweep into the grace. Again and again he seemed to approach the point, and as often he veered off. Finally, to the general disappointment of the congregation, he closed his hour's discourse without a single reference to the blessing for which they had mainly assembled to hear him speak. Again Jonah failed to reach Nineveh. What might have come to the preachers, indeed to the whole throng of that enlightened and listening assembly if the prophet had arrived, could not possibly be properly estimated.

An Evangelist, in the enjoyment of the blessing mentioned above and possessing in a wonderful degree, the confidence of the public, came to a large city to hold a meeting. Requested by some to preach on the subject, he refused on grounds puerile and untenable. Poor Nineveh was again beheld unvisited and unblessed in this conclusion of the prophet.

A Bishop confronted a great audience at Conference when all expected him to speak clearly and definitely concerning the great depositum of Methodism, the blessing of holiness. Nineveh lay out before him that morning in the shape of a great spiritual need. But Jonah failed to come. The text was, "The Lord is My Shepherd." Concerning this fact of the divine care there was no doubt in the congregation of worshippers. It was something else they wanted to know, which the Bishop knew, and which he failed to tell them. The prophet turned off in the direction of Joppa and Tarsus when he was needed at Nineveh.

Men have had their eyes to fill with tears in reading about the flying Jonah; but to the reader it seems that the saddest tears should be shed over poor, neglected and forgotten Nineveh!

CHAPTER 6

THE SLEEPER

To the writer one of the most pathetic features of Jonah's history at this time was his sleeping in the hold of the storm-rocked vessel in which he was trying to fly from God.

To stand over the recumbent figure of the wearied man, mark the pallor and deep lines of care in the unconscious face, and think of the heavy heart under it all, is to feel the eyes growing misty with tears.

What is there in misery which courts sleep, if it is not the burdened mind endeavoring to receive relief in the temporary oblivion of slumber.

It is said of the Savior that he found His disciples the night of the betrayal "sleeping for sorrow."

It is still one of the ways of our race, and when somnolence will not come of its own accord, men and women with the heavy heart and guilty life resort to morphine and chloral. Rather than agonize, awake with spirit-crushing actualities, or listen to the cries of an outraged conscience, they take opiates, slip away from the burden and woe, and forget for awhile in sleep the whole sad history of the past and escape the torture of confronting a future of midnight blackness. They cannot endure the remembrance of faithlessness, of duty neglected, of wrongs committed, and so run from fearful realities to a land of dreams. They do not wish to hear the roar of the storm which they have brought on themselves, and so go down into the hold of the vessel and fall asleep.

We doubt not that many confirmed opium slaves were made so because they fancied they could not endure certain sufferings and sorrows which had entered their lives, and so endeavored to escape by blunting the feelings, deadening the senses, and plunging the mind into a state of stupor, a condition of oblivion by the artificial slumber of narcotics

We knew a woman, who, by her own conduct, brought great hardships and privations upon her family. The household endured them as patiently and heroically as they could, but she, the author of the whole trouble, became addicted to narcotics and escaped, by way of a constant slumber, from the woe and sorrow which she had brought on her own household. She had awakened the tempest which beat upon her family, and yet while they labored and toiled to outlive the storm, she the cause of the misery, slept heedless of it all from day to day and month to month under the influence of laudanum.

When the sleep comes from natural exhaustion, the picture presented is full of pathos. The striver against God, the runner from duty is overcome and overborne at last. He is but human after all. How weak he is in spite of all his defiance of truth and resistance of heaven. A child could now kill him, as all helpless, he slumbers the unconscious hours away.

We once beheld a brakeman on a freight train so exhausted from the day's labor and two nights loss of rest that he said in our hearing, "I cannot go another step," and, sinking down on a large rough plank, was sound asleep, we believe, before his head touched the hard wooden pillow. The "boss" and the writer stood looking at him for several minutes with doubtless very different feelings, although to both he was an overworked man. He was a great burly fellow — almost a giant, but locked in profound slumber, he was as helpless as an infant.

After all, our boasted human strength is a pitiful affair. The strongest soon tire. The swiftest have to stop. The Lord has no trouble in overtaking us in our maddest, wildest flights. He has only to tarry a couple of nights and let us run, and, lo! when He comes after us He will find us sleeping.

It is a wonderful sight; omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, looking down in the face of a sinner or faithless Christian, who, in the act of running from God, and flying from duty, has fallen asleep.

CHAPTER 7

HEADED OFF

God has a wonderful Board of Detectives and a perfect multitude of sheriffs, constables and policemen.

It is to be noticed in the Old Testament history, that when even a king had to be directed or rebuked, there was always a prophet or servant of God close by to utter the commandment or deliver the warning. They would stand or run along the side of the road, leap out of the woods, come forth from the desert, appear on the streets and in the palaces, and start up in the ranks of the army. They seemed to be ever on hand and always ready.

In addition to these earthly instruments were angels who would speed on divine missions with the swiftness and power of a bolt of lightning.

Besides these supernatural messengers God used birds and beasts and the very elements of nature to carry out His will. Hence the sound in the air of an enemy marching, the sighing of some sycamore trees, and a ditch full of water looking like blood. In all these different ways the Divine Being could head off a deserting follower or flank and surround an open foe. There was no possibility of escape.

In the present instance the Lord commissioned a storm and a fish to overtake the flying Jonah and arrest him. So while it seemed that the fugitive was getting away from God, he was really putting himself in the path of a sheriff in the air and a constable in the sea who had been ordered by the Lord to capture him.

Thus it was that when Jonah reached Joppa and found a vessel by which he planned to escape, the storm was coming. And while he slept in the hold it had arrived and was reading in a high shrill voice in the rigging its divine commission: "I am commanded to overtake a man named Jonah, who is trying to run away from God!"

Nor was this all, for later, when the trembling, unhappy man was on the deck answering the questions of the sailors, the constable of heaven, in the shape of a fish, was cleaving the waves in pursuit of the ship, saying with every plunge, "Has anybody seen anything of a man named Jonah who is running from duty and God? I must find him today and swallow him!"

There is no use trying to flee from the presence of God. It cannot be done. Cain undertook the task and found God everywhere. Murderers and criminals of every kind in all ages and countries have endeavored to do the same heart-sickening, body-exhausting, soul-despairing, ever-failing thing. The face of the Lord seems to be ever against them; the eye of God is felt to be searching them out; and the uplifted hand of the Almighty appears always ready to drop upon them in discovering judgment and doom.

A criminal once escaped from a house where he was confined as a prisoner, sped down a hill and plunged into the forest. He could have succeeded in getting entirely away, for he had the start, a dense thicket and approaching nightfall to favor him; but he failed in spite of every advantage. He had actually given up before the officers reached him. When asked why he had stopped his flight his reply was, "I thought every tree was Almighty God."

Verily, it is a poor, profitless race to make, this running from duty, this refusal to go to Nineveh, and this mad endeavor to escape from the presence of God.

The ship may appear to favor our plan of escape, but the gale will founder the vessel but what the Lord will have us. The sailors may feel kindly to us and try to assist us in our disobedient way, but God can manage even them, and they will finally heave us headlong to the fish that has been expectantly following after us. Yea, we may become so utterly sick of ourselves and so convinced of our failure to outrun conscience, memory, the voice of the Spirit and the pursuing hand of the Lord, that we ourselves will beg to be thrown overboard.

CHAPTER 8

UNDER THE BILLOWS

As we sailed a few years ago over the Mediterranean Sea, we thought much of the prophet who spent three days and nights under the waves of that very part of the inland ocean we were crossing.

What sensations and meditations he must have had in the depths and darkness of this world of waters. His own language has been preserved by the Spirit and is full of force; — “The floods compassed me about; all thy billows and thy waves passed over me; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head; I went down to the bottoms of the mountains.”

Long years afterwards David in great trouble adopted the language of Jonah to describe his sorrows and said “all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.”

Some of us to this day feel that the figure cannot be improved upon, and have made the same utterance in speaking of calamities and afflictions which came upon us. They were like waves and billows, and literally rolled over us; but we were also able to say in faith and submission “thy waves” and “thy billows.” God’s hand was felt in all and through all, and this thought and assurance saved us from utter despair.

“Under the billows,” has been an experience with the children of God in all ages and countries: and oftentimes as in the case of Jonah, the floods have come because of disobedience to Heaven and flight from duty.

