

ABSALOM THE USURPER

STORY BY THE "HIGHWAY AND BYWAY" PREACHER

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Scripture authority—2 Samuel, 15: 13-18: 33.

SERMONETTE.

Destruction is from within. Every man builds the scaffold on which is executed the monster of his misdeeds.

Absalom is but one example of the myriads which the world's history affords of the fact that an evil life contains the seeds of its own undoing.

Pride which built up such a splendid conspiracy, proved the medium through which came defeat and final destruction.

A man, after all, is only as strong as his weakest point, and notwithstanding Absalom's rare genius and clever scheming, he fell an easy victim to that desire for magnificence and display which had been a ruling passion of his life. A night campaign, swift and full of hardship and danger, did not appeal to him, but the leading of a magnificent army in a spectacular campaign won his approval and led him to defeat and death.

That is about all there is to be said concerning Absalom. As we see him in that last ignominious hour how the mask is torn from his beautiful face and form, and the hideous character which he had grown within stands revealed! A dishonorable, disobedient, Godless son going down in disgrace to a grave dug in the woods, while the magnificent mausoleum which he had erected with a statue of himself stands empty, and, in silent mockery, condemns the folly of man's planning apart from the will and purposes of God.

In this incident is strikingly emphasized the old, familiar adage: "Man proposes and God disposes."

David realized this, and as he fled from Jerusalem, a broken-hearted father, he lifted his eyes to heaven and said: "If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both the ark and its habitation. But if he (God) thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

Here was both the spirit of true repentance for the sins which had come into his own life, and whose fruitage was to be found in the present wicked plottings of his son; and wholehearted submission to the sovereign will of God.

And both the repentance and the submission find their inspiration and strength in the faith which laid hold upon God in the dark hour and clung to him as only the helpless soul can cling which is reduced to the last extremity and sees that only God can deliver.

THE STORY.

JERUSALEM, which had but a few hours before wept over the aged king, as he fled with his few followers, now rang with the shouts for the new king. Ever a lover of pomp and ceremony, that was a most spectacular entrance which Absalom made as, with his gathered army and the increasing multitudes who were carried away by the enthusiasm of the mo-

ment, he made the journey from Hebron and took possession of the royal city and the palace of cedar which David had built.

As he rode through the streets surrounded not by fifty runners and a few chariots, but by a multitude of chariots and a great company of fighting men, he smiled with grim satisfaction. Far beyond the greatest expectations had his plot carried. He had not expected to enter the gates of Jerusalem without a struggle. He had not dreamed that so easily and quickly were his ambitions and hopes to be realized. But here he was within Jerusalem's gates, and yonder the splendid palace of cedar. The air rang with the shouts of the multitudes as they cried: "Long live King Absalom!"

With an expression of supreme satisfaction and self-assurance upon his face Absalom turned to Ahithophel, who was riding with him in the chariot, and said:

"Where are those who stand with David?"

"Be not over-confident, oh, king, for where David is there will be found those who will lay down their lives for him," rejoined Ahithophel, almost curtly.

There was no man in all the land so keen and wise as Ahithophel. For long years he had served at the court of King David, and was acquainted with every detail of the business of the kingdom. Through some slight, fancied or real, at the hands of the king, he had become dissatisfied, and when the plotting of Absalom had so carried the nation by storm he had welcomed it as his opportunity of gaining a greater ascendancy over the nation and had quickly joined himself to the court of Absalom which he had set up at Hebron, and when tidings had come that David had fled from Jerusalem he counseled that they return to the royal city and take possession of the palace. This advice Absalom speedily adopted and, as we have seen, his welcome to Jerusalem was all that the heart of an ambitious man could desire.

And on the day after his return came Hushai, the Archite, saying:

"Whom the Lord, and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. Yea, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of David's son? As I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence."

And while Ahithophel, Absalom's chief counsellor, looked with disfavor upon the coming of Hushai, nevertheless Absalom was disposed to receive with a deep sense of gratification the coming of one who had been so near to David, and he accepted it as another sign of the unflinching success of his plot. He found a new sense of security in the presence of Hushai.

That night Ahithophel came to him and urged him to choose out a small army and pursue after David and his little band of followers, and he gave a ready consent.

"But first let us hear what Hushai hath to say," demanded the king. "He hath but just come from the presence of David and he well knows what it will mean to pursue after the fleeing king."

"The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time, oh, king!" boldly declared Hushai, when he had been ushered into the royal presence. "Thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field; and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. Behold, even now he is hid in some pit or in some other place; and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt; for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are vallant men. Therefore I counsel that

all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person; so shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground; and of him and of all the men with him there shall not be left so much as one. Moreover, if he be gotten unto a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there."

Ag Absalom listened to the brilliant picture of success which Hushai painted his enthusiasm grew. The big army, the brilliant plan of campaign, the overwhelming numbers and the crushing victory all appealed to his innate sense of pride and kingly importance. He would lead such an army; he would utterly destroy the mighty David and his valiant men and the fame of him would spread to the uttermost bounds of the earth, so that all nations round about would tremble.

