

AN ANSWER OF FIRE

Elijah, the Prophet, Overcomes the Prophets of Baal.

STORY BY THE "HIGHWAY AND BYWAY" PREACHER

Scripture Authority.—1 Kings, Chapter 18.

SERMONETTE.

"The God that answereth by fire, let him be God."—Fire was the element over which the god Baal was supposed to have special power, and when Elijah proposed his test it appeared in every way reasonable to the people and the prophets of Baal. The fire should be a sign to the people as to which was the true God. The result of the test we know.

Fire was the symbol of God's presence, and it was the fire which God had kindled and which the priests were to keep constantly burning by which the fire on the altar of sacrifice was to be kindled. Long since because of the apostasy of Israel had this fire been quenched, and now if the altar fire was rekindled it must be from God. Thus was Elijah choosing a token which would at once test the strongest claim of Baal and at the same time bring the people together in the divinely-ordered form of worship, and make possible the revelation of God's presence and power.

The child of God need never fear the test which involves the true elements of worship and seeks the revelation of God's presence and power. But we must remember that Elijah was three years getting ready for this task on Mount Carmel. Three years of waiting. Three years of prayer. Three years of fellowship with God. Three years of simple, childlike dependence upon his care and protection. And then came the call from God and the opportunity for service.

It was the testimony of Moody as under his leadership the fires of revival were kindled wherever he went, that it was the result of the long-continued prayers and the patient waiting of some saint or group of saints. It is prayer and faith which brings down from heaven the manifest power and presence of God to the defeat and the destruction of the evil.

Fire typifies a two-fold process of manifestation of God. That of purifying and cleansing and that of judgment.

God's children are purified and cleansed by the operation of his word. "Now, ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you," said Christ. Just as the impurities are burned out and the pure gold left, so by the processes which God is carrying out in his children he is burning out the dross in order that the pure gold of righteousness and truth may be made manifest.

God is spoken of as a consuming fire, and thus is typified the judgment of God upon evil.

THE STORY.

"WHAT! Thou hast seen Elijah and hast let him get quite away again?" and the shrill voice of Jezebel with rising inflection and added intensity with every word plainly indicated the astonishment, indignation, scorn and contempt which surged over her. King Ahab in confusion struggled to make answer, but he had

only spoken a few faltering words when Jezebel broke out again:

"Here thou hast been seeking for thy enemy and the enemy of thy people for the past three years, and when the gods give him into thy hands thou lettest him get quite away again!"

"But it was not the gods that gave him into my hands," Ahab protested, "for he came boldly to meet me, saying his God had sent him."

"His God!" scornfully repeated Jezebel. "What god is there beside the god Baal whom we worship?"

"And he has asked that all the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the groves who eat at thy table shall meet him on Mount Carmel," Ahab continued, without answering Jezebel's question.

"Thou fool!" shrieked Jezebel, letting her passion quite get the better of her and so distorting her face that she seemed more demon than woman.

"Think'st thou that he will meet them there? Surely, he seeketh only to put thee to further confusion and shame. The dirty dog, the vile hypocrite, dare not show his face before the prophets of Baal."

"But Obadiah declareth that there is no doubt but that Elijah will be on Mount Carmel at the appointed time," protested Ahab.

"And what reason hath Obadiah for supposing anything?" contemptuously demanded Jezebel. "Verily, I believe sometimes that it is he who has kept Elijah hidden from my wrath during all these years."

"Thou speakest unjustly," protested Ahab, "for the king hath no more faithful servant than this man Obadiah."

"But somebody who is close to thee and hath known of thy plans must have kept the prophet warned, else could he not have escaped our search all these years. And who but Obadiah could do this thing?"

"And it was Obadiah who first brought me word to-day that the prophet Elijah was in the land and close at hand," reluctantly admitted Ahab, as he recalled how Obadiah had sent him to meet the prophet that day.

"Ho, ho! As might have been expected, and yet thou needest to be told what ought to be plain enough to thee. And now thou art foolish enough to believe that the prophet will keep his word. He hath but slipped through thy fingers again, and while the prophets of Baal are gathering on Mount Carmel Elijah will be far, far away."

