

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

by

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CHAPTER TWO

ELIJAH AT THE BROOK CHERITH

At that awful moment, when Israel stood at the brink of the Red Sea, perplexed which way to turn; while before them the deep waters roared behind them the enraged Egyptians were rushing upon them with chariots and horsemen, and on either side of them perpendicular rocks rising up like walls on high, making retreat impossible—the Lord came to Moses and said, “**Wherfore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward**” (Exodus 14:15).

There seems something very surprising in this command. But we have a God, my friends, who always knows exactly, and much better than we do, what is good and necessary for his children; and, in truth he never leads them otherwise than they would wish him to lead them, if they were able to see as clearly into their hearts and necessities as he does. But we very seldom know what is good for us; and therefore the ways by which God leads us are generally mysterious and obscure, just because the why and the wherefore are concealed from us.

“**Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward!**” What a commission was this!

- Lord, behold the sea with its billows at our feet! “**Let them go forward!**”
- Lord, are we able to walk upon the waves, and to find a highway upon the mighty waters “**Let them go forward!**”

Lord, Lord! but where is the passage over the flood, or, where are the vessels for our conveyance? Is it thy will that thy people perish in the sea, and that the Egyptians triumph “**Speak unto them, that they go forward!**” saith the Almighty; but still he does not touch a single wave to quell it, nor does he dry up the sea, but let its waves roar at their pleasure; and yet he points to its troubled surface and commands that “**all the hosts of Israel go forward!**”

They must venture upon his word, they must believe before they see, and go forward in faith. They venture, and lo! The very moment they prepare to advance in the name of their God, and to step upon the boisterous element—the waves, struck with the rod of Moses, part asunder, and become a wall on their right hand and on their left, a highway in the sea is opened before them, and the people pass over joyfully.

This is the way of our gracious God.

We must venture upon his Word; and verily, however much we seem to hazard in his name, nothing is really hazarded. And when he commands us to go forward, be it into fire, tempest, or the sea, let us only advance in the path of duty, and the result will be glorious. Truths like these, of the most consolatory kind, we shall see confirmed as we now proceed with the history of our prophet.

“And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord; for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook” (I Kings, 17:2-6).

How refreshing a stream of instruction may this narrative prove to those who have to tread in any similar path, or to bear any similar trials to those of Elijah! Draw near then, ye that seem to dwell in a desert, and who are solitary in the midst of this wilderness world. Bring vessels with you and draw abundantly, and drink, and let your sorrows cease.

The subjects to which we would now direct your attention, are,

- I. Elijah’s perplexity;
- II. God’s command;
- III. The prophet’s faith;
- IV. The triumph of his faith.

I. Elijah had prayed

In zeal for the honor of God he had prayed that it might not rain; and, being assured of an answer to his prayer, had gone to Samaria, to meet Ahab. There, in his presence he declared with holy boldness—and no doubt the whole country was soon filled with the report of it—**“There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word,”** ver. 1.

The word was spoken in God’s name, and the judgment denounced immediately followed: first, in appalling harbingers; then, in complete desolation.

The sun glared upon the earth with its scorching beams, a memento of the eyes of the Lord, the righteous Judge, which are described as **“a flame of fire,”** those rays which heretofore had diffused a smile over the whole face of nature were now changed into arrows of destruction and death; while the sultry winds dried up with their burning gusts every rivulet from its bed, and every fountain from its source; the plants and trees dropped their leaves and withered away; the lowing herds and bleating flocks explored every spot upon the parched fields; the wild beasts moaned in the forests; the dearth rose to its height, and it was not long before the famine became universal, and turned every habitation into a place of mourning and woe.

And where is Elijah? Where should he be? He is sharing in the common calamity.

No angel has come to convey him away—no chariot of fire has taken him up. There he stands with the criminals on the place of execution, apparently himself a sacrifice to the wrath he had drawn down, and exposed, with the ungodly, to famine and death. There he stands, panting and groaning like the rest, exposed to the same dangers, and, over and above, execrated by a whole nation, and devoted to ruin by the infuriated populace. He seemed likely to fulfill the fate of Samson, who pulled down upon himself the pillars of Dagon's temple roof, and was buried in the common ruin of his enemies.