The “billows” have a way of talking as they roll; and they seem to say “It would have been better to have gone to Nineveh.” The “bottoms of the mountains” ejaculate, “The people of Nineveh could not have put you deeper down than you are now.” The “grasses about the head” whispered in their rustling “would the pillows of Nineveh feel any rougher than I am?”

To be under the billows away from everybody, gives the mind a fine opportunity for indulging in healthy reflections, instituting comparisons between the mental states of obedience and disobedience, and arriving at conclusions that will be most profitable when the individual faces another opportunity of doing the will of God.

The Bible speaks of "Treasures of Darkness." It is a spiritual application of well-known fact in the physical or material world. The gold and silver are underground; while the ocean sweeps over many a gem of purest ray, and covers treasure of every character and description.

There is such a thing as going under the billows both in nature and grace, and coming up with the hands full of pearls.

Somehow we have noticed that the man over whom the waves of affliction have rolled, and who has kept true to God through all, comes up rich in spiritual knowledge and human sympathy, and with a strange gracious power for good over human souls. Such characters arise from the depths of trial and sorrow with "treasures of darkness!" They have learned lessons of faith and resignation, have found a deeper peace and profounder joy, and obtained victories over self and the world which throw in the shade, and leave far behind, all the boasted triumphs in the annals of war among the nations. They have won the true riches, secured the highest and best of wealth, and can now gladden, enrich and bless mankind as gold, silver and precious stones are powerless to do.

A young preacher crushed by the death of a favorite son fell upon the floor where he was groveling in a wordless agony. A blessed gray-haired woman, a member of his flock, stooped down and pillowing his head on her arm, while her tears rained upon the colorless face, she cried in broken accents — "My precious broken-hearted pastor, look to Jesus, He can and will comfort you." They were simple words, but the power to speak them in a way to reach and comfort the agonized soul, she had paid a great price for. She had been under the billows herself, and had come up again with the pearls of sympathetic utterance and gospel consolation in her grasp.

A Christian woman told the writer that she had been in great darkness for months and years through a bereavement that had befallen her. One day a preacher called at her house, and as he spoke and prayed with her, there

was that in his voice, words, manner, spirit and face which got hold of her benumbed powers, and aroused her paralyzed faith. As he continued speaking she felt the shadows leaving, the old sense of deadness and frozenness slipping from her heart, until suddenly as she entered her room, a few moments after the minister's departure, the great and perfect deliverance came in a burst of sweet delicious tears, and the swelling faith in her heart of a rapturous song which has never since left her.

But mark the main point; the gems of speech, accent, manner and spiritual knowledge which the preacher paid down for the ransom and recovery of the woman, had been gathered by himself, months and years before, far under the billows.

CHAPTER 9

FISH UNIVERSITY

The story of Jonah entering and abiding in the body of a great fish for a certain period of time, has given some learned and scientific gentlemen a great deal of trouble. Only acquainted with the opposite phenomenon, that of a fish in the body of a man, they have staggered at the exhibition of a power different from and superior to their own, and so have dismissed the Old Testament narrative as highly figurative and not to be taken at all as a fact.

Such men fail to observe that Christ endorsed the history of the prophet, fish and all; so that for these wise and critical professors of the schools, and star preachers of the pulpit to do away with this biography of Jonah, they must not only reject the Old, but the New Testament; not only impute falsehood to the one who wrote the life of the messenger to Nineveh, but say that the Son of God Himself was deceived or a deceiver.

It is certainly strange that scholars who know of an actual physical life, without breath, and which exists before birth in darkness and surrounded with fleshly walls, should profess to be amazed and even altogether skeptical at the entombed life of Jonah. And yet in the first instance life was sustained and flourished for six months, while in the latter case it was only three days.

But the unanswerable argument to infidelity here is found in the omnipotence of God. What embarrassment of power would He feel in preparing a great fish for the purpose in view, or in arresting the gastric juices of the leviathan, or in supplying the imprisoned man with oxygen, or in supporting life in any way He saw fit to do until some purpose of His own had been accomplished! He who “hangeeth the world on nothing,” and upholds the universe in space, would not realize much difficulty we imagine, in managing one man and a solitary fish in a fair sized pool of water for a few days.

We, for one confess never to have been disturbed in the least over the Bible narratives of Jonah in the fish, Daniel in the lion's den, and the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. The simple word "God," which figured in each story, made the occurrence or miracle as men call it, not only true, but a thing wrought easily and without the slightest trouble. It is very likely that what we call miracles on earth, are not so termed in Heaven.

Aside from all this, there is another view to take of the fish, and that is that he became a kind of college or university to Jonah.

It is quite important to secure intellectual knowledge in this world, and absolutely essential to obtain truth, find out ourselves, and know God. Hence it is to meet this double need we have both literary colleges and theological seminaries.

A school for the prophets can be traced back to the time of Elijah, and we have them to this day. Men are taught there what is not to be found in the world's regular seats of learning. Other things being equal, and religious experience the same, yet the individual with the training of the church college is bound to have an advantage over his uninformed and mentally undisciplined brother.

But God has for His children still other schools than those already mentioned; and in them we learn the most blessed and profitable lessons for life, as well as eternity.

The Fish was a kind of Special Religious Collegiate Institute to Jonah. The prophet certainly dipped into Ethics down there, secured a better idea of the divine providence, learned more of God and His power, got a good deal of sense besides, and graduated in three days.

He advanced farther in spiritual and divine matters in half a week, than some people do in a four years' theological course. According to the second chapter of the Book of Jonah, the commencement exercises and services were of a very high order. God was recognized; worship abounded; praise resounded; and Jonah himself the only one in his class and so the Honor man, was shouting happy when he received his diploma and left the place that had been to him a school of the highest and best of knowledge.

Verily we have not learned all, though we may have been through Yale, Vanderbilt and touched off with some Bible and Training Institute.

There are some things that these schools cannot teach us. There are lessons of faith, humility, patience, as well as of obedience and courage, which are obtained only in special colleges of which Fish University is a type. They have different names; Sorrow, Failure, Defeat, Bereavement, Poverty, Trial, Loveliness and still others. All are endowed and run with a view to the education and improvement of the soul. God looks after our matriculation, and if we be faithful will see to our graduation. The course of study may be severe, but the sight of the diploma which Heaven will bestow, and the possession of a knowledge which profits here and blesses forever more, will richly repay us for all the cost and toil and time that was spent in the universities we have mentioned.

One of these days it will be clear to the whole world, that it was far more important for us to have gone through one of these strange colleges of God, than to have passed with honor through every one of the most famous schools founded and run by man.

CHAPTER 10

CAST OFF

At the command of God the fish cast the prophet out on dry land. To the human eye it seemed that the sea monster was sick of the man and glad to get rid of him. The fact was that the whole performance was in the divine order.

The “cast-out” experience is broader and more general than one would at first imagine it was far from being unknown by the other prophets, while Jesus plainly affirmed that it would be a frequent happening to His disciples who were then with Him, and the history of all those who followed Him truly in after days.

And so it all took place, and continues to occur. There are removals from the Sanhedrin and Councils; evictions from the Temple and Synagogue; ostracism from the social circle; and sadder still the casting out from the home and from the hearts of one’s own family. And yet, strange to say, these things are done when no sin has been committed, but truth and full salvation have been declared, defended and lived.

Then there are castings out from positions and places that were pleasant and easy, because God had use for us elsewhere. Or perhaps we had learned all that we could in certain conditions and surroundings, and were transferred in a sudden and sometimes a violent way to another locality and work, with circumstances and persons altogether new and different.

We have a great way of fixing and settling ourselves for long and permanent stays. We arrange the grasses found about the head into a bed for the whole body, hang up our clothing on the ribs of a present misfortune or condition, and begin to think we are here to remain, when, lo! we are cast out from the old situation, and our former home is out of sight and far away!

At first when this shock of a sudden change is upon us, we think man is in it all, but later we see with the revelation of time that an active or permissive providence of God bends over every soul occurrence.

Preachers have wondered why they were allowed by a just and almighty ruler to be flung out of a Conference or Synod, and removed in a more or less painful and mortifying way from prominent churches as if they were incompetent or criminal. But afterwards, with the flight of months or years, they saw that it was a blessing in disguise, that it drew public notice to the truth, and resulted in a larger sphere of duty or field of work and performance, even as a wide country is far broader than the sides of a fish.

