

rose again. Oh, that it might be rung out! "Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

"So Naaman came with his horses"—it is a sarcastic book, this old Book—"so Naaman came with his horses." They were not lepers, but he fetched them. "So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot." The Revised Version is more sarcastic. It says, "With his chariots; and stood at the door of the house of Elisha." Now, Elisha, you are on your trial. Now, Elisha, you never were in such a perilous place as you are now, after all that has been said about Israel and Israel's God. It is a trying time for you now. Very likely some young gentleman who has come in here this evening said, not out loud, but by his whole attitude, as he sat down in that pew, and as I came up into this pulpit—for wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?—"Now, preacher, you may have been criticized a little before, but it was gentleness and mercy, compared with what you will have now, since I have come. I am none of your ordinary church-goers. I am"—what do you suppose you are? I am very glad to see you, dear friend, but less of your airs, if you please, and less criticism! Understand the situation. I am master of the situation, and the situation is this: there is no problem up here. The whole problem is down there. Will you at length open your eyes? Will you at last be humbled in your own eyes? Will you at last cease from criticizing, cease from pulling yourself up all your inches, and strutting, and spreading, and accept the Gospel as a helpless leper, like you, should? Will you? I hope that is plain enough. If you will give me plainer English, I will hand it back to you, for, as God is my witness, I do believe that if you have not been washed by the blood of Christ, Naaman, for loathsomeness, is but a poor picture of your condition in the sight of God.

No, Elisha was not on his trial, and God was not on his trial; but Naaman was upon his, and he did not come through it very well at first. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee and thou shalt be clean." But Naaman was wroth, and went away; and you remember what he said, "Behold, I thought he will surely come to me." "To me." "Granted that I am a leper, but I am not an ordinary leper. I am an extraordinary leper. I am a general. I am a prince. I am a captain.

I am here with these jingling horses and chariots. May he deal thus with me?" Have you never heard or witnessed that rage? Is it not in your veins at this mom-

ent? Are you not sorry that you came in? Sit still. You may be sorry before you go out. After all, the worst kind of Gospel hearer is that one who comes and goes, and comes and goes, and you never find him either sad, or glad, or mad—never. There they are, like a ditch without fall or flood—like the Mediterranean, without ebb or flow—at the one fall-less and floodless, contemptible level. I like to see men mad. When a man like Naaman is being led along a line like this—when he is taken so far away out of his own orbit, or so far off the beaten track, so completely away from what he expects, when the Lord's message through Elisha falls upon him at an angle of incidence so unexpected—I can quite understand him. I do not suppose that the Lord was angry, and I do not suppose that Elisha was angry. They thoroughly understood it. They knew exactly what the effect would be. When men are wakened up from a deep sleep, and wakened up in a hurry because there is something urgent and imminent, they often wake up cross—they often wake up angry. I suppose if I were to come to you to-morrow morning, with all your amiability and your sweetness and your gentleness—and I do not despise it—and seized you by the hand, and put my hand on your shoulder and shook you rudely and woke you up, when you arose you would not have all your "Polite Letter Writer" phrases just ready at the time. You would be likely to be a little indignant, and you would be likely to think that I was very inconsiderate; but if in the midst of all your ruffledness and all your anger I showed you that I had a just cause for what I had done, and that there was a fire, and that the fire was not in the next street or even in the next house, but was in your own house, I think when you got to know that, you would thank me, and you would say that if I had been polite, and had stood upon ceremony, I should not have been your friend. So with the Gospel preachers, so with Elisha. Poor Naaman was far gone, and what he needed was quick medicine: what he needed was something which went straight to the point. I grant there was seeming rudeness in the wording: I grant there was imperiousness, for when God speaks you must allow Him to be imperious and imperial—never forget that. The Gospel does beseech, but in it all and through it all the Gospel is a command, and you disobey it at peril of eternal damnation—let every soul of us know it before we go out. The Gospel is a command. Believe: repent. Go wash, and go as quickly as you can for your own sake. That is the Gospel—a command; and it is in your interest, oh sinner, that the Gospel is on the surface as