Surely it was no small matter, in such circumstances, to keep faith alive. What a commotion must have arisen in his soul at beholding the universal misery around him and his own personal danger! How easily may we suppose natural pity at one time, and natural fear and despondency at another suggesting to him, “Why didst thou pray for this?”

It is not difficult to realize the perplexity in which the prophet must have felt himself. His joyful elevation of spirit must well nigh have subsided, and no support was left him but simple faith in the “Amen” of his God; the consciousness that all had been done in God's name, and that now the Lord would provide.

Similar experiences to that of which Elijah was probably the subject are not uncommon to the children of God. Something like this every Christian occasionally undergoes, in one way or another. An individual is inwardly constrained to say or do some particular thing. The impulse is strong—the inward call seems not to be resisted. Stimulated by holy zeal, he cheerfully enters, in the name of God, upon a duty or a course of action, without any cold calculation of consequences—the measure is adopted, the word is uttered. Then all at once he is made aware of what he has risked; he finds himself cast into difficulties and dangers, which seem far to exceed the measure of his faith and ability; he has stepped with Peter upon the open sea; the wind becomes boisterous, and he is threatened with destruction. He would fain retrace his steps, but retreat is out of the question.

Then that cheerful zeal which actuated us seems to have burnt down into the socket, and the soul desponds and cries, “**Lord! save us, we perish!**”

This was the case with some excellent men, who very lately, on account of their faith, were obliged to leave their native land. In opposition to the spirit of the great and mighty of this world, and of the ignorant multitude, they preached to their congregations the pure Gospel—repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

In so doing they had exposed themselves to danger, which however was somewhat held back by their prudently refraining from publicly attacking the national church, and the unchristian inroads which their superiors were making upon its ancient doctrine and discipline.

But, all unexpectedly, their lips were opened by another, so that they could not refrain from preaching what they had been reluctant to bring out, and would otherwise have shrunk from doing; and, carried away by a holy zeal; they declared the danger by which the national church was menaced.

All mischiefs and abuses were then exposed without fear of consequences, so that the people's ears tingled. They could no longer keep silence respecting the insidious design of reducing the religion of Christ ultimately to mere heathenism; they roundly declared nothing else was intended than craftily to bear away the ark of the covenant, and to smuggle images of jealousy—false doctrines and precepts—into the sanctuary.

They complained openly that the churches had been robbed of the invaluable standards of their faith; that books were imposed upon teachers and scholars, which were infected with the spirit of Antichrist; that the last pillars of their ancient ecclesiastical constitution were shaken, in order that the church of Christ might become a mere political institution; and many of the worthy preachers so lost sight of themselves, and gave themselves up so entirely to the impulse of the Spirit of God, that they openly avowed that they could net conscientiously belong to such a church any longer.

The words were uttered, the match thrown in the mine; and who would fetch it back. The people were amazed and confounded; many hastened to their teachers as soon as the sermon was ended, and expressed their determination to separate from such a church; others wavered, and were much perplexed. The mass of the people vented abuse and curses, threatening to stone these intrepid witnesses; and the strong arm of civil power came upon them with ejectments, imprisonment and exile.

The worthy men had not thought of consequences like these.

Consternation came upon them like an armed man. The heroic zeal, which had carried them away in their pulpits, and in which they regarded God only and his cause, but not themselves or their own lives, had now so subsided under the pressure of these floods of affliction, that they were forced to say, "Had we foreseen the consequences, we would fain have held our peace."

Nothing now remained to them but the conviction that God had directed them; for their own prudence would have had it otherwise; and this assurance that God would have it so, is the pilgrim-staff which has supported and comforted them in their banishment and wanderings to the present hour.

Now, that which happened to these worthy men upon a public scale, happens to thousands of Christians in a more private way continually. One, under the influence of the Spirit of love, commits unsuspectingly his whole property to a brother in embarrassment, in the name of a disciple; but subsequently, in his own family, he experiences the temporal inconveniences of such an act, in his own privations or those of his children, and in other perplexing circumstances; then his joy departs, and his heart is terrified.