Wesley was flung from tabernacles that could seat a few hundred people to open squares and fields that could accommodate twenty thousand. He went from a little round box, the size of a barrel, and called a pulpit, to the broad surface of his father's tombstone, where he spoke to ten thousand souls; and to the saddle of a horse which carried him all over England. Scotland and Wales; and to platforms from which his voice was heard, not only by the nation, but by the world itself.

John was cast out of a town, and got a whole island in exchange. He was moved from the sight of a few hundred faces on earth, but God opened the skies and showed him a vision of the shouting, singing, white-robed multitudes of heaven.

We have known of preachers whom Bishops and Conferences considered theologically unsafe and unfit to take charge of a single important city church, and so sat the unfortunates aside and down as well; when, lo! the great Head of the church swept these very excommunicated ones into positions and labors as far ahead of what they had been stripped as the work and territory of a Bishop outstrips that of a preacher who is appointed pastor of a mission chapel on a back alley. Nor is that all, for while scores of churches close their doors to the interdicted man, as was done to Wesley and Whitefield, yet under the voice of Christ and the touch of the Holy Spirit multiplied hundreds of others gladly open up to him, and not only unite, but insist upon his coming.

The blessed conclusion to be drawn from all this is, that we are not to be cast down when cast out. The two expressions are not necessarily synonymous. The fact is they mean and stand for very different things.

It is said of the Jews that “He brought them out that he might bring them in.” May the reader take note of the sweet, deeper meaning of the verse and abide in the comfort which it offers.

CHAPTER 11

A TYPE OF CHRIST

A man has certainly not lived in vain who has helped an immortal soul in some way to the Son of God. After all, soul help and saving is the best work that one can render to another. It is not only the noblest of employments but the most enduring of all human labors.

The Colossus of Rhodes has already vanished, the Parthenon and Coliseum are going, and the Pyramids will disappear in dust and smoke when the burning earth staggers around in the air in the morning of the Judgment Day; but that which is done for a soul in the way of salvation shall outlast them all, and go on through eternity with an increasing glory.

To speak of and for Christ, to illustrate and present Him to the world, and to get men to come to Him, know Him and reverence Him, is the highest possible achievement.

Hence it is that “a voice crying in the wilderness” has never ceased to echo down the generations and stir multitudes of hearts, for it was that of a man forgetful of self and pointing everybody to Christ.

But Jonah went beyond this service and ministry in that he became an actual type of the Savior. Such cases are very rare in the Bible, and generally represent in their lives some single point or feature of the Messiah’s life and mission. Thus we see Isaac bound on the altar typifying the sacrificial death of the Son, while Joseph, in his immaculateness, forgiving love and bountifulness, shows in a larger measure still the wonderful character of the Redeemer.

Jonah is made to foreshadow the burial and resurrection of our Lord. Christ Himself said: “As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Two more important and comfortable truths could not be declared than that Christ should die and rise again. The prophet foreshadowed these stupendous facts, becoming a “sign,” as the Savior called him of the death and resurrection of the Redeemer. This peculiar glory was put upon him. His name is now forever linked with that of the Son of God. He was one of His types.

Of course great suffering was involved to work out the image or symbol, but that is the inevitable condition of presenting Christ to the world. To declare and hold up the Savior truly and completely is to become deeply acquainted with sorrow and go through many schools of pain.

As the Lord Jesus has come and gone there can now be no more types, for He has fulfilled all. But there can be heavenly imitations and such genuine likenesses as to bring great comfort to the church and profound conviction to the sinful world.

Then all of us can be sign-posts. We can have that in the face, in the manner, in the spirit, and in the life which will point clearly and unmistakably to Jesus.

Our tongues should not fail to direct aright here; but more than that, the character should have a voice, and the lips an utterance which translated into words would be exactly what was heard once before in the wilderness of Judea: “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”

CHAPTER 12

A SECOND TRIAL

A man has a style of giving up his brother in disappointment and displeasure on the first failure. God has a way of trying people over again. This accounts for the love which multitudes bear for Him, explains the amazing achievements of some men in the spiritual life, and is the reason for the growing population in heaven. Evidently God's method is the best.

Jonah had deliberately disobeyed God in reference to the Nineveh call and work, had gotten into a world of trouble thereby, and in perfect justice could have been relegated to the rear, while another man was put into his place. But He who said He would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, held on to the unhappy, frightened, demoralized man, and after proper discipline, as described, commanded the whale to cast the prophet upon the shore. Here the patient, merciful God met him with the same old commission: "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

At the first command Jonah "rose up to flee," but when the second bidding came, the Bible says, he "arose and went unto Nineveh."

God evidently knows how to manage men. He sees deeper than we to, and beholds good where we do not, and lays His plans and shapes His providence to bring forth the good stuff, to the recovery and development of the man himself, and the comfort and salvation of others.

In some Methodist Conferences Jonah would have been subjected to a church trial and located. The Lord simply sent him a little while to one of His universities, re-taught him some forgotten truths, instructed him in some other lessons, reissued his license, reread his old appointment, and, lo! Jonah went forth, not only to do the work of his life, but to sweep ahead of anything that has ever been accomplished by any preacher or Evangelist, from that time to the present hour.

In like manner the Lord held on to Mark after he had weakened on his first missionary tour. Paul seems to have lost confidence in him, but the Savior tried him again; and the Apostle himself writes later, “Bring Mark with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

Truly it is well for us all that we have such a wise, merciful and long-suffering God at the head of human affairs. Well for us that he knows us better than men. And well also that He is willing to try us again.

Frequent were the mistakes and grave the blunders that many of us made. We fled from an angry Jezebel, flung ourselves under the juniper tree and wanted to die. But God sent us breakfast instead of a coffin, and a new commission rather than a discharge from service.

At another time we took ship to Tarsus instead of going to Nineveh, but the Lord overtook us, humbled and subdued us, forgave us, and sent us back to the difficult field where we did the best work of our lives.

Or perhaps the servant of God became frightened in the Judgment Hall, where the cause of Christ seemed to be under arrest, and so in some way denied the Lord. There was weeping and in the dark over the cowardice and desertion, but after that came the promise and appointment of a meeting on some mountain of prayer, and then an interview by a Lake of Grace with the Savior, where some thrilling questions were asked and answered, a new commission issued, and a banquet provided for the soul by the hands of none less than the Son of God.

Nothing is more plainly taught in the Word than that God will grant a second trial to a man who is honest and in earnest and wants to do the right, true and holy thing.

What the sandy shore of the wilderness was to Jonah, what the cave in Horeb was to Elijah, and what Lake Galilee was to Peter, so the present moment may be to the reader if he has faltered and failed in the past. Let him kneel down at once and say, “Lord Jesus, try me once more,” and the love and mercy of God for it, and the Word of God for it — he will be received and tried again.

CHAPTER 13

A WONDERFUL SUCCESS

No man ever witnessed a greater success than did Jonah, when he finally obeyed God and went preaching through the streets of the vast and beautiful metropolis of Nineveh.

Here was a city of one million of inhabitants all brought down before God in humiliation, fasting and prayer. From the throne in the palace to the stall in the stable the cry of mourning could be heard!

Let the reader turn to the pages of his story, and read the records concerning great reforms and revivals, and he will find nothing to compare with what took place under the ministry of Jonah.

A gospel meeting even in these enlightened days means that nine-tenths of the city in which it is held, does not know of its existence: while the very smallest fraction of the population is affected for good. For instance an Evangelist may hold a ten days' meeting in a place of five hundred thousand inhabitants. The real facts are, (not a lying report), that perhaps two thousand people may remember that such a series of services is going on; four or five hundred may attend; and fifty or one hundred be genuinely blessed. All this is attended with considerable advertising in the papers, house to house visiting, and the faithful work of a band of helpers in the platform and altar exercises.

Now look at the meeting held by Jonah. He knew not a soul in town, had no singer or helper of any kind, had no church or hall open to him, but preached on the streets entirely. The city itself was one of the largest in Asia, requiring a three days' journey to get across or around it. And it was as sinful as it was big. And yet we read that the prophet had not gone a day's travel into the place until the most astounding revival of ancient and modern times took place. The Word says that "The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them."

The revival swept like a mighty torrent not only up and down the streets, but penetrated the homes; and it entered not simply the hovels, but swept into the palace itself. The sacred narrative declares that the “Word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid aside his robe from him and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.”

