THE DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN

SPECIAL ARTICLES

Our Contributors

THE CRY FROM THE CAVE. By Rev. A. J. Mowatt, D.D.

By Rev. A. J. Mowatt, D.D. David is hiding from Saul in the cave, most likely Engedi. Engedi, ar Ain-jiddy, Fountain of the Kid, is at the southwest end of the Dead Sea, one of the wildest, grandest, ioneliest, most dod-forsaken spots in the whole land. Just because it is so, however, it is all the safer hiding-place. But then it is banishment to be there, and sucl: a sense of isolation, ioneliness, forsaken-ness, fails upon him that he fills his prayers and tears. He is passing through one of the darkest and most soul has ever been called to pass through, and so we call it the Cry from the Cave. The whole pasalm is the ery from the cave. Its heading is: "Ma-scate" of pavid, when he was in the cave", and opens thus:--

I cry with my volce unto Jehovah;
With my volce unto Jehovah do I make supplication.
I pour out my complaint before Him;
I show before Him my trouble.

But while the whole psalm is the cry from the cave, the burden of it seems to me to gather around these pathetic words, and I make them the keynote of my message tonight:

"No man careth for my soul."

Trouble of Soul, A Cry from the Cave.

David is in trouble. That is why he is in the cave. He has got himself into trouble with the King, and so the cry from the cave. It looks suspicous, you tell me. There must be something tell me. There must be something wrong with the man in the cave.

In the cave. The story is in brief this: David is the youngest of a family of eight sons. Jesse is the father. They live at Beth-lehem, and belong to the tribe of Ju-dah. With seven between him and the humble paternal inheritance, there is not much of a chance for David at home. The times are hard, too, troub-lous and very early in life David has to help. His work is to keep the sheep. That is all he is good for. He is boyish for his yeare, and small of stature alongside of his big brothers. But if he is not big in body, he 's big in soul-he to gent-soulde, every inch a man, a hero. His big brothers follow the king to the glory of war-they beer arms; the little David follows the sheep to the hills. But the day of his opportunity comes. With his aling he slays the glant, and thus saves the nation. You call it a

With his sling he slays the giant, and thus saves the nation. You call it a With his sling he slays the grant, and thus saves the nation. You call it a lucky hit. But God is with him. When the question of the royal succession is up and has to be settled, his big sol-dier-brothers, one and all, are passed by, and David is the Lord's choice, and is anointed. But jealousy is awakened, and now his troubles begin. The next you see of him, he is in the cave, and there is a cry from the cave.

Poor David! He is in sore trouble. A cave is a hard place to be in. Is he a bandit, an outlaw, that he should be in the cave? Is he a revolutionist, a rebel, a political adventurer, that he should be in the cave? Better to be out on the hills with the sheep rather than be a king hiding in a cave. It looks suspicious. Appearances are against him. Once the pet and pride of the people, now an outcast, a dweller in no man's land! Once, too, so faith-ful in his attendance at the sanctuary, never absent indeed, and so active and prominent in everything that was good, especially in the praise part of the service; now shut away from all that, his name blotted from the roll of mem-bership because of unexplained absence

and neglect of ordinances-outlawed, excommunicated, anathematized! That is what he feels most-the loss of his spiritual privileges. No one to take to him about his soul! No one to take any interest in his soul! No care for his soul! His body safe in the cave, but his soul neglected there! And so the cry from the cave, sad, pathetic, full of trouble, is: "No man careth for my soul." soul

Is that the cry here tonight—the cry from the cave, the cry of a soul in trouble, the cry of a soul in trouble be-cause neglected, because not cared for? cause negrected, because not cared for? The cry from the cave, and it is a real cry, and a sad cry, is the cry of the unchurched. David in the cave is one of them, and the deprivation of his splritual privileges is what he feels and laments most.