Ahab was silent. The influence of his wife was so strong upon him that when in her presence she dominated his every thought and action, and now that which before he had not called into question seemed uncertain and doubtful. He wondered now how he could have been so weak as to let the prophet Elijah escape him. He recalled how when first Obadiah had brought him word of anger and revenge filled his heart against the prophet, and he fully intended to call him to a severe accounting, but as he had come into that commanding presence his courage had failed him and with a desperate effort at the display of kingly dignity and authority he had demanded:

"Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"

And then the piercing eyes of the prophet had been fixed upon him, seemingly looking right through him, and making him quail and tremble as his words of accusation and condemnation were thundered forth. With bowed head he had listened, and when the prophet had commanded him to summon all the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel he had promised like a child to obey.

But now under the spell of his wife's suspicions and wrath a revulsion of feeling had taken place and he began to doubt himself and everything and everybody. Such is the evil influence of a wicked life which comes to completely dominate another.

"Shall we not summon the prophets to Mount Carmel?" at last he ventured to ask, half doubtfully.

A wicked gleam came into the eyes of Jezebel as a sudden thought came to her and she said:

"We will let Obadiah decide. If he thinketh his friend Elijah will keep tryst with the prophets of Baal, let them be summoned. But," and she fairly hissed the words as she leaned toward Ahab, "if Elijah come not—and he won't—verily the life of Obadiah shall be forfeited. He shall atone with his blood for the affront offered Baal."

Without a word Ahab turned and left the apartment. He knew it would be useless to protest, even though he chose to do so. The decision of summoning the prophets must rest with Obadiah.

"Remember," he exclaimed later, when Obadiah had come to him in response to his summons, "remember, it means thy life if the prophet Elijah appeareth not!"

"Yes, I know," was the quiet response. "He will come. Let the prophets be summoned."

On the day appointed, with much pomp and ceremony the great company of Baal set forth for Mount Carmel, their gorgeous apparel and banners and images borne before them making an imposing display and calling forth the shouts of admiration and approval of the great crowds of people as they followed.

"Baal shall have a fitting sacrifice to-day," whispered Jezebel to her chief prophet just before he took his place in the procession. And then as her eyes sought out Obadiah where he stood surrounded by the guard she had caused to be appointed, she added: "Let him not escape."

The hours passed wearily to the queen. Her usual pleasures and diversions failed to hold her attention. Confident as she was of the outcome of the gathering on Mount Carmel, her spirit was strangely ill at ease. That night troubled dreams came to break her rest and the next day found her in a state of nervous excitement and irritation from which late in the afternoon she sought relief by resting upon her couch. Not a breath of air was stirring and the sun seemed more fierce in his heat than ever, and as she lay down she said to herself:

"Surely the gods will be appeased this day and will send rain."

How long she slept she knew not, but she was suddenly aroused by a loud crash in the room and sprang up to find the wind blowing in a perfect hurricane and the heavens so black with clouds that she could scarcely see in the gloom the broken fragments of the big urn which had stood before the open window. Trembling and frightened she turned to flee and ran squarely into the arms of some one who at that moment had come hurrying down the passageway. A sudden flash of lightning revealed the awe-stricken face of Ahab bending over her.

"What alleth thee?" she whispered. "Taketu thou the death of Obadiah thus to heart?"

"Nay, Obadiah liveth," Ahab exclaimed, "and the prophet Elijah hath appeared on the mount and his God hath answered him with fire, and the prophets are slain."

"All the prophets?" she asked, trembling like an aspen.

"Yea, all!"

On Cutting Sermons Short.

"It's a fact," remarked a well-known local minister of long experience the other day, "that a minister cannot be successful these days unless he holds his sermons down to reasonable brevity. These jokes you hear about long sermons aren't just jokes. The people of to-day won't put up with long sermons. I found that out a number of years ago in another city. I had noticed that the congregation had been gradually thinning out, and I began to preach sermons of not more than 30 minutes in length. The regular attendance at church increased fully one-half in less than two months. I think a minister should hold his sermons down, no matter how many good things he has to say, because he can then get a bigger audience and consequently accomplish more."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

A Blessing, Not a Blow.