Could any language convey to the mind a more vivid and startling picture of the state of things in the Assyrian capital, than that used in the two verses just quoted; and yet all this stir and excitement, this exceeding anguish and fear was traceable to a solitary person who wandered up and down the avenues, and from street to street, crying, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

CHAPTER 14

THE SECRET OF HIS POWER

It is but natural when we see great manifestations of power in Nature or Grace, to ask after and find out the cause. In such a natural and moral universe as we live in there is bound to be a reason for phenomena beheld in either world. If there are results then there must be such a thing as a cause.

Jonah has given a wonderful page to religious and ecclesiastical history. He beheld under his preaching what no other man ever yet has seen. He swept a vast city from its feet in the preaching almost of a single day! He had but one tent and apparently but one sermon. And yet nearly one million people came to the altar! and the Bible says: "God saw their works; that they turned from their evil way." His preaching reached the "masses" and also the "classes." The King came to the Mourners' Bench as well as the peasant, Everybody humbled themselves and cried mightily unto God.

Where lay the secret of this marvelous power?

Of course we know that God was in and back of it all; that it was the Holy Spirit alone who could bow such a multitude and humble such a proud and sinful nation. But what was there about the human instrument that enabled God to use him and act so upon the outside world?

One thing, we doubt not, was the prophet's thoroughly humbled condition. He had been so fearfully taught his helplessness and nothingness in his attempted flight, in the days spent in the fish, and under the billows that he was just where God could use him most effectively. Both the Bible and life confirm the fact that God employs men most powerfully who feel that they are nothing. It is not by might, wisdom or human energy, declares the Lord, but by my Spirit.

And right here can be explained and accounted for the failure or success of men. God will not give His glory to another. His treasure is lodged in

earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be seen to be of God, and not of men.

A second explanation can be found in the man's faith. The history of the past few days had taught him that God is Almighty. That whether on land or sea, or under the sea, He reigned.

Now only let a preacher or any servant of heaven fully realize this truth and he can and will speak just as God desires His messengers to deliver themselves.

A third fact was His recent wonderful rescue. The storm had been a fearful one; the heaving through the spray-filled air down into the sea waves was a still more dreadful experience, and the entombment in the body of the whale more horrible than all. And yet God had saved him in spite of wind and wave, of pitiless men on earth and monsters in the deep. All this put love's tender tremor in the voice and a light in the eye, which wonderfully assisted the servant of God in the proper and effective delivery of messages of divine warning to his fellow creatures.

A fourth cause for the man's power is to be found in the fact that he had been praying a great deal! The three days spent in the fish were filled with supplication. And he not only prayed much, but prayed thorough for according to the sacred narrative he got to shouting and praising God in the body of the whale. He was free within before he was free without.

Who cannot tell the preacher who comes into the pulpit from his knees! A light is on his face that no human power can manufacture. A thrilling something is in the tone of the voice which the schools may imitate but can never grasp and possess. Moreover, the heaven-anointed man brings with him a freshness, solemnity and unction combined that declare plainly, even to sinners, that the ambassador has just left the presence of the King. All see it and all feel it.

So then, happy within and powerful without is the preacher who lingers long at the Mercy Seat. Blessed is he who, like John Fletcher, is heard wrestling in his study with God, and although the congregation was waiting for him, would not leave, but was overheard saying to God: "I will not go unless you go with me." A few minutes afterwards he entered the

pulpit and the audience saw with a glance that the Holy One had come with him.

Thus it happened that Jonah was in the very best spiritual condition when he opened his meeting in Nineveh.

The simple recital and explanation of his power was that God was filling and using an humbled, emptied, believing and praying man.

CHAPTER 15

THE MISSION OF THE IRREGULAR

The explanation of the marvelous influence of Jonah over the city of Nineveh, as given in the foregoing chapter, would not be complete without calling attention to still another feature of the case. This additional fact is found in the word “irregular.”

It seems that people become wedded to a state of things because it has long existed. They have no eyes for a better order of affairs because the present ways and customs were observed and approved by their fathers, and the fathers before them. This of course means political, civil and commercial stagnation.

In like manner in the religious world men settle down into a quiet, satisfied acceptance of religious and ecclesiastical conditions that have got to mean nothing and accomplish naught for the salvation of the soul and the moral transformation of the community. The very unvarying presence and regularity of the means of grace, seems to lull the soul, quiet the mind and bring a strange state upon the people where the voice of truth fails to be heard, or if heart is powerless to arouse.

If Jerusalem, favored as it was of heaven, drifted into such deadness, how naturally would Nineveh sink into a far more deplorable state. Nothing but the irregular, the unusual and the startling would do to wake up this great metropolis from its mental and spiritual torpor and stupor. No ordinary preaching would answer, no prophet or priest such as Israel had seen would accomplish what was necessary to make this vast community get to thinking, repenting, and calling on God for mercy. The Lord had to suddenly bring upon the streets a man with seaweed upon his clothes and in his hair, having a face we doubt not of ghastly pallor, and a manner that fairly bordered on frenzy as he cried out, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” That strange, wild-eyed, soul-thrilling figure contributed vastly to the conviction of the great city. It was God’s employment of the

unusual and irregular. It was the final effort to awaken the spiritual soul to hear the word of warning and be saved.

It is because of this constantly recurring condition in the life of individual and community that God has to repeat this peculiar mode of operation.

The spiritual wants of Israel were provided for in the chosen and ordained priesthood, but the wandering prophet was a moral necessity and did what the priest and Levite could not or would not do. Men settled down in contentment, quiet and ease in Zion with altars, officiating priests and smoking sacrifices. Conscience went to sleep in the midst of songs, incense and worship of the Temple. God had to reach forth and bring in the weeping Jeremiah, the illustrative Ezekiel, and the stern, denouncing Elijah, to wake up and save his people.

In like manner the church, and the holiness movement itself would become lazily satisfied with its preachers, teachers, tabernacles and regular meetings. We get accustomed to the most gifted in our midst; we like our own so well that they cease to convict us; we become so familiar with the different styles of our bowmen and swordsmen, that God is compelled to send a lad from the sheep fold with a sling and a few stones to do a work that the skilled and valiant in Israel cannot or do not accomplish.

In other words, God has to present his truth in different ways, bring it up from other angles and standpoints, have it pronounced with every variety of human accept, and illustrated by every kind of character and temperament in the ranks of men.

It is this fact that accounts for the presence among God's workers of the unlettered, the uncouth, the unpolished, the eccentric and the man with one gift laboring diligently by the side of another who has ten talents and is richly endued in many ways.

Among this strange company we find the grave, the gay, the humorous, the eccentric, the person of mannerisms, the individual with the shout, song or story, and many others too numerous to mention.

Of course there is an amount of mental and spiritual suffering felt by numbers of people in getting accustomed to this new type of worker. Another trying human lesson has to be learned. The "Irregular" breaks in

on old ideas, and long established customs, and actually burdens the soul for awhile as the effort is made to see if these things are of God.

By and by it is noticed that the man who does not express himself or work just exactly like we do, yet is honored of God and reaches individuals whom no one else was ever able to move, convince and lead to Christ. This is enough for the honest-hearted and broad minded man, and such an one will say Godspeed to all, no matter how they may differ with him in mere manners and methods so long as they possess the spirit of Christ and are preaching and living the Truth.

CHAPTER 16

ON THE ROOST

There is nothing more astonishing than the sudden changes beheld in the spirit and conduct of men. Courage is followed by timidity, generosity by stinginess, and nobility by contemptibleness. Louis Stevenson's description of one man in two forms falls short of what is often beheld in actual life. For judging from the different spirits looking from the face, and the diverse language falling from the same lips, there seems to be two, three, four, five — indeed, a score of characters residing in the one body before us. In some cases we seem to have come into possession of a human kaleidoscope, and every turn of events gives us a new life or character arrangement.

Jonah, the victorious, irresistible preacher, is a glorious sight to look upon, but Jonah sitting on the brow of the hill anxiously awaiting for the destruction of Nineveh, is a spectacle disappointing and revolting.

We have a large black bird in the South that has a way of spying out a sick or dying animal, and then straightway, perching itself on a fence or neighboring tree waits with smoothed feathers and solemn visage for development in the dissolution line. This interesting fowl is called the turkey buzzard, and it is marvelous how long and patiently he will abide in his lofty position of inspection and expectation. The hope that animates his breast and sustains him in his lonely vigil is the speedy demise of the animal lying helpless in the field or in the fence corner of the lane.