Ahithophel, who noted the expression of favor upon the face of Absalom, arose to speak in remonstrance, when the young king waved him aside imperiously and said:

"The counsel of Hushai is better than thy counsel. Let messengers go forth at once that there be no delay in the gathering of the hosts of Israel."

A few days later as Absalom, at the head of a vast army, was proudly setting forth from Jerusalem, word came to him that Ahithophel had hanged himself.

"The fool," muttered the king under his breath, "could he see the hosts of Israel this day and the certainty of glorious victory he would be ashamed that he had counseled other than as did Hushai."

So he tried to dismiss the subject from his mind, but all through that day and the next, as he led his forces into battle, there kept floating before his eyes the vision of Ahithophel, black and hideous, with a rope around his neck. He could not shake it off. In desperation he pressed the battle, but instead of the foe he ever saw the dead, blackened corpse floating before his eyes.

The flanks of his army have been turned, the ranks waver and break, and soon the panic of full retreat has seized all the hosts of Israel. Those about him melt away and, almost alone, he turns his mule's head and flees. With a fatal fascination he watches the swaying branches of the trees in the distance. He thinks of the dead Ahithophel. It seems almost as though the trees were beckoning him to Ahithophel's side. On he goes, and as he passes under the boughs of a great oak the hair in which he had found so much pride and joy caught hold of the oak and there he swung between earth and sky unable to free himself. And there Absalom died, and they cast him into a great pit and laid a very great heap of stones upon him.

The Hungry Parrot.

Everybody knows one or more of those conscientious egotists who cannot rid themselves of the idea that no one can be trusted to carry out the simplest details of routine work without personal supervision. It was one of these men who sailed for America, leaving in his brother's care a parrot of which he was very fond. All the way across the Atlantic he worried about the bird, and no sooner had he landed at New York than he sent over this cablegram to his brother:

"Be sure and feed parrot."
And the brother cabled back:
"Have fed him, but he's hungry again. What shall I do next?"—Tit Bits.

The Interesting Novel.

You can't convince a woman that a novel is interesting unless the hero and heroine get married in the last chapter and live happily ever after.

easily establishes how much the fish have gained in size and weight since the previous catching. Moreover, the distance between the spot where it was released and the place where it was again caught gives an idea as to its movements.

Embraces Islamism.

Dr. Ewald Falls, a well-known Egyptologist and excavator, has embraced Islam. While at the head of an excavating expedition in the Nile delta he became so convinced of the virtues of Mohammedanism that he confessed the faith and was received at the mosque at Mariout. He will henceforth be known under the name of Mussa Mohammed.

The Test.

It is as much the test of discipleship to wash or mend a net on the shore as to catch a great draught in the open sea.

The Climbers.

The Alpine summits are not for monks or sybarites. They are for climbers.

ESPERANTO GROWS

GREAT VIGOR OF MOVEMENT FOR UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE.

Progress Made in This and Other Countries in Developing a Common Medium of Communication.

The Esperanto movement is gaining strength every year. The development of the universal language and the numbers of those who are committed to the mission of placing the language upon a practical and commercial basis grow apace. This was plainly and forcibly indicated at this year's International Congress of Esperantists just held in Cambridge, England.

It is estimated that there are upwards of 500,000 loyal esperantists throughout the world, a goodly proportion being found in New York, Boston, and other large cities of the country. Dr. L. Zamenhof is president of the international organization. Under the nom de plume, Dr. Esperanto (a name, by the way, which signifies "hope") he invented the language. He objects to the distinction, universal language, as it was farthest from his purpose to have the new language become the common tongue of all peoples. He prefers to have it known as the international auxiliary language, as it is intended to simplify commercial and political intercourse between the nations. Perhaps the greatest impetus which Esperanto has received took place at the congress in Cambridge, England. Fourteen hundred delegates representing twenty-five different countries were present. To attempt to describe in detail the events at this congress would take columns of space. It may be mentioned here, however, that every big country was represented by a man of prominence and at this congress Esperanto received its first official recognition by a European power, the delegate from Belgium having been officially assigned by the ministry of military affairs to represent the Belgian ministry at the congress.

The American delegates who attended the congress are enthusiastic over the practical use to which they put their knowledge of Esperanto while in Cambridge. Professor Viles, of the Ohio State University, had only a reading knowledge, but he declares that he found, within a few hours, that he could use the language in conversation. Professor Viles also brings back word that Lord Roberts, the famous "Bobs" has just accepted the honorary presidency of the British Esperanto association.

Although the leading centers of the Esperanto movement are in France, England and Germany, the people of the United States are rapidly becoming

interested in it. Three years ago it was virtually unheard of in America. Now there is a national association and more than forty-two local societies and clubs affiliated with it, the total membership list running well up into the thousands.

The national society, or the American Esperanto association, as it is now known, was formed on March 16 of the same year at the home of Mr. Matchett, who organized the first society. The members of the two societies already in existence and other Esperantists residing in Everett, Medford, Brighton and neighboring towns succeeded by united effort in placing the national association upon a



DR. MAX TALMEIJ

permanent basis. They were soon joined by Esperantists and Esperanto clubs in other states.