"Here's a good one," said the telegraph operator. "A dear old minister came yesterday and sent this telegram to a conference that had assigned him to a charge: 'Acts 20:32.' He explained that the citation was: 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God.'"

"Well, the careless operator at the other end handed the message to the conference so that it read: 'Acts 23:2.' That text, the bewildered conference found on reference to its Bible, reads:

"And the high priest Ananias commanded them who stood by to smite him on the mouth."

Household Philosophy.

A new broom always sweeps clean, but a new cook doesn't always make good biscuits.

Probably the best salve for healing the broken heart of a woman is a mixture of time and another man.

Cupid is a wise little chap. He leads the couple to the altar, then quits the game.—Chicago News.

HURT HOME TRADE

WHAT GREEDY, SHORT-SIGHTED PEOPLE DO.

WAYS THAT KILL CUSTOM

Fair Treatment by Tradesmen Assists in Building Up Towns and Increases Business for All.

One of the troubles in small towns seems to be that petty jealousies keep the business men from working in harmony. There is just so much business to be had, and it either goes to the home stores, the mail order houses, the department stores or some nearby city, or perhaps is let go to a more progressive neighboring town. It should be the aim of every town to make its trade territory as large as possible. It is the attitude of the business men that counts. One good, live man in business in a small town is a benefit to the whole place. He brings trade to all. People are swayed to and fro by opinions that are formed sometimes without careful reasoning. It is the best policy to treat each and every one fairly and honestly.

Let the average farmer think that he has been given the worst end of a bargain, and he will ponder over the matter for years. It is not a good idea for a merchant to have a scale of prices for different customers. Charge John Jones \$12 for a suit of clothes, and sell the same suit to his neighbor, Jim Smith, for \$11, and Jones will find it out and feel that he has been treated unfairly, and Jones is right about it, too. There is one town, a county seat, in a western state, a place of nearly 3,000 population. Its trade territory extends for a dozen miles in each direction. The country has a large foreign population. They are the best classes of customers, liberal buyers and not quibblers over prices. Still, they desire just treatment. A few years ago thousands of dollars in trade was diverted from the town through a dealer in agricultural implements being a poor business man. A wealthy German purchased from him several hundred dollars' worth of agricultural machinery, wagons and other goods. The farmer wanted a harrow. A price was made—\$33. A few days later the farmer was at a town where there were but two stores and an elevator. He saw the same kind of harrow and was told that \$23.50 would buy it. He visited the county seat a few days later, called on the man from whom he purchased his implements and again asked the price of the harrow, and was told the same as before. He then stated that the same make and kind of harrow had been offered him for \$4.50 less. After some talk he was told that he could have the piece of machinery for the same price. He did not take it, but secured the one offered him by the man in the smaller town. He did not like the style of the dealer in the larger town. In fact, he concluded that the other storekeepers of the place were of the same caliber. He quit trading, and not alone was his trade lost to the county seat town, but the trade of a score of his neighbors, and even they changed their post office addresses to the smaller place. The trade of this one farmer lost to the county seat was the means of building up a healthy trade in the smaller town and bringing to it other business places.

KEEP TO THE FRONT.

Energy and Progressiveness Demanded by Present Strenuous Times.

Do you hear the rumble? The noise of the wheels of the car of progress? If you are deaf to it just make up your mind to join the ranks of the nonprogressive and the failures. This is a strenuous age, and a time when to succeed in business requires work, intelligent work, and a lot of it. System is the watchword, and work, work steady and directed by brain, is what brings success. There are so many who are engaged in trade that are little equipped for it. These days, to succeed, it is necessary that every phase of the business you are in be understood. What rules to-day may undergo a change to-morrow. The man in business must be up-to-date or very likely he will soon be the loser. Keep posted on the markets, the conditions of trade in general, on the latest methods of doing business. If you do not—well, just put your name on the back-number list and drop out. The sooner the better for your own pocketbook and the welfare of your family.