The prophet Jonah did not think so, but he occupied for days the position and magnified the office of a turkey buzzard. He roosted on the hills near Nineveh, waiting for God to destroy the city before his eyes. That the disaster and ruin did not come was exceedingly disappointing and trying to the vulture nature remaining in him, The grief of the man over the withheld judgment is plainly stated in the Word of God.

The prophet has many like him to this day. Not only are there men who present the woe of hell without tears, and wear an appearance of satisfaction that some people are going there, but there are still others who reveal the vulture nature in looking up signs of failure and sin in people, and in expecting the immediate ruin of individuals whom they dislike and have devoted in their minds to a complete overthrow.

It is a spectacle never to be forgotten to behold Brother and Sister Vulture alight upon a roost of observation, smooth down their feathers, draw down the corners of their mouths, and assume the same meek, pious look that we have seen buzzards wear when watching a dying sheep, only in the case in question it was the temporal misfortune, character ruin or physical death of some man or woman they waited and wanted to see.

God seems to try to exhibit in the physical and animal world some of the features and characteristics of the sinful and depraved nature in man. So when we hear men and women prophesying coming judgments about people whom they do not like, and see them with watch and almanac in hand waiting for death and destruction to strike the victim, we know at once why God put the nature in certain large birds to roost on trees, smooth their feathers, cast down their eyes, assume a thoughtful, melancholy and expectant expression, and await the decease of some wounded animal by the roadside.

Recently a good man died in the ministry, Already we have heard three persons intimate that God took him away because he had opposed them. Here was a group of one dead sheep and three turkey buzzards. Doubtless there were other vultures in trees farther down the road; we did not go on to find out; the three we had beheld were amply sufficient for our vision.

The prophet of Nineveh certainly had the vulture nature well developed in him when he was waiting for the death of a million people to take place in order that his dignity might be upheld and his prophetic fame be preserved. This certainly sweeps ahead of an irate servant of God who anathematizes only individuals, or disgusted with a congregation shakes his coat skirts, wipes the dust from his feet, and tells the audience they can all go to hell if they want to, for he does not care. And yet it is evident that the man possesses the same spirit of the messenger sent to Nineveh, and is

plainly coming up to the completeness and fullness of this original captain of the Buzzard Brigade.

What a contrast is the beautiful, loving heart and life of Christ, with the rending, snapping, fault-finding, abusive and anathematizing nature we find in some people who declare they are His followers, and are filled with His Spirit, and yet who condemn in total all who do not agree with them, and declare publicly that all are going to hell who are not part and parcel of their little “handful.”

Our Christ is not a tiger, but a lamb; and the Spirit he has sent forth into the world to subdue it is not a croaking raven, nor a roosting, devouring buzzard, but a dove.

Truly the representative of heaven on the hills around Nineveh was a poor one. He certainly did not embody nor reflect the spirit and intentions of the heavenly world which had sent him forth as its mouthpiece. He came threatening, when God wanted him to warn the people. The preacher left no loophole of escape, and spoke so as to produce despair when the Lord desired repentance. The ambassador was after the destruction of the people, while heaven proposed deliverance and salvation. Evidently Jonah had misread his instructions, possessed old orders, and was not in late touch with headquarters. He had evidently become soured and embittered. What he regarded as a persuasive sermon sounded like an invitation to dwell in a land flowing with vinegar, shaded with groves of cayenne pepper, and whose dew and rain were sulfur and brimstone.

One thing is certain, that, Jonah sitting on the hills, waiting for God to burn up Nineveh, and becoming sulky and even angry because He did not do it, is a poor illustrator and declarer of the nature of his God, who so loved a sinful world that He gave His only begotten son to die for it, and thereby save all who would from perishing.

In like manner the threatener, denouncer and condemner of men, and good men at that, is a poor representative of Christ, unless he can burst into genuine tears when he says, “Your house is left unto you desolate,” and after that get up on a cross and die full of love and pardoning mercy.

By our fruit men will know us. If we bear thorns they will not call us a fig tree. If we go into the railing and abusive business our letters will all come

directed to Mt. Ebal, instead of Mt. Gerizim or Mt. Zion. If we go around distributing lancets and mustard plasters, the world will never confound us with the band who, on a certain hill side, received bread and fish from the Savior's hand and went up and down the ranks of the multitude with food for the body and words of cheer, love and comfort for the soul.

God help us to be like Him of whom it is said that He went about doing good, healing the sick, preaching the kingdom of heaven and delivering all those who were bound and oppressed by the devil.

CHAPTER 17

ANGRY WITH GOD

At first glance the caption seems to stand for an impossible thing; but reflection will convince that there is scarcely a mood or practice that is more common. Of course it is a most foolish, unprofitable and hurtful action of the mind and heart, but nevertheless men are guilty, and many times so at this point.

Jonah was angry and defended himself in it. He declared that he did well to be mad; and mentioned his grievances.

It seems that he had several causes of offense. One was that God had not done as He said He would. So he was aggrieved with the Divine Being for His inaction.

Then his prophecy of woe was not fulfilled, and this affecting his veracity with the people, therefore his reputation as a prognosticator was seriously injured if not totally destroyed. He had said the city would be overwhelmed in forty days, and behold such was not the case! And worse still a long lease of time had been added to its municipal existence.

The million lives that had been saved by the goodness of God, counted nothing with Jonah. What was the deliverance of a great metropolis from destruction, compared to his name, fame and standing as a prophet. When he said things were going to take place, he wanted them to happen. His reputation must be upheld at every hazard and loss or he did not care to live.

A third grievance was that God should be merciful to a city that deserved so richly the divine judgment.

The unhappy and disgruntled state of the prophet had its tap root embedded in the rank soil of "Self." The man wanted his way whether it conflicted with God's will and purposes or not. Any movement or dealing

therefore that went counter to the human plan and idea was annoying, humiliating, exasperating and generally upsetting.

We may study the vast body of people who are mad and outdone with what they call their luck, fate, wrongs, etc., and it is nothing but anger against God.

Men lay their failures and misfortunes at the door of Heaven. They blame the Lord for the result of their own improvidence, carelessness, folly, and sin.

We knew a lady who became a backslider because a friend of hers lost her reason and had to be sent to a lunatic asylum. She acted as if the Lord was responsible for the woman's insanity when doubtless the natural and easy explanation was to be found in the sinful excesses of a father and grandfather.

We have known people become angry with God over the loss of a fortune, the failure of a plan, or the disappointment of some hope or ambition.

Still others we have seen who grew moody and sulked like Jonah because their utterances and achievements were not honored as they expected; or like the prophet got indignant because God favored certain people whom they disliked and whom they wanted to see judged and destroyed, and not favored and spared,

So this unhealthy, unreasonable and abominable state of mind toward God is anything but unusual whether we look in the Bible, in history, or about us in present life.

The Devil swept every kind of calamity upon Job, and the wife in her fury bade her husband to "curse God and die."

A woman, during an early pastorate of the writer lost her husband, two sons and her fortune. Whereupon filled with rage toward her Maker she turned infidel and so lived and died.

Jesus said that the Jews hated Him without a cause, and so they did. Men do not have to possess a cause to be mad with the Lord. But one of the strangest occasions for anger is seen in the case of Jonah, who was deeply

offended because God had mercy on a million of people, and saved them from a horrible doom of destruction and death.

This is a vision of something more than a childish perversity and unreasonableness. It is a fearful disclosure of the unmercifulness and hellish cruelty that can be found in the human heart, and deeper still that rocklike hardness and grinding crushing, nature that belongs to the carnal mind or the Old Man.

It is fearful to contemplate what a spirit like this would do, if power always went along with the nature. Tyranny in the State and Popery in the Church have given us some illustrations on this line, while the Dark Ages are filled with the blackest proofs of man's cruelty to man, and Domestic History or the pages of Home Life opened at the Day of Judgment, will be fully as astonishing and shocking.

Truly the heart of man is like a deep well, and the rope of our knowledge is short. The light of day is not sufficient to reveal its depths; and there is much to confirm the thought that if the soul is lost it becomes in itself a bottomless abyss.

Verily, the man who can rejoice over the misfortune and woe of others is a desperately bad man. Nor is this all, but the spectacle of a heart willing for a multitude of men and women to be destroyed for the gratification of personal spleen or ambition, not only confirms the Bible statement of heavenly angels becoming infernal, but shows to the thoughtful student of human nature how perfectly possible it is for men themselves to become devilized.