Although few of the business men of New York have made practical use as yet of Esperanto, Dr. Talmeij President of the New York Esperanto society, is confident that those who are affiliated with firms that handle a great deal of foreign business will soon be forced to take up the international language. In an interview recently with the writer he said:

"The American Consul in Breslau, Germany, has just written the government to advise our merchants to either learn Esperanto or secure representatives with such knowledge if they desire to hold foreign trade. This message was published in the Financier, and I understand it has spurred some of our merchants to inquire about Esperanto."

"I agree with the Breslau consul, for I believe that the day is not far distant when foreign merchants will transact much of their international business through Esperanto."

OLD ROMAN ARENA

DUG UP IN HEART OF PARIS AND COMPLETELY RESTORED.

Will Be Utilized as a Place for Open Air Theater in Which Ancient Dramas Will Be Given.

The things of a bygone age have a fascination for the people of today. The ruins of former centuries are being uncovered and explored, and in some cases where the circumstances warrant are being restored. This is true in Paris at the present time, where steps are being taken for the restoration of the remains of the Roman theater, which were unearthed just before the Franco-Prussian war, but which have for years been desecrated by a terminus of the General Omnibus company of Paris.

Up to the time that the omnibus company took possession of the picturesque spot in the Rue Monge, it was the pride of Baron Haussmann, who found delight in the ancient ruins, although he made no practical use of the place. Now it is proposed to revive it in a manner most aesthetic. Some time ago the omnibus company was dispossessed and the ruins completely restored, and at the present time M. Camille de Sainte-Croix, the dramatic author, has obtained a concession from the city of Paris which will enable him to give open air performances there of old Greco-Roman plays similar to those conducted at Orange, Beziers, Champigny, Nimes, Arles, and other places which have Gallo-Roman remains.

The theater in the Rue Monge dates from the third century, and was built by Roman soldiers whose camp occupied the place where the Odeon and the universities now stand. In 1870, when the Rue Monge was pierced and these Roman remains were unearthed, the archaeological societies of France helped to form a company to restore and preserve them. But they never went further than the sweeping

of the only part of the circus that was exhumed. The Franco-Prussian war interrupted the work, and the potteries, coins, arms and sculptured ornaments found in these remains were taken to the Carnavalet museum. The remainder of the circus is still unearthed, and is covered by the red-tiled station of the General Omnibus company. Thirteen years later the city awoke to the necessity of making some use of the material excavated, and the ruins were repaired and a square was planned with trees upon the borders. But the effort ended there.

The present arena is in three parts—the stone steps to the left, the terraces to the right, the hemicycle cut by the omnibus company's wall—a wall, by the way, which is most advantageously situated for the uses of the present undertaking, as it gives acoustical properties of much the same importance as at Orange, and will permit of lyrical performances until the way is clear for grand spectacular ballets. The stage, with its orchestra, dressing rooms, scenery, costumes and accessories, will be built at the foot of this great wall. A velum in four parts, fixed with decorative masts, will protect the stage and the spectators from sun or rain, at the same time intercepting the view of the neighboring houses.

The principal entrance, six yards wide by fifty long, leads from the square to the arena. The audience will be seated in a circle facing the wall in the original distribution of places on the stone steps to the left and the terraces to the right, covered with removable wooden benches, and in the shape of a fan upon the ground of the arena, covered with a slanting flooring in wood with seats at various prices.

In the Asylum.

Now Jones was in a padded cell,
But Smith, he had an added
Insanity—so mad was he
He had his brain-cells padded;
—Puck.

MARKED FISH IN THE SEA.

Thousands of Them Caught, Numbered and Put Back in British Channel.

Catching fish, measuring and marking them and then returning them to the sea with the chance of retailing them later is part of the work carried on by the Marine Biological Association of Great Britain, says Discovery.

By means of a steam trawler the fish are caught in the usual way. Each haul is carefully recorded, the fish are counted and measured and all details of locality, time, number, species, sex and size are put down, together with accurate observations on the water, the depth and bottom of the sea, the kinds and quality of food available, etc. These data are subsequently tabulated and charted.

The method of marking the fish is interesting and has been attended with valuable results. The fish chiefly used during the few years the experiment has been in progress have been plaice, because the proposals which have been made to interfere

with the catching of them were based on inadequate knowledge.

The fish are marked on the dorsal surface with a very thin convex metal disk bearing a number. This is attached to a fine silver wire which is passed through the thinner part of the fish near the fin and secured on the under side by a small bone button. The fish do not appear to suffer inconvenience and their growth is not interfered with in any way.

The thoroughness with which the North sea is swept by the nets of the fishing fleets is demonstrated by the fact that out of 5,039 marked plaice of all sizes 992 were recaptured within a year. This represents 19.7 per cent., or nearly one-fifth, but for the medium-sized fish the figures are far higher, ranging from 28.4 to 39 per cent. for the whole of the North sea and to 43 per cent. in the more northern portions.

The men of the regular fishing fleet cooperate by forwarding to the laboratory of the association at Lowestoft all the marked fish they catch. At the laboratory reference to the records