Another, animated by holy zeal, stands up at length among his friends or relatives, with a confession of Christ crucified, or even with a serious call to repentance; but afterwards, when he finds what misunderstandings and wrong feelings he has thus raised against himself, his zeal subsides, and he is wretchedly cast down. What now must he do? Must he recall what he has uttered? This he cannot, this he dare not do, for his Lord's sake; no, he must let the fire burn.

A third is constrained, from the fullness of his heart, to entreat the Lord to unite him more closely to himself; and if it cannot be done by gentle means, to effectuate it through affliction—the affliction comes—the waves of trouble roll over him; hut alas! Affliction, while he is under its chastening, no longer seemeth joyous, but grievous. The cheerful emotion, with which he once prayed respecting it, is gone; he is ready to repent of such a prayer; his heart can do nothing but mourn and complain.

Are we then to begin nothing without first calculating the consequences? I reply, Where it is possible previously to sit down and count the cost. Do so. But, as this is not always possible, it cannot be made a general rule.

- The lion roars—who can forbear to tremble?
- The Lord gives the word—who can forbear to publish it?
- The stream rushes along—who shall impede it?
- The love of Christ constrains—who shall restrain it?
- The Spirit is a fire in the bosom—who shall quench it?

What a man is bound to do, he must do; and if any evil resort from it, he may then say, “I was bound to do it; it was God’s command; it was not the dictate of flesh and blood;” and, with faith like this, much difficulty and perplexity may be overcome. And you may rely upon this, that if the arm of God is ready to assist any, it is those, who, upon his call, “Come hither!” confer not with flesh and blood, but with joyful alacrity venture upon the waves, and at his bidding risk all consequences.

This we may learn from the example of Elijah.

II. He did not long remain in this solitary condition, left to the musings of his heavy heart

When he knew not what to do, counsel was given him; and when he saw no way of escape, the gates were opened to him. Such is usually the case. We read that now “***The word of the Lord came to him.***”

What a cheering visitation in a land overspread with desolation and misery! For when the word of the Lord comes to us, we are visited by nothing less than God’s eternal love and compassion; for the word of the Lord is Christ.

Nothing is so beautifying to the spirit of a man, as the visitation and manifestation of Christ. But this is especially blissful and desirable when we have undertaken something in his name, and have thereby kindled a fire which threatens to consume ourselves and others—when, at his bidding, we have ventured upon a duty, the consequences of which are such as to perplex us, and make us doubt whether it was really the will of God, and at his bidding.

Such a perplexity is indescribably painful, and raises our distress to the highest pitch.

How gladly is He welcomed under such circumstances, when he unexpectedly knocks at our door and permits us again to hear his pleasant voice; when he again, in some way of his own, gives us to understand that we have acted rightly; causing something to transpire which leaves us no longer in doubt as to his approval of our conduct; and either by some external help, or by some spiritual testimony and assurance of his grace, giving us an evidence that he regards us not with displeasure, but with complacency; and that what we have done has been well done, for he has pronounced it good.

Oh! This surpasses all other joy in this world, and though our temporal burdens may remain as they were, we are wonderfully strengthened to bear them!

“The word of the Lord came to Elijah.” He had not to seek for it, but it came to him; and the Lord is kind, indeed, thus to comfort his children uninvited, and to anticipate their suit with his own counsel; for he does not always wait until they ask, any more than that saying is always true, that “Distress will compel men to pray.”

O how are men even at their wit’s end, when the waves of trouble come suddenly upon them, and imminent dangers encompass them. They are confounded at the winds; they shrink at the waves; they seize the rudder of human strength; they cling to the brittle anchor of human hope; but, “Master, awake, we perish!” is forgotten; or, if the Lord is thought of, there is a want of faith, or filial courage and confidence, or something else; and scarcely one step is taken towards seeking the Lord. How justly might he be offended at this, and requite us accordingly!

But, no! He rather prevents his children with the blessings of goodness, and heaps coals of fire on their heads. He often visits them uninvited and breaks in with his light and salvation, where he was not only not sought after, but even affronted with misgivings. Such visits of the Lord are surely well suited to humble and abase us, to melt the heart and stop the mouth, so that we have not a word to say for shame and confusion of face. Free and unmerited grace then appears in all its brightness; the Christian can find nothing in himself worthy to be thought on as a meritorious cause of the afforded aid—no prayer, no sigh, no looking up to the Lord; he cannot lift up so much as his eyes to look him in the face; he can only kiss his feet; and this humbling acknowledgment of mere unmerited grace, which our proud nature is so unwilling to make, how salutary is it—how good—how much for our spiritual welfare!