And like David, some of the so-called unchurched of the city can look back to the day when they were never ab-sent from the services of the sanctu-ary. They sat at the communion table. They loved the prayer meeting. Their children were at Sunday school. They enjoyed religion. Their pastor and elder never forgot to call, and were heartily welcomed. But something happened. Reverses came-loss of health, loss of property, loss of pres-tige. They could not dress as they once dressed. They could not move in the society they once moved in. Their altered circumstances necessitated the society they once moved in. They altered circumstances necessitated their removal to another quarter of the city. This interfered with their church attendance. They went to a church nearby, but they did not feel at home. The worship did not appeal to them. And then nobedy seemed to know them, nor take any interest in them. No minister or elder took the trouble to hunt them up, and keep in touch with them. And so it went on, till they stopped going to church alto-gether. It was not altogether their fault, any more than it was David's vonder in the cave by the Dead Sea, that they were the unchurched, but the fault of circumstances over which they had no control. Are, they happy in had no control. Are they happy in their cave? Call it that. Are things improving with them in other respects? No. And how can they? And so you had no control. No. And now can they I and so you hear a cry, a cry from garret and cel-lar, a cry from the great unwashed and unchurched, and the cry is a pit-eous appeal, a cry like the cry that David cried from the cave: "No man careth for my soul."

Doubt's Cry. A Cry from the Cave.

Turn now to another thing, for there are caves and caves, cries and cries. To doubt, to question, to speculate and all that-it seems wise, clever, right. There is the intellectual young man crammed with modern magazine liter-ature, the budding scientist fresh from the schools of bold investigation-be the schools of bold investigation—he turns over the pages of his grandfa-ther's Bible in a careless way, and dares face the dark of life, with its problems and mysteries, make his way into the geological caves of prehistoric ages, and think things out for himself. But out of the cave at last is heard a cry, a cry of a soul for light and peace, and the burden of it is: "No man car-eth for my soul."

Just the other day I read a some-what striking article on George Ro-manes. Brought up in a Christian home, amid the happlest and holtest surroundings, he broke away from it all, and embraced boldly infidel opin-ions. Darwin and Herbert Spencer, Huxley and Tyndall, ventured far, but Romanes ventured still farther, and faced the dark with all fits grotesque and grim shadows. He wrote an anon-ymous work called Physicus. It was cleverly written, bold and brilliant,

and became at once the banner book of infidelity. The book denied the very existence of God, and assumed to prove that there was no need of the divine mind, since nature was sufficient unto itself. The writer confessed that he bad once held the Christian faith, but had once held the Christian faith, but hese remarkable works. I call them these remarkable works. I call them they are to this effect: "I confess that with this virtual negation of God the physiling contrast between the hallow-d glory of that creed which was once mine, and the lonely mystery of exist-nossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible. To think of nothing better for myself, and those who think as I think, than that death ends all-mo hereafter life; to face death with all the unknown there win the prayerless prayer of the pa-gan poet Oedipus— Maynet, thou never know the truth of whethen arti-

Mayest thou never know the truth of what thou art;-

to die thus, I confess, makes me shud-der and recoil. But I face it all." I ask, is there no cry from the cave in such words? Twenty years later George Romanes died, his pen dropping from his hand in the middle of a sen-tence. He had returned to the faith he had left, and died a humble Christian. When he died men gathered up his pa-pers, and found that he was the author of Physicus, and was engaged in writpers, and round that ne was the author of Physicus, and was engaged in writ-ing another book intended to counter-act the poison of the former, and this was to be called Metaphysicus. But the pen fell from his hand, and the work was never finished.

. . .

Are you a doubter tonight? Are you a sceptic? Digging among the debris of the cave-dwellers you have come to that, and so you have lost faith in the teaching of the Old Book, and have turned your back to the light, and your soul is now in the dark sunless and starless cave. But is it well with your soul? Is there no cry as the darkness deepens, and the ghosts of the dear old past come haunting you? I hear a cry from the cave of doubt and darkness, for while you can live without Christ. for while you can live without Christ, it is hard to die without Christ, it is hard to die without Him, and the cry is the cry of the text: "No man careth for my soul!"

The Cry of Sin and Crime, the Cry from the Cave.

Men in stress of circumstances o which they have no control, just like David, often resort to doubtful expe-dients for temporary relief. They take David, often resort to doubtful expe-dients for temporary relief. They take shelter in dark places; they do some curious things. They feel themselves driven to do them. You would not go as far as say perhaps they are wrong, sinful, criminal. They excuse them-selves, and you feel like excusing them. But if they are not sinful and criminal, they are next door to it. It is the cave of a doubtful expediency they have sought shelter in, they have fiel to for refuge. for refuge.

One thing however leads to another, and soon they are in a darker, deeper cave-they are in prison. You find Da-vid in this very paalm, in his cry, speaking of himself as in prison:

- Attend unto my cry; For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors; For they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison.

It is so easy to be led into doubtful courses, to help yourself from your em-ployer's money when you are hard up, to borrow at a high rate of interest, to

BOOK

REVIEWS