

you, and show you how to get at the meat of these matters ?'

'Indeed, I would, captain, if you don't mind.'

Then the captain proceeded as follows : 'I'll do it with pleasure. First, you see, I read and read, and thought and thought, till I got to understand what sort of people they were in the old Bible times, and then after that it was all clear and easy. Now, this was the way I put it up, concerning Isaac\* and the prophets of Baal. There was some mighty sharp men amongst the public characters of that old ancient day, and Isaac was one of them. Isaac had his failings,—plenty of them, too ; it ain't for me to apologize for Isaac ; he played it on the prophets of Baal, and like enough he was justifiable, considering the odds that was against him. No, all I say is, 't wa'n't any miracle, and that I'll show you so 's 't you can see it yourself.

'Well, times had been getting rougher and rougher for prophets,—that is, prophets of Isaac's denomination. There was four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal in the community, and only one Presbyterian, that is, if Isaac *was* a Presbyterian. which I reckon he was, but it don't say. Naturally, the prophets of Baal took all the trade. Isaac was pretty low-spirited, I reckon, but he was a good deal of a man, and nodoubt he went a-prophesying around, letting on to be doing a land-office business, but 't wa'n't any use ; he couldn't run any opposition to amount to anything. By and by things got desperate with him ; he sets his head to work and thinks it all out, and then what does he do ? Why, he begins to throw out hints that the other parties are this and that and t'other,—nothing very definite, may be, but just kind of undermining their reputation in a quiet way. This made talk, of course, and finally got to the king. The king asked Isaac what he meant by his talk. Says Isaac, 'Oh, nothing particular ; only, can they pray down fire from heaven on an altar ? It ain't much, may be, your majesty, only can they *do* it ? That's the idea.' So the king was a good deal disturbed, and he went to the prophets of Baal, and they said, pretty airy, that if he had an altar ready, *they* were

ready ; and they intimated he better get it insured, too.

'So next morning all the children of Israel and their parents and the other people gathered themselves together. Well, here was that great crowd of prophets of Baal packed together on one side, and Isaac walking up and down all alone on the other, putting up his job. When time was called, Isaac let on to be comfortable and indifferent ; told the other team to take the first innings. So they went at it, the whole four hundred and fifty, praying around the altar, very hopeful and doing their level best. They prayed an hour,—two hours, —three hours,—and so on plumb till noon. It wa'n't any use ; they had n't took a trick. Of course they felt kind of ashamed before all those people, and well they might. Now what would a magnanimous man do ? Keep still, wouldn't he ? Of course. What did Isaac do ? He graveled the prophets of Baal every way he could think of. Says he, "You don't speak up loud enough ; your god's asleep, like enough, or may be he's taking a walk ; you want to holler, you know,"—or words to that effect ; I don't recollect the exact language. Mind, I don't apologize for Isaac ; he had his faults.

'Well the prophets of Baal prayed along the best they knew how all the afternoon, and never raised a spark. At last, about sundown, they were all tuckered out, and they owned up and quit.

'What does Isaac do, now ? He steps up and says to some friends of his, there, "Pour four barrels of water on the altar !" Everybody was astonished ; for the other side had prayed at it dry, you know, and got whitewashed. They poured it on. Says he, "Heave on four more barrels." Then he says, "Heave on four more." Twelve barrels, you see, altogether. The water ran all over the altar, and all down the sides, and filed up a trench around it that would hold a couple of hogsheads,— "measures," it says ; I reckon it means about a hogshead. Some of the people were going to put on their things and go, for they allowed he was crazy. They didn't know Isaac. Isaac knelt down and began to pray : he strung along, and strung along, about the heathen in distant lands, and about the sister churches, and about the state and the country at large, and about those that's in authority in the government,

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\*This is the captain's own mistake.