Hence the Lord sometimes purposely takes away from his children all that they have, withholding from them even the spirit of prayer itself; and then he helps and answers them, as if the best and most fervent prayer had been offered up to him, that they may become truly and thoroughly humbled, and convinced that in every respect **“it is not of him that willeth, not of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy”** (Romans 9:16).

But to return to the narrative. The Lord interposed, not only to comfort the prophet, but to rescue him from extreme danger. This, however, was to be done in a way which should glorify the name of the Lord, as well as serve for a beneficial exercise of faith to Elijah. No fiery chariot was yet to bear him above his troubles; he was not yet to rise aloft amidst a convoy of angels. Here would have been little room for the exercise of faith.

God, therefore, showed him another path.

"Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

A singular direction—as it would seem from a bad condition to a worse. But you remember it was said to Manoah, "**Why askest thou after my name, seeing it is wonderful!**" (Judges 13:18) And as is his name, so is his way. "**Thy way is in the sea, and thy paths in the deep waters, and thy footsteps are not known!**" (Psalm 77:19)

Do we inquire whether the Lord directs his children still, as thus in old time Undoubtedly he does, though not by any audible voice, yet with equal certainty and evidence; and this commonly by closing up, inwardly or outwardly, all other ways, and leaving only one open to us. And is not this equivalent to our hearing a voice behind us saying, "**This is the way, walk ye in it, when we turn to the right hand, and when we turn to the left**" (Isaiah 30:21).

When he inwardly leads us—he impresses a scriptural conviction on the judgment as to what we ought to do, and it is scarcely possible for us any longer to hesitate. Would our feelings lead us in a different course? Then peace immediately departs, and such disquietude arises within us, that we are compelled to retrace our steps.

When he outwardly leads us—he brings us into such circumstances, connections, and situations, that only one way remains open, for we see every other obstructed by visible providences. The ways which the Lord thus points out to us seem, therefore, like that to the brook Cherith, selected and appointed purely for the exercise of our faith, the crucifixion of our old man, the mortification of our inveterate corruptions. Only then follow on courageously!

Whenever the Lord says to any of his children, "**Get thee hence, and hide thyself,**" he also adds, either expressly or by implication, "**and the ravens shall feed thee there.**" Every duty which He commands has its promise appended to it; and we need be under no concern except to know that the Lord has directed our way.

III. And how did Elijah obey this command his God?

There was doubtless in him, as well in every other man, something that would oppose this divine direction, and be dissatisfied with it. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and therefore his nature would have much to do against it. How could it please him, that, instead of an instantaneous and supernatural deliverance, he is obliged to make a long journey on foot, like any ordinary person? And why he should be directed to turn eastward into the land of Judea, which participated in the judgments of Samaria, he could not discover. To be directed into the lonely wilderness, and to the brook Cherith, amidst gloomy, uninhabited woodlands, was far from inviting. And even his security there, from the pursuit of Ahab and from the general drought, was not warranted by any natural appearances: while the prospect of being fed by ravens, those unclean and voracious creatures, must have appeared as disagreeable as it was contrary to reason and experience.

But, however much nature might oppose, or the old man murmur and recoil, these were silenced and crucified within him. For there was a spirit imparted to Elijah which taught him that his own nature was wrong, and that Good's will was right.

Not, perhaps, that Elijah was able, with fervency of joy, to thank God for the command given him, and triumphantly to rejoice in it. Possibly, his mind was much tried and depressed by it; but it proved courageous in the faith by which he endured, as seeing Him that is invisible.

