

Watchman, what of the Night?

"So thou, O son of man! I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me."—Ezek. xxxiii. 7.

To understand this passage, you must imagine yourself in Palestine. The farmers there do not live on their farms, but in villages—just as if all the farmers round here lived in this village, went out in the morning to work in their fields, and returned in the evening. This plan they adopted because of the danger from enemies. These villages were generally erected on hills; on the highest part of the village a tower was erected. The people, in any time of danger, chose one of their number to stand on this tower, with a trumpet. He was to keep a sharp lookout. If he sees a cloud of dust, he must watch it; if he feels satisfied that the enemy is coming, he ought to blow the trumpet to warn them that are in the field—the men to gird on their arms, and the women and children to flee. Such was the position of the prophets of the Old Testament, and such is the position of the preachers of the New Testament. Let us follow out this idea, that we as watchmen, may know *our* duty, and that you who set us as watchmen, may know *your* duty at this time, when there is a great public question stirring the minds of the people of this county.

Let us consider *first*, the office: It is to *WATCH*. A simple, easy thing, you say. Look at the people in the field: *they* toil hard; *he* is only watching. True; but that *watching* is harder than *working*. He is alone all day; others work in company. He must never sit down on duty; workers can rest at noon. He must watch into the night; the workers are asleep, each one in his own home. So with the ministers of Christ. Our work is to watch; but we are often alone. The people cannot enter into sympathy with us, in many things. But we are not alone, for the Father is with us. We carry into the night the cares of our work. The responsibility of the watchman is great. Brethren, pray for us. But there are too many who are more ready to find fault than to pray. To such we say: "But with me it is a very small matter that I should be judged of you or of any man's judgment; but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

II. The position of watchman. It is an ELEVATED position. The people are in the

fields down on the plain. He is on the hill, and on the top of the high tower. He therefore sees further; and being accustomed to watch, his vision becomes sharper. A man goes up from the field for a little while, to take his stand on the tower. The watchman suddenly stops, looks into the distance, and draws a long breath. What is the matter? A little cloud of dust. The other man sees no danger. It is the enemy coming. Watchmen on the towers of Zion are thus in a favourable position, with regard to some questions. Their education; their studies, their prayers, their study of the Word of God, place them in a favorable position to see the approach of moral danger. Now, there are two questions at present agitating the community here: Whether it would be wise or right in this county to put down the traffic in strong drink; and whether the Bill to be introduced on the 20th and 21st, would help to *ward* this matter. On these two questions, especially the former question which is the main question, there is no class better entitled to speak than ministers of the gospel. When the question is about politics, about railroads we are silent. You had exciting discussions in this county since I came in here, about narrow gauge and broad gauge railroads; about politics—reform and tory; but, except in the way of private opinion, I never interfered nor attempted to direct you. If a question should arise as to disease among the people, the prevalence of fevers say, and how to prevent them, I would leave the point to the medical men of the county. Their education and their training qualify them to speak on this point; and the ministers of the gospel would be to blame did they meddle with what they did not understand. But when the question agitated comes to be a question of morals, of social order, a question that concerns the welfare of families and the temporal and eternal happiness of men, women and little children, then we claim that such a question lies within the sphere of ministers of the gospel, and that a great deal of deference should be shown to their views. But this question about the Temperance Act now