CHAPTER 18

THE GOURD VINE

Jonah evidently felt that he had been personally humiliated by the providence of God. He had been made to stand before the country in the position of a man whose words were not honored by the fulfillment of heaven; he was discounted, so to speak, by the Being who sent him forth, and so now he swelled and suffered with all the trouble that comes from wounded vanity and pride.

In this time of distress when he was acting very much like a spoiled child, the pitiful God caused a gourd vine to spring up in luxuriant arches over him, and become not only a thing of beauty but a place of comfort. Instead of chastening the disgruntled and growling prophet, the Lord gave him a new blessing and mercy.

This touching fact of divine tenderness is seen in every troubled life. We never know one to be plunged in sorrow, but God who lines the storm cloud with silver, plants the Palm tree in a desert, causes water to gush from a rock, would see to it that some kind of comfort and blessing should come straightway into or upon the afflicted life. The gourd vine is seen in many forms in different lives. God gave it to Jonah as a shadow to his head, and to deliver him from his grief. In like manner the divine remembrance is sent to men and women for purposes of consolation. After bereavement and calamity, something is left to cheer us, something made to spring up in our lives to divert our attention from the crushing grief, and cause us to say that after all, life is worth the living.

It may be but a vine, but the Bible says that “Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd,” and so have we all been, and doubtless are so today.

Poor grown-up children that we are, we forget one toy in the presence of another. We cease to remember a great failure, through the comfort of some little thing which springs up in a night and may be gone in a day.

They are very frail affairs to sit under, these gourd vines of ours. Indeed, all of our earthly joys are but slightly-built and lightly-covered arbors, and can be knocked down both speedily and easily.

The ephemeral feature, however, of the temporal comfort utterly fails to impress many, and so we see men forgetful of the old sorrow, take hold of the new joy, become fearfully absorbed in it and act as if the blossoms and leaves of their little arbor formed a roof of iron, and the vine stalks that swayed in the breeze, were pillars of imperishable marble.

It is all lost time to tell the deluded, infatuated man that what he regards as a tower of strength is only a bower of leaves. He smiles in pity for his warner and goes deeper under his gourd vine.

What man in health gives a thought to the possibility of sudden sickness and death. What family rolling in wealth dreams of the fleeting nature of riches. What young people do we see, but act as if youth, with its freshness, vigor and comeliness remained forever. And yet everyone of these conditions are but trembling trellis work, tottering arbors, or the gourd vines of a day and night.

Evidently God would preach to us through the green, spreading branches of the bower which overshadowed Jonah. He would show us ourselves as we would rest in and under conditions that are as frail and unstable as a canopy of leaves and blossoms.

What must the angels think of us? How does God regard us, when, failing to recognize the mission of the gourd vine, refusing to believe in its short lived nature, we actually dispose ourselves in mental states and life attitudes that would indicate we had reached the goal of existence, and rested now in the full realization of conditions permanent and eternal.

Jonah, under the vine, is truly a study. And we are not less so who abide under anything else than the shade of the Tree of Life and the shadow of the Great Rock in the weary land of Time.

CHAPTER 19

THE WORM

The vine with its fluttering canopy of leaves had thrown a cool and pleasing shade upon and about the troubled exhausted prophet. Doubtless his message had been such that no one had proffered him hospitality. He also was glad to be removed from the hot crowded streets of the great metropolis, and was thankful indeed for the shadowy retreat which had become his own so suddenly and providentially.

And yet already a worm was traveling in his direction to bore into and ruin this very arbor of beauty and rest. Its commission was to destroy Jonah's present home and resting-place: and it did so.

Quietly as is the fact stated, yet a great truth is brought out in the simple narrative. The lesson taught is that there is no place on earth, no pleasing condition of life we may enter upon, but a something or somebody will arise to blight and end it. The worm may be slow in coming, and possibly overlooked in its journey, and unrecognized on its arrival; but just the same the vine that we rested under and rejoiced over is seen to droop, shrivel and die, and the Jonah within is beheld on the ground in all the varying stages of sorrow, anger, fury and despair.

Many are the surprises at such moments, and not the least one is that a small circumstance led to the great trouble of life. A worm destroyed a vine many thousand times larger than itself.

Such very little things seem able to affect the life not only seriously but disastrously. Then God when displeased with us, or in trying to save us from delusion and ruin itself, can make a small instrument have the force of a far greater agency. As it has been often uttered in prayer He can take a worm and thrash a mountain to pieces.

What peculiar and differing sensations would fill men today, if from the cozy office, great store, brownstone mansion, nuptial banquet, bridal trip and latest social, political or literary success, they could see in the distance

the worm approaching which has been commissioned of God to bring down to the very dust and grave these fabrics or conditions of earthly comfort, pride and vain glory.

Some might be tempted to smile at the insignificant circumstance, the trifling first beginning of trouble, but very horror-stricken would be their gaze and wildly would beat their heart, could they see as does the eye of the silent God, that in the slow approach of that little matter or happening is the complete wreck of earthly hope, the departure of happiness, and the downfall of life itself.

This approaching doom has the deliberate vermicular motion of its ancient predecessor. It does not come in a straight one. It is turned aside here and there as a worm is forced to leave its track. It looks like it was being rolled back at times, and the victim would escape. Perhaps the man may suspect something is aiming at his peace and rest, and so may endeavor to avoid the disaster by throwing up furrows and digging ditches in the possible path of the advancing trouble.

But the event or thing that is to strike, bore into, and destroy, keeps gathering itself up, pushing itself out and coming on. It looks like it is directed by some dreadful instinct; and though slipping back here, and falling back there, it resumes its slow, twisting, noiseless motion and presses on.

It comes with an infallible pointing and frightful directness, for it has been commissioned by Heaven to reach a certain man who is to be laid low; where earthly props and comforts are to be brought down in ruin about his head in order to bring him to his senses and save, if possible, his immortal soul.

As certainly as God lives and reigns, if we enter upon a false rest, we are going to be driven out of it sooner or later. We may refuse to do our duty, and surround ourselves with the comforts of time and sense, but none the less will the planting of our hands come to naught, and the pride and joy of our life be withered before our eyes.

Already the worm may be on the leaf, under the leaf or on the stalk itself. Already the reader may have had some signs of coming trouble, and the ruin is to be brought about in such a simple way and by such a trifling

agency, that the very contrast of size and force, between the cause and effect will overwhelmingly convince the mind that God is in the whole matter from the beginning to the end.

One thing is certain, that if our souls or life work is hurt by the bowers of Time, then God owes it to us to bring the little latticed and vine entwined affairs down to the dust. Their trailing tendrils on the ground mean our enlightenment and deliverance; while the cause of the calamity which we may have inveighed against and lamented over, was the disguised blessing of our life. A worm of the dust has sometimes done us more good than a shining angel from heaven.

CHAPTER 20

THE EAST WIND

It is quite frequent for individuals, after graduating in a university, to take a special course in some law, medical or commercial college. We have known men, after receiving a clerical education, to obtain a commercial one, and then round up the matter in a penmanship school by taking a diploma there.

In addition to these regular lines of knowledge there are post-graduate classes where the study of some science or art is taken up and pursued far beyond the ordinary curriculum, and the result of increased learning in the head is at once declared to the world in various alphabetical combinations, like Ph. D., S. T. D., F. R. S., L.L. D., etc., which are added to the humbler ones of B. A. and A. M.

So it is in the spiritual life. We learn in the University of Grace the great fundamental truths of redemption and the experience of a full personal salvation; but besides this there are special courses found in the tests and trials of life, in our own environments, in human treatment, and in providential dealings and judgments by which we get to know God, our fellowman and ourselves better, are stripped of foolish and hurtful things, and advancing in heavenly wisdom and love become joined happily and everlastingly to the Son of God.

We question whether anything comes into our lives but arrives with a message and mission to our souls from God. It is the part of sensible men and women to receive the messenger and understand the communication sent them from the skies.

Of course ambassadors and servants do not always bear pleasant tidings, but what they bring is always worth hearing, is at times very important, and on still other occasions is all essential to the welfare, happiness and even salvation of the soul. We never know but that the individual trying to reach us in the crowd may be endeavoring to save us from some calamitous

Ides of March. We may not know that under the guise of friendship a dagger is lifted to bring us down, mortally wounded, on a day of great success. We may not see that the meat has been poisoned, a trap laid for us, and an asp lies coiled under the flowers.