"As it is the Divine command," he might think, "therefore it is holy, just, and good. God's commissions to his children, what are they but hidden promises? Since he saith to me, '**Get thee hence**,' I am well assured that he will make a way for me, succor me, and preserve me on the way; for he can neither deceive nor be deceived. No serpent shall bite me, no wild beast devour me; for I am in God's way. Since he commands me to turn eastward, I am certain, though I seem to be going towards the setting rather than the rising sun, still it will be morning over my head. Forasmuch as he bids me hide myself by the brook Cherith, which is before Jordan, that brook must be a safe place of refuge, though it were in the midst of Samaria itself. I am directed to drink of the brook; here then I have a pledge that the sun will not be permitted to affect this brook with his scorching rays."

Thus might the prophet think, and then he would conclude further, that "God's promises are, virtually, obligations which he imposes upon himself. If he say, 'I will do this or that for thee,' he must necessarily bring it to pass for his own name' sake. Therefore the ravens will certainly come, and sooner will they themselves die of hunger, than I shall be suffered to starve."

In this manner might Elijah have conversed with his own heart; and so, taking the word of the Lord into the hand of his faith, he made it the staff of his pilgrimage. Whenever he grew weary, he leaned upon this staff: his courage revived. When danger appeared his way, he feared not while he had this staff support him.

And have you such a staff in your hands, dear brethren? Are you assured, with this prophet, that the path you tread has been pointed out to you of God; and has any Divine promise been applied to you and become your own, either a particular promise, or a general one, like this; "**Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. When thou passest through the waters, they shall not overflow thee**" (Isaiah 43:1, 2).

O then, of a truth, all is well, sure, and certain! But now look at Elijah as he takes his journey, a solitary traveler. It seems almost as if we heard the sound of his footsteps, while we read that "**he went and did according to the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.**"

IV. Come, let us pay a visit to this man of God in his new dwelling-place

A dreary wild, near the banks of the Jordan, is the scene now opened before us. Dead silence reigns around, interrupted perhaps by the cry of the solitary bittern, while amongst the heath and the juniper bushes broods the ostrich—no hunter disturbing its repose.

No pathway opens to the view—not a human footstep is seen—all is wilderness and solitude. Let us follow him, in imagination, towards the Jordan, bonder lies our track, where the naked rocks rear their lofty heads and the forests frown. Then; through one thicket and another, through one narrow pass and another, we come at length down into a deep and narrow glen overhung with tangled wood, where a brook runs murmuring along and finds its way between the rocky masses.

O look! There sits the man of God! Here is his appointed dwelling: the blue sky his roof, the bare rocks his walls, the stone his seat, the shady wood his bed-chamber, the grass his couch; his company, the purling brook, and the hoarse ravens aloft among the trees. There he sits in his hairy mantle, silent and reflecting; and whenever solitude becomes wearisome, or the hissing of serpents or the distant roar of the lion would inject terror into his soul, he remembers, “I am imprisoned here for the Lord’s sake, and his footsteps are among these rocks;” and thus by faith and hope he regains courage.

For twelve months did Elijah dwell here. This may seem to you incredible, and almost dreadful! But how would you be astonished, were Elijah to assure you that the whole time never appeared tedious; that solitude daily became to him less solitary—nay lively and cheerful! And doubtless this was the case.

He needed neither books nor society—neither labor nor diversion to entertain him.

Silent nature around him was a sufficient book, and the treasure of his experience supplied him with an ample volume. Self-examination, prayer, and converse with Him who seeth in secret was employment enough for him. His Lord and God, whose gentlest whispers and footsteps he could far more readily perceive in this solitude than amidst the noise of the busy world, was sufficient company for him.

- The works of creation which encompassed him, soon served as a living epistle, which he found it employment enough to study.
- The rock by which he dwelt preached to him of a Rock that ever liveth, and whereon himself had built.
- The brook had something to say to him, and spoke many sweet and comfortable things to him of the truth and faithfulness of God, and told of other waters that were still to come—of waters that God would pour upon the dry ground, and of floods upon the thirsty land, and of springs which he would cause to break forth in the desert.
- At one time the shady trees would preach to him and suggest to him the comforts of the tree of life and of those heavenly palms from whose tops eternal peace would at length breathe upon him.
- At another, the cheerful songsters of the air, and the wild roses in the brakes would sing to him, “Be calm, Elijah, and free from care. How can He who is so faithfully mindful of us in this wilderness, feeding the one and giving fragrance and beauty to the other, be forgetful of thee?

