

APPLICATION

Even the elders, v. 11. In Coleridge's strange tale of The Ancient Mariner, the corpses of the dead crew rise up to man the ship. Dead men pull the ropes

**A Strange Tale
And Its Lesson**

and spread the sails and work the steering gear. It is a gruesome picture, from which we turn away with a feeling of shuddering relief that it is only an imaginary tale and not a story of a real happening. But the poem illustrates how men may have their conscience, their sense of honor, their just and kindly feelings, deadened through fear, as in the case of these Jezreel magistrates, who dreaded the consequences of offending Jezebel, or through the power of some evil passion or appetite, so that they became blind instruments ready to carry out an evil purpose, whether of some malignant human master or of Satan himself, the source of all wickedness.

Witnessed against him, v. 13. William Wilberforce, the famous British anti-slavery advocate, related this incident regarding himself. He was once held up to ridicule in an unfriendly newspaper, which told, as an instance of his Phariseism, that he had been seen, not long before, walking up and down in a public place reading his prayers, like his predecessors of old, who prayed at the street corners to be seen of men. Wilberforce, on reflection, recalled the basis of this charge. He had been walking with a friend, and in the conversation a passage was quoted from the Latin poet Horace, the accuracy of which was questioned. Having a copy of Horace in his pocket, Wilberforce turned up the words and read them. "This", he says, "was the bit of wire which factious malignity sharpened into a pin to pierce my reputation."

The word of the Lord came, v. 17. Hearers, like readers, may be divided into four classes. The first class are like an hour-glass into which

**Four Classes
of Hearers**

the sand runs in only to run out again, leaving no trace behind ; the second like a sponge, imbibing everything and returning it in nearly the same state ; the third like a jelly-bag, allowing all that is pure to pass away and keeping only the refuse and the dregs ; the fourth like a gold pan used for retaining the

pure metal, while the worthless dross is washed out. In hearing the Word of God, there is no need for our separating the good from the bad ; coming from Him it is all pure and of priceless value. But there is need that we should hear with the most careful and searching attention, and above all, with a willing mind to do its behests. The wealth of God's Word, spoken or written, consists in hidden treasure to be sought for as the merchant man of our Lord's parable sought goodly pearls. They are not revealed to indifferent and superficial hearers or readers, but to those alone who read with eager desire for heavenly riches.

Thou shalt speak unto him, v. 19. Once, when George Whitefield was staying with a friend at an inn, they had scarcely retired for

the night when their rest was
A Soft Pillow disturbed by an uproar in the house. Men were gambling,

quarreling and using the most profane language. Whitefield said, "I must get up and reprove these evil-minded men who talk and swear so shamefully." He went down, but they only laughed at his words and abused him. When he returned, his friend asked, "Well, what did you get for your trouble?" "A soft pillow", was the faithful preacher's ready reply. There is no feeling so restful as the thought of duty conscientiously done. The results will never fail though we may not see them quite as we expected. In the meantime it is for us to do our part and to leave the rest in God's hands. The satisfaction of having done our duty will in itself be a rich reward.

Hast thou found me, O mine enemy, v. 20. A foolish girl had wrinkles in her face, and broke her looking-glass because it showed

**The Right Aim
for Anger**

them. But she was not so foolish as the men and women who become angry with the friend or the minister who bravely and plainly points out their faults. The looking-glass is only fulfilling its purpose when it gives back in its reflection every wrinkle, and those are our best and wisest friends who lovingly and faithfully point out where we are wrong. It is much more sensible to aim our anger at our faults than at those who tell us of them.