Great are the dangers of the soul without, and great are the perils from within. Sin may slay us from the outside and self may ruin us from the inside. God knows all this, and would save us from every kind of spiritual disaster. The remedy sometimes is a heroic one, and the methods adopted are sharp, severe and heart-crushing. Sometimes the body has to be destroyed in order to save the soul.

So it is not angels that are seen most frequently coming into the life, but, as in the case of Jonah, we notice in their order a raging storm, a pursuing whale, days of darkness under the billows, a destroying worm and a hot, blasting, blighting East wind. And all had messages and missions for the prophet.

It is noticeable that the worm was sent to destroy the bower in which Jonah delighted. The East wind was sent to prostrate Jonah himself. The latter was a greater work than the former. Some men will not go down even when their joys and pleasures are taken away. This necessitates another dealing that comes direct from the sky which will lay the proud, resisting man, all fainting and conquered in the dust. The Bible says, "God prepared a vehement East wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted and wished in himself to die, and said 'It is better for me to die than to live.'"

Many of us know what the East wind is that God had to turn loose upon us. We have felt its dreadful power and fainted under its hot, withering breath. It had to come because we were not sufficiently yielded to God. The worm had taken away some of the comforts and delights of life; the bower was gone, but self, in its pride, still remained, resisting, fretful, argumentative, complaining and defying.

Then came the divine command for the East wind to come. God "prepared it," who knew all about our strength and endurance, and it blew its weakening, sapping, consuming, prostrating breath upon us. We fainted and fell beneath it, realizing our helplessness and confessing our

nothingness. We were completely whipped and utterly brought down, but were defeated and laid low by the hand and dealing of Almighty God.

Truly, the East wind, with all its suffering, is a blessing indeed, if it humbles the haughty spirit, brings the soul into a blessed submission, and makes the man perfectly silent before God. This is what it did for Jonah, what it has done for many since his day, and what it can still do for any child of man.

CHAPTER 21

THE SUMMING UP OF LIFE

If the prophet Jonah reviewed his life from the hill top near Nineveh, or studied it from a later period, he must have been deeply impressed with its remarkable vicissitudes. There is a perfect panorama of winding highways, tossing waves, rolling ships, howling winds, lonely shores, crowded streets, strange faces, frightened people, solitary hill tops, vanishing blessings and unrewarded labor crowded into his life. All these changing features are but signs of the rapid alternations that befell him of inward state and outward condition. As from a great battledore he is tossed from peril to rescue, from defeat to victory, from success to apparent failure, from utter isolation to a crowded metropolis and apparently as helpless as a shuttle-cock. A perfect rush and whirl is in his existence, and every hour gives a new surprise. Now he is on the land, now off; now on the sea, then under it; now flying through the air, and next in the body of a whale; now on a desolate shore and again in a crowded city; now the object of general regard and awestruck attention, and immediately afterwards utterly forgotten and overlooked! Who can read of these happenings without marveling at such a human history?

Hence we repeat it if the prophet indulged in a retrospective look at his past he must have been profoundly impressed as well as awed.

One thing is certain, that he never would have chosen such a path or course of life. The very thought of what awaited him could not have been borne, and so mercifully was hidden. Out of it all, however, came to him not only the discipline of his soul and development of character, but the obtainment of a knowledge of himself and of God that he could not afford to be without. Silenced as he was on the outside of the walls of Nineveh by the Lord, yet Jonah then, in faith and grace, was millions of leagues ahead of the fearful white-faced fugitive who had taken ship at Joppa to go to Tarsus.

We doubt not that the reader of these lines would be startled into the liveliest reflections and driven to the most powerful mental conclusions, if he would look back over his past, and see the remarkable way in which he has come to the present hour.

Some of the Bible maps have traced out in a winding, twisting and circling line the course of the Israelites through the wilderness on their way to Canaan. Not only does the wavering, zigzag track, doubling on itself repeatedly, declare the state of the people in their progress and backsets, their triumphs and failures; but the various transpirings on the road furnish a perfect commentary, not to say history, of the moral condition of that wandering nation. The weariness of the desert, the quails, the fiery serpents, the false teachers and the brazen censers, the opening earth and consuming fire, the smitten rock and uplifted symbol of the Redeemer; all faithfully describe and locate them in the religious and character world.

In as remarkable a way, men and women are coming up through time to eternity and from earth to heaven. With two worlds against the soul, and but one for it; with friends acting as enemies to one's spiritual interests; and with the Bible statement of the fact that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household;" who wonders at the strange happenings that crowd into the life of one seeking for truth, aiming to fulfill duty, and struggling toward the skies. Who is surprised that devils and men will at different times powerfully affect the individual, and bend the straight line into a wavering, faltering movement, then into a backward course, and finally into a dead stop for months, years, or forever?

Hence, it is to the thoughtful, that the striking features and incidents of the wilderness march of the Jews, means much more than cold historical facts of the past of a vanished nation. The flesh in the nostril, the burning sting of sin, the trembling mountain of fire, the senseless idolatry at its foot, the murmuring over recurring hardships and the scourging hand of God, are all terrible realities in many lives. Some people profited thereby, but others leave their carcasses in the wilderness.

To stand then in Canaan and look back towards Egypt is to gaze upon a roundabout path lined with remarkable and terrible happenings indeed. Or with Jonah, to fix the eyes upon the past is in a figure to see a strange procession of angry-looking skies, a waste of tossing billows, a casting out

by the hands of men, a perfect submerging in a sea of sorrow and a coming forth therefrom by the power of God. These scenes may be followed by a line of great battles and victories, labors and successes, interblended with the strangest and most trying experiences of withering hopes, failure as to public recognition of success, the hand of God apparently turned against his servant, bodily comforts taken away and the curtain dropping at last upon a life unrewarded, and left to utter solitariness.

Here is a maze of the most puzzling character; a problem that simple human wisdom cannot understand. But to God it is plain enough, and full of gracious design from beginning to end.

The spiritual mind, taught of God, can get glimpses and flashes here and there of the heavenly plan running through all the life tangle and perplexity; but one has to be nearing the conclusion of the earthly warfare and journey, before seeing in the clearest and most powerful way how God in a blessed sense was in and through it all. He made us to unload at one place, and take on at another. We were taught humility, patience, tolerance, charity, faithfulness and steadfastness marvelous to say by our very defects and failures. The bitterest hours and experiences of our life delivered us from things that were hurtful to the soul, taught us wisdom from our mistakes, drove us closer to Him by revelations of our weakness, and made the trials and difficulties of our lot that we imagined would overwhelm us, actually work together for our good.

All this throws a new, sweet light upon a stormy, agitated and deeply-tried life. At the same time it brings a blessed explanation to another kind of existence full of monotony and drudgery; a life crowded with duties of the most uninteresting character. The power and love of God is here also, and the pressure upon mind, heart and spirit, is like the load which forces the rich wine from the grape, or the heavy heel that sends the fragrance of the bruised violet, up from the grass into the face of the delighted passerby.

There is a forest in Germany that has been so worked on by one of the past Emperor's chief gardeners or horticulturists, that it is a woodland mystery, with its winding roads, rambling paths, tangled thickets and gloomy, shadowy glades. It seems to have no plan in its arrangement; and one can but wonder at the meaningless combination of the forces of nature

and art in such a place. There is one spot however, in the center of the woods, where from an elevated point the complete and beautiful scheme of the constructor bursts upon the vision, and what seemed a tangle is beheld to be a most lovely design with a perfect fulfillment and execution of the same.

We doubt not that it is granted to the faithful soul, before leaving this world, to have just such a view of the preceding years with all their changes, separations, bereavements, heart breaking happenings and unexplained mysteries. The elevation from which one looks back may be the calmness itself of the evening of life; or it may be the loftier position still, the pillow of death. Whichever it may be, there will suddenly rush upon the clarified vision of the soul at that time the blessed, gracious plan of God in and through all the years it has lived on earth. The quiet summing up of the events that seemed so strange, tried so severely, and looked so dark and unexplainable, will result in the soul-melting discovery that God was with us and for us all the time.

We turned in sorrow and loneliness down the road. We imagined at times that Heaven itself had forgotten us. But some one drew near and walked with us. Our eyes were so hidden that we did not know Him for quite awhile; but did not our hearts burn within us as He spoke to us, and opened up Moses and the prophets by the way!