In short, everything began to live, and breathe, and talk around him—the stars in the firmament, the flowers in the meadow, the drops on the leaves, and the zephyrs among the shrubs; so that Elijah experienced what the apostle says,

“There are so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification” (I Corinthians 14:10); and was able to sing with David, **“The voice of the Lord is powerful, The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness”** (Psalm 29:4, 8).

After having thus pleased and delighted himself awhile in the exterior world and its speaking emblems, he would then return to another world within him, and be absorbed in listening to what was stirring and passing there.

At one time a new insight was afforded him into his deep poverty of spirit and natural corruption; and then he would be led to weep, and mourn, and wrestle in prayerful conflict.

At another time he would contemplate the work of Divine grace within him, and the clear evidences of the indwelling and operation of the Holy Spirit in his soul; and now the cliffs of the wilderness would resound with psalms like a temple of God, and with pious hymns of thanksgiving, which vibrated strangely, with the mountain echo, far into the depths of his solitude.

Let no one be too much cast down, should the Lord ever direct him to the wilderness by the river Jordan, and to the brook Cherith: for he still is accustomed to do so with his children in a variety of ways.

- If he visit us with sickness, so that we must be alone upon our bed and in our chamber;
- If our friends forsake us and forget us;
- If we become regarded as outcasts, having neither house nor heart opened to us any longer;
- If we are called to sojourn in Mesech, and to dwell among those who are of a different mind from ourselves, who do not understand us, and who ridicule our way of life.
- In such situations we are shut in with Elijah by the brook Cherith. But be not alarmed; rather be of good courage! Such seclusion, or exclusion, how blissful and salutary may it become!

Numberless Christians have been constrained to declare that it was in their imprisonment, or place of exile—in their lonely sick chamber, or in the days when they were forsaken by men and cast out by the world, that they entered really into their own hearts, and ascertained their true spiritual state.

The leaven of the Pharisees was then put away from them, and worship was no longer paid to an imaginary Savior. They began to long in earnest for close communion with him; and the wrestling prayer of Jacob, lasting until daybreak, which they had only talked of before, now became a matter of reality and experience, an event in their own personal history. And a hundred other things pertaining to inward religion, which they had only in imagination appropriated hitherto, were then individually realized.

They were then also first truly brought into the number of those sheep who hear His voice, and were never so conscious that he really lives and speaks to his children, and walks and dwells with them: nor did they ever experience his tender consolation and support, or ever feel his love so strongly and unequivocally, as at that very time when their path was so solitary and through the wilderness, when they were obliged to be with their Lord alone.

Therefore be encouraged, ye who dwell by the brook Cherith, in solitudes, for God's dew can drop upon the dwellings of the wilderness, as David sings; and the pastures in the wilderness do spring with blessings.

"Thou shalt drink of the brook, and the ravens shall feed thee there." Thus said the Lord; and, however marvelous and unheard of it might sound, Elijah bowed himself and believed, and his faith did not deceive him: all that the Lord had promised was "**Yea and Amen,**" and nothing remained unfulfilled.

It was not long before the whole country was like a heath, and fields and woods became scorched as by fire. One spot alone continued green and cool; that spot was the prophet's rocky vale. Every fountain was exhausted, and every forest stream dried up by the sultry heat; one brook alone continued to flow—the brook Cherith—that remained as fresh and as full as if nothing had happened. And the ravens also fulfilled their office.

How wonderful! Those ravenous carrion birds, impure according to the law, and so voracious and unfeeling that they would leave their own young to starve, did not God interpose, who asks, in the book of Job, "**Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat**" (Job 38:41); these creatures we find employed here in an occupation of disinterested kindness; dead, as it were, to the natural voracity of their species, coming and going at God's bidding, denying their own appetites and performing a most beneficent office.

No sooner does the morning dawn in Cherith's rocky vale, than their cry is heard aloft in the trees; and when Elijah wakes, he beholds the provision for the day lying before him. And when the evening shades advance, these black livery servants again appear, laden with meat and bread. And this takes place not merely once, but a whole year round, without intermission.

