

The Inglenook.

For Dominion Presbyterian.

Bell's Story: Part II.

BY ANNA ROSS.

How Bell was led to watch for Christ's Second Coming.

The first time the subject caught her attention at all was when listening to the following conversation in her own parlor. Two friends had been indulging in one of those delightful interchange of thought on subjects dearest to both, which make friendship really worthy of the name. The younger of the two suddenly asked of the elder, "Do you incline to the premillennial view of Christ's second coming, or to the post-millennial?"

His friend answered with animation, "Many years ago I studied the subject throughout the whole word of God with all the thoroughness of which I was capable. At that time I rejected the ordinary premillennial view, though there were some things seemingly in favor of it that I could not then explain. But the more I have thought the matter over, and the different passages have ranged themselves in right perspective with each other and with other truths, the more I am dissatisfied with both views. The post-millennial theory makes much of the Bible meaningless, and takes the ring of cheer out of Christ's parting words, 'Surely I come quickly.' The pre-millennial idea of a visible coming at that time in the clouds of heaven, and reigning in person in Jerusalem surrounded by His risen saints, springs, I think, from a confusion of ideas. Let me explain my meaning."

The speaker, as was often the case when deeply interested, had been walking up and down the room. Now he paused beside the table and laid his finger significantly upon three successive points of its surface.

"I find," he said, "in carefully studying the word of God, not merely two, but three distinct comings of the Son of Man."

"His First Coming," laying his finger again upon the first point in the tablecloth, "was foretold as a time of humiliation, suffering and death."

"But there is a Second Coming," laying his finger upon a second spot, "which is foretold with marvellous fulness and in a great variety of passages. It is this coming which immediately precedes the millennium. Concerning Him at this Second Coming, it is announced that 'He shall smite all nations with the rod of His mouth'; that He shall consume Antichrist 'with the spirit of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming.' Under His leadership 'the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.' Then 'the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' This is the Second Coming of Christ of which the Bible is full and for which we are all to watch."

"But," he added with energy, "there is a Third Coming, a coming to judgment, in the clouds of heaven, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and shall meet the Lord in the air, to be immediately joined by the saints then living, when all shall be gathered before the great white throne, that the books may be opened, and all judged according to their works."

That is His Third Coming. Now the Jews, in watching for their Messiah, made their mistake by losing sight of the lowly and sorrowfully significant predictions that described His first coming, and fastening their eye entirely upon the glorious promises concerning His second coming. The premillennialists, as it seems to me, make the similar mistake of reading into those promises of the second the peculiar features that belong only to the third or final coming. But the mass of post-millennialists have lost the Second Coming altogether."

The young questioner had listened with the deepest interest.

"Then in what sense," he asked, "do you expect Him to come the second time?"

The animated walk up and down the room recommenced,—

"Not this time in the literal, visible sense. He will come, as He came the last time, in such a way that the Church itself, except the few that may be watching, shall not know Him. You will find this Second Coming given in vision in the 19th of Revelation,—'And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.' If you study the whole passage I think you will be satisfied that this rider is not the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven to gather His saints to a personal meeting in the air; but it is Christ going forth to conquer this old rebellious world to Himself. Christ as the Word of God with the sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth. The day is coming, and it is not far off, when to those who are watching, He shall so shine into His own word, and His glory shall so shine out of it, that that word shall be to them as though their visible Lord was walking at their side—yes, more than that."

"I know," he added, "something of what I am talking about. The power the Word of God has at times over my own soul is, I believe, a foretaste of that which is coming soon in full force to those who are watching, and ready to follow Him who rides forth with the sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth."

"And do you think," inquired his friend, "that the conflict will be with the Church as well as with the world?"

"When Christ came the first time," was the answer, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Unless I am much mistaken, when He comes the second time, the Church will be as truly unprepared as it was eighteen hundred years ago. Jesus Christ Himself almost indicates as much when He says, 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?' A remnant will be filled with His word and spirit as never, except in the rarest instances, has been the case before; but they will be counted bands of enthusiasts, hypocrites or fools. But they will really be bands of heroes, every one of them such as David was when he went forth to meet Goliath. They will then do in earnest what each of us should be doing now—they will be doing 'His will on earth as it is done in heaven.'"

The speaker paused a moment in front of his young friend and asked him,—

"Do you know what these men will be doing? They will simply but actually be living the doctrine of the Headship of Christ

over the Church." Do you know, he added with great animation, "that the principles which produced the Disruption are the very principles which, as things appear to me, shall introduce the Millennium."

"That is a very interesting idea, and gives a dignity to the contentings of the Free Church that I never suspected before."

"Look again at the 19th of Revelation," recommencing the walk up and down the room. "You will find both the principles there, and both in such prominence that they are given as the two published names of the Divine Rider. His name is called *The Word of God*. In going forth to do battle under that name He certainly goes to bring a people under complete subjection to that word, and that is asserting and establishing His own Headship over them. But He has another conspicuous name. 'He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, *King of Kings, and Lord of lords*.' In going forth to do battle under that name, He certainly goes to bring kings and kingdoms under positive subjection to Himself, and to Himself as the *Word of God*. And so real is their subjection in the end that He shall 'rule them with a rod of iron.' If that is not asserting His Headship over the nations and winning it too, what is it?"

"Then you think that Christ's people, under the actual but invisible leadership of Christ Himself, shall literally take the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven?—that they shall assert and establish His right to control, not His Church only, but the whole world, according to the laws laid down in the word of God?"

"That is it exactly. And it is quite possible that it shall be done according to established constitutional principles. Two things will probably go on together; 1st. The most tremendous political confusion and bloodshed, signs enough of which have for years been shewing themselves; and 2nd. The quickening, consolidation and marvellous growth of that inner Church scattered all throughout the present visible Church—the actual gathering together of those armies of heaven on white horses going out after the august rider, who is their Leader. Now remember these two forces will be at work, together, death and destruction, making awful havoc of human life on the one side, and a present, though invisible Lord developing beauty and power on the other."

"Take your own city. Fasten your eyes on it, and watch the necessary consequences of the continued action of these two forces. Soon the people of the saints of the Most High would be in the majority, and, once there, what would they do? Would they not quickly fill all the municipal offices with men after God's own heart? From the mayor down to the policemen parading the streets, the uppermost thought of each officer would be how, in the wisest and most effectual way, he could rid the city of every temptation to iniquity, and bring all its institutions and inhabitants up to the closest accord with the Word of God. Let these two forces work on through the whole world, and you see the necessary consequences, without anything that we call miracle, except this, the complete subjection of Christ's people to His Word."

"But it will be a time of tremendous conflict. The devil will fight for every inch of ground. The victory will be gained simply because 'greater is He that is with us than he that is with them.' It will again be a trial of strength between the Son of God and the god of this world."

"I see. Once Jesus Christ is established