There will come a sweet, glad experience sooner or later to every true follower of Christ, when the Lord from the head of the table of his completed life shall reveal Himself with uplifted and blessing hands; and we will then discover that He has been with us, not only on the journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus, from one city of earth to another, but all the way from Zion in this world, to Zion the beautiful and glorious in Heaven.

CHAPTER 22

GOD HAS THE LAST WORD

The book of Jonah ends peculiarly and most significantly. It closes with the man silent, while God does all the talking.

The prophet, full of garrulity, had spoken as unwisely as he had glibly. He may have done some faithful preaching for awhile, but he concluded his labors with some bitter and foolish statements. At this juncture the Lord meets the false opinions and judgments of his servant with the living parable of the gourd vine; silences him completely with its application; and ends by having the last word.

Here closes the life of Jonah as far as the sacred historian gives it. The book ends with Jonah silent and God talking. So we drop the man where God leaves him and will not even speculate over the abrupt termination of the biography. The sudden conclusion is not without its significance; but where the Book itself is silent, we will not break in with any word of ours. We feel that enough has been stated in the four brief chapters of the man's life to warn the most disobedient, encourage the weakest, bring down the highest and haughtiest and reach those who are counted the most unapproachable and immovable of men.

This is surely teaching enough for one small book. A man who has been used to impress and illustrate as many truths as did Jonah can be suddenly returned to obscurity or hidden in the grave with perfect wisdom and propriety by Him who doeth all things well.

So we leave the man and his history suddenly as did the Bible biographer, and rest the case in the hands of the jury of our readers.

The concluding lines of this volume shall be devoted then not to Jonah, but to something that was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, that the prophet became silent and God had the last word. Let us see what light, strength and comfort we can obtain from the thought.

There are men who love to hear themselves talk. They make volubility to be truth itself, and construe loudness of tone into a kind of final judgment from which there can be no appeal. Their perfect assurance would indicate that they had been in all the councils of Eternity. They do not know many things, but all things. They have their ideas of the creation, the resurrection, and all eschatological events, irrespective of any statements of Revelation. The Bible is evidently a back number with them. They can prove by a pronoun that the book of Jeremiah was not written at the time, nor by the person generally supposed by the church. They also have indisputable evidence that David did not write the Psalms, and that the fish did not swallow Jonah. It is both amazing and inspiring to behold the vast heights of their vanity towering above us as exhibited in the form of final and unchangeable conclusions,

One of these days this class of babblers will be still. An awful hush will fall upon them, while he who has been silent so long, will do the talking. With a look he will render them speechless, and then, showing them their superlative ignorance, silliness, and folly, will banish them from his presence with the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed." The poor little word-manipulator of time will be left to crushing and overwhelming reflections of an eternal nature while the voice of the Lord will fill the heavens and continue to sound through the universe as its maker, benefactor, preserver and controller forever and ever.

So will it be with the individual well known to many of us, whose tongue wagged tirelessly in profanity, irreverence, detraction, slander and criticism. God himself in his perfection could not please him, and so he fretted, fumed, vilified and stormed on, until suddenly smitten with disease, the hour comes when he is unable to respond to the simplest queries of physician, nurse or member of the family; the eyes glaze, the chin drops, and the long-coming and long-lasting period of silence begins. Memory starts to its feet then, while Conscience and Remorse apply a pitiless lash, and through the resounding strokes can be heard the voice of God, who was not allowed to speak before, or if speaking was not heeded. It is noticeable that the Lord has the last and the everlasting word now.

The Jews murmured continually in the wilderness against God and his servant Moses. Nothing suited them. They did not like the bread from

heaven. They fretted for flesh, and sighed for what had been left behind in Egypt. They constantly found fault with Moses, and were deeply offended when the Lord destroyed the false teachers, Dathan and Abiram. In a word, their whole lives were spent in disobedience to the will of Heaven, while their lips seemed to be in constant motion in finding fault, and attacking the providence of God.

We read in the Scripture that the Almighty buried every one of them! And now, as the sands of Arabia covered their dead faces, and their unruly tongues were stilled at last, God had the final word in each case. He was speaking when they were past all utterance in the death struggle. And when they were left in long rows of silent mounds in the distance, the Lord could be heard saying to Moses as regarded the future movements of the survivors, "Speak unto the children of Israel all that I shall command you." Again He had the last word.

It is all a type and foreshadowing of what is going to happen to the world itself one day. All around us in life there seems to be no end to the silly babbling and outcry against God. The vilest and stupidest of mankind feel free to assail in some way the High and Holy One of heaven. Babel, with its clash and confusion of tongues, seems to have been reconstructed. Arguers, deniers, ravers, falsifiers and blasphemers are the builders of the impious verbal edifice. The words of God are contradicted or explained away. The works of God are limited, doubted or denied altogether. Human tongues are pouring forth volumes of invective, abuse, infidelity and senseless clamor, against the Lord of heaven and earth, who in perfect silence beyond the clouds, hears every word, and yet continues to send the sun on the just and the unjust, and the rain upon the evil and the good.

But the day is coming when He shall appear in the heavens, and there will be a great and dreadful silence on earth. He will take His seat on a great White Throne, and this much-misunderstood, greatly-maligned and long-abused God will speak to the awe-struck, dumb-smitten nations gathered before Him. The medley of human tongues will be over at last. Profanity will die in this overwhelming presence, and Infidelity, with its chattering black brood of Atheism, Deism, Free Thought and Higher Criticism will be stricken speechless and lifeless with a single look at the

face of Him before whom the very heavens flee away and no place is found for them.

One voice alone is heard in that hour, and it rules everything and everyone completely and supremely. The long-time prophesied monologue takes place at last. God does all the talking, and not an angel, man, woman or devil, dreams of answering back. He closes the feverish, foolish, shallow, ignorant and impotent conversations of earth. He has the last word. Let the reader lay the salutary lesson to heart, for it is true of the individual, the nation and the world itself — God in each case is going to have the last word.

There are a number of applications of the truth above stated that are profitable and most comfortable. We mention only two.

There are many isms and schisms today. There are many departures from the faith once delivered to the saints, and no end of “lo, heres!” and “lo, theres!” and “we are the people of God, and all others are wrong and bound for hell.”

How cheering and assuring it is to those who are under ban and proscription to realize that these utterances are not final. That there is another voice yet to be heard, and it is that of One who never made a mistake. God will speak the last word about all these matters, and it will be the right word. There are many faithful souls calmly and restfully awaiting that day and hour.

Again, the closing verdict of the world in regard to the work, life and character of many individuals is far wide of the truth. Some men go down to the grave honored by the community or nation, and are put on pedestals in more respects than one. In numerous instances by this mistaken judgment of men, falsehood is rewarded as though it was truth, and badness receives the crown of virtue.

Fortunately for the moral universe God has the last word. Sin cannot get into heaven, and he who wears a crown and reigns in eternity on a throne prepared by a just as well as a holy God, deserves the diadem and is fit for rulership. So God’s last word pulls down many whom the world in its ignorance exalted.

Still again, there are persons who are better than others suppose. They have been misunderstood, misquoted, misrepresented and slandered. They, through busy and false tongues, have a reputation poorer than their character. Their standing with God is better than their standing with men. The world has seen some weak points, or some single error, or possibly a defeat; but God sees the true inner life and scores of victories in the heart, over the body, and in the private life, all unknown to men.

Hence it is well for justice itself, and the present and future welfare of souls, that the opinions and judgments of men are not final. Good people may die and be buried under the adverse sentence of a multitude, but the true and real judgment of character is still to come. Before the soul is sent to and fixed in a changeless destiny, the Lord himself speaks, and we may be sure it will be a right sentence. It may reverse the opinions and conclusions of men, but it will be true just the same.

Hence it is that every wronged and misjudged individual on earth need not be dismayed at the clash of unfriendly tongues and the deliverances of the councils of this world. He can lay his head upon his dying pillow sustained with the double consolation, first that he knows he pleases God, and, second, that after all the harsh criticisms and false judgments of men, God has the last word.

This fact has cheered the hearts of the martyrs in the past, and the persecuted in all ages. So should it inspire a multitude of suffering spirits in our present day, and sustain and deliver the great host of the unborn, who are to follow us in life's battles, trials, vicissitudes and victories in the centuries to come. To all alike the thought is most blessed and comforting, that God has the last word.

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