Don't keep in the rear of the procession. There is plenty of room up front. Once in the rear, you may be inclined still to further lag behind and let the procession get clear out of sight. Lots of room in the front, and if you can carry the banner, all the better. Good old Step-Lively is always there, and he can hear every command, and right from the front, too. He can watch the maneuvers of the enemy and has by far the best chance of doing his duty well. The boy in the rear can only see the movements of those before him, and is pretty likely to get a stray shot from a point outside his view. If you want to succeed in life, don't get in the rear.

The Two and One Game.

It takes two to make a bargain, but only one of them gets it.—Puck.

Korean English.

Our translator has handed in the following conundrum: The magistrate of Palk Chyon Mr. Palk Iwki asked the dismissal for own position and said that he is impossible to suppress the insurgents as he is quite ignorant of any education, otherwise there are nothing to help the people but trouble.—Korea Daily News.

THE OLD HITCHING POST.

It May Be Useful, but Is Unsightly and Generally a Town Nuisance.

That good old hitching post! What a familiar object to all of us who had the good fortune to be reared near a country town. Still, while tender memories hang around the old post, there is much about it at times worthy of condemnation. There is nothing that makes a main street of a small town look so shabby and thoroughly countrified and back-woodish as a row of rickety old hitching posts on each side of the street. Constant tramping and pawing near them makes holes in the ground, unsightly mud-holes in damp weather and ill-smelling and offensive in numerous respects. It may appear a bit of enterprise on the part of the merchant to erect a number of posts in front of his store, but does he gain business by it? How often do you see Farmer Shorter drive in, tie his team to the post in front of Smith's store and go over to Green's to do his trading? As long as hitching posts are allowed to occupy places in front of

stores on main streets it will be impossible to keep the streets in the neat and good condition that they should be in. Far better to have on some unoccupied street within easy reach of the business sections posts where the farmers can hitch their teams. Every town which has the power to control its own affairs should make regulations that will keep the hitching post from "ornamenting" the main streets.

Owl Caused Conflagration.

An owl flew out of a burning chimney at Coverach, Cornwall, England, with its feathers on fire, and perched on a hay-rick near at hand. The result was that the rick was completely destroyed, and several stacks of straw barely escaped.

How Paris Deals with Rats.

A direct and immediate system of dealing with the rat pest is that of the Paris sewers. A naked electric wire is stretched about six inches above the ground, and on it are strung pieces of horseflesh. The rats paw at the wire and are "electrocuted."

WARNINGS FOR FLAT HUNTERS

Tenants of Building Get Even with Miserly Agent.

There is an apartment house in The Bronx whose agent's idea of thrift and economy is "spend not a penny to-day that can be saved until to-morrow." He buys but one load of coal at a time for this apartment house, and never orders a second load until the first is all gone. Then it takes the coal dealer 12 to 24 hours to deliver. Meantime the tenants burn gas and shiver. The agent also instructs the janitor to be extremely saving in the use of coal, in the furnace and in the boiler. The result is that some days the so-called hot water is only warm and on other days it is entirely cold.

The tenants have grown tired of this routine and several of them have moved out since the winter set in. Others are posting notices in the hall for the benefit of flat hunters. Two samples are as follows:

"No; we don't furnish hot and cold water. We furnish two kinds of cold water."

"Six days in the week shalt thou have steam heat, and on the seventh day thou shalt burn gas or freeze, as pleaseth thee most."—New York Press.

The Anti-Monopoly Crusade.

Uncle Jephtha—The railroad is sellin' tickets ter Chicago fer four dollars. They can't afford ter do it at that price.

Uncle Steve—No; that's what Hiram said. He went an' bought nine tickets an' didn't use one of 'em. Said if he had money enough he'd keep on buyin' tickets till he'd busted up the hull railroad monopoly. He's got it in fer the trusts, Hi has.—Puck.

Giving her policemen helmets, Spain is also sending them to school for 13 months.