

But do not overlook the gates of which you yourself hold the keys. What does the glory of the great King matter to you—or His peace—or His grace—or His love—if you do not get your share in them? Let the New Year open with the opened gates of your heart and life.

Toronto

Pen Pictures of Great Prophets

By Rev. J. M. Duncan, D.D.

I. ELIJAH

Elijah was an out-of-doors man. He loved the great lonely spaces of nature. He hated cities. A rough sheepskin mantle was his chosen garb. Amid the barren hills and wild ravines and bleak uplands of Gilead, with only here and there a shepherd tending his flocks, he was at home. He was hardy of frame, swift, strong and temperate,—a journey of a hundred miles and more, on foot, to Zarephath had no terrors for him. In his running before the royal chariot over the seventeen or eighteen miles from Carmel to Jezreel, he showed the endurance of a finely trained athlete. Hearing the murderous threat of Jezebel, he saved himself from the queen's wrath by a sudden and rapid flight to the remote Beersheba. It is no disparagement of his powers that he suffered the complete collapse of body and spirit that led to the eclipse of his faith beneath the juniper tree in the wilderness.

The great prophet was a stranger to fear. Like a bolt from the blue, he burst into the presence of the wicked king Ahab and denounced the royal transgressor to his face. Jezebel, the bold, masterful, unscrupulous Lady Macbeth of the Old Testament, could not silence the tongue of the brave desert dweller, with his message from the Most High.

He was a man of faith. At the bare word of God, he set out for the solitude of the brook Cherith, where there was no means of support for him but that brought by the greedy birds of prey from the hands of his heavenly Provider; and afterwards, in the widow's home at Zarephath, he drew on the same Source with a confidence unshaken by the scantiness of the visible supply.

It mattered not that he stood alone, to all appearance, as a champion of Jehovah worship, in a nation given over to the worship of Baal. Sure that he was on God's side, and therefore that God was on his side, he confronted the hundreds of idolatrous priests on Mount Carmel, and put them to shame. He was confident that with him stood the One whose presence always makes a majority.

Elijah was a stern prophet. In his spirit and methods there was more of the mighty wind hurling the loosened granite rocks down the mountain side, or the earthquake that sets the lofty peaks a-reeling like drunken men, or of the fierce lightning flashing across the sky, than of the "still small voice", "the sound of gentle stillness". But the evil times called for one who could strike straight, strong blows at the wickedness springing up on all sides; and the sternness of Elijah doubtless prepared the way for Elisha, his gentler successor.

No nobler hero stands out on the pages of scripture than this great prophet of Jehovah, with his brave heart and frame of steel. During long years of toil and conflict, he marched breast forward against the foes of God and his country, to be carried away, at last, in the fiery chariot, a victor from a well fought field.

The Real Hero

Through a far Western town a train loaded with powder was creeping. From the men out on the cars behind the engine came the report that the train was on fire. Up in the cab sat a man the world never knew before. His name is to-day unknown to any save the very few who learned of the heroic deed he did. Garcia, the humble engineer, Garcia, the man who stayed at his post in a time of danger, Garcia, the real hero.

"Tell the men to jump for their lives!" he sent back word to the trembling hands in the rear, but he himself pulled his cap down a little farther over his eyes and threw the throttle wide open. For he knew that if the train blew up while passing through that town, a good share of the houses would be hurled down to ruin and the people killed.

"I'll do my best to pull the train out where no one will be hurt!"