O wisdom of God, which carnal reason would account foolishness, how precious art thou! Let the world imagine to itself a magnificent Deity whose government is only general; we adhere to the Lord God of Elijah, and rejoice in his providential superintendence of the smallest matters.

And this God still liveth, a living Savior, who is always to be found of them that seek him, and is nigh unto them that call upon him; and whose delights are with the sons of men. About his servants and handmaids is encamped a mighty host; and when he saith, "Come!" they come; or "Go!" they go: and there has been no end to his wonders, even to this day.

Who else was it but the God of Elijah, who, only a short time ago, in our neighborhood, so kindly delivered a poor man out of his distress—not indeed by a raven, but by a poor singing-bird? You are acquainted with the circumstance. The man was sitting, early in the morning, at his house-door; his eyes were red with weeping, and his heart cried to heaven—for he was expecting an officer to come and distrain him for small debt. And whilst sitting thus with his heavy heart, a little bird flew through the street, fluttering up and down, as if in distress, until at length, quick as an arrow, it flew over the good man's head in his cottage, and perched itself on an empty cup board.

The good man, who little imagined who had sent him the bird, closed the door, caught the bird, and placed it in a cage, where it immediate began to sing very sweetly, and it seemed to the man as if it were the tune of a favorite hymn, "Fear thou not when darkness reigns;" and as he listened to it, he found it soothe and comfort his mind.

Suddenly someone knocked at his door. "Ah, it is the officer," thought the man, and was sore afraid. But no, it was the servant of a respectable lady, who said that the neighbors had seen a bird fly into his house, and she wished to know if he had caught it.

"O yes," answered the man, "and here it is:" and the bird was carried away. A few minutes after, the servant came again. "You have done my mistress a great service," said he; "she sets a high value upon the bird, which had escaped from her. She is much obliged to you, and requests you to accept this trifle, with her thanks."

The poor man received it thankfully, and it proved to be neither more nor less than the sum he owed! And when the officer came, he said, "Here is the amount of the debt; now leave me in peace, for God has sent it me."

Something very similar was experienced by another brother, who is perhaps now present, and could testify to the fact. He had at one time the grief to see his little child crying for hunger, and there was not a morsel of bread left in the house, nor a penny in his pocket, and his heart was bursting with sorrow. He crept away into a solitary corner, and prayed, with many tears, to that God who feedeth the young ravens and clothes the lilies of the field; he prayed, "**Give us this day our daily bread!**" with an earnestness which, perhaps, he had never felt before.

And on rising up from prayer in a comfortable state of mind and going to his house-door, a dog came running along with a piece of meat in his mouth, and on arriving at the poor man's threshold he let it drop, and ran off.

The Lord has sent us this," said the man, as he took it up from the ground. "A gracious God!" exclaimed he, as he brought it into the room; when it was cooked and laid upon the dish, and hungry people sat round it, and a blessing had been asked, it was to them all as memorable an occasion as if they had been partaking of the paschal lamb.

The God of Elijah still lives! and under this truth I may rank your own experience also, my dear friends, which some of you have related to me; that, in distressing necessities and perplexities, help has often come to you in a wonderful manner, from persons who were not only indifferent to you, but even disaffected towards you, and bore you some ill-will; from unbelievers, who, in general, cannot endure them that are "**quiet in the land**" (Psalm 35:20).

But, all at once, it suddenly occurred to one, he himself knew not how, that he must bring you some particular thing; or another could not sleep for the thought of not having done something for you, and however much he strove to drive the idea from his mind, he could not succeed in kicking against the pricks.

Yes, He who turneth men's hearts as the rivers of water, sends them to your aid; and his purpose who shall defeat?

What they did for you, was not done because they intended it, but because they were constrained by conscience, that is, by the God of conscience; and thus you experience that the God of Elijah, who can provide for his servants even by the ravens still lives.

Therefore let every child of God be strong and of good courage! Only believe, ye who are at the brook Cherith and in the wilderness! For faith can supply the want of everything temporal; and faith is the grave of care.

And remember, dear friends, that it is in vain for you to rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows; for as David says, "He giveth it to his beloved sleeping" (German version) Psalm 127:2.

May He who giveth songs in the night, teach us all the song of the royal psalmist, "**I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety!**" (Psalm 4:8)

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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