

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### VICTORY THROUGH RETREAT.

BY REV. JAMES MASTER, LINDSAY.

It is the last thing we would expect of Elijah—this retreat to Cherith—judging from the man, and from his opening attack on Ahab.

Sudden as a thunderbolt from a clear sky, and as unexpected, the prophet confronted the monarch and exclaimed, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." (1 Kings, xvii. 1.)

Good generalship, we would suppose, demands that the *coup de main* be persistently followed up till victory be complete, and rather than retreat the hero would fall. But, the campaign was of God's designing, and His strategy like Himself puts to scorn the wisdom of men.

Elijah retreated because God sounded retreat. But, why order retreat at the present juncture?

(1) For *Ahab's sake*. Bad men are notoriously superstitious. Superstition is peculiarly affected by what is concealed and mysterious. Elijah's absence, therefore, would terrify Ahab vastly more than his presence would. Famine was devouring man and beast meantime. Ahab was at his wit's end to know what to do. Fain would he hold a conference with the awful prophet, but he was incognito. The presence of the famine and drought, the absence of the famine-producer were a double distraction to the monarch; while positive and present ills were still further augmented by the hallucinations of a guilty imagination as to what might yet take place. It was of great moment to paralyze Ahab's hand, and confuse his mind, and this could be done most effectively by keeping Elijah out of sight while the judgments were doing their terrible work. Hence one reason for Elijah's retreat to Cherith.

(2) *Ha!* the main reason was for Elijah's own sake.

(a) To protect him. Could Ahab only get his hand on the "Troubler's" throat how soon he would dispatch him. True, God could as easily work a miracle for Elijah's rescue as to stop rain by a miracle. But the divine method is not to employ miraculous agency so long as natural means will suffice. In this case concealment will accomplish for the prophet all that is needed; hence the order to retreat into the wilderness.

(b) Mainly, however, to train Elijah for those future exploits which he was destined to achieve later on. Three years hence and the pitched battle between truth and error shall be fought on Mount Carmel, and for that grand Waterloo Elijah must be specially fitted. To this end he is sent to college, shall I say, up yonder by the lonely brook Cherith. Twelve months of seclusion from society, twelve months of solitary life in a weird wilderness, followed by two years more of concealment up at Sidon with a poor widow—what a strange curriculum to pass through. Nay, more than strange, how trying, extremely trying to a man of Elijah's temperament and upbringing. He was a born man of war. Mountain bred, he was naturally in love with danger. Just in his element he was thundering the truth into Ahab's ear, or breaking to pieces false gods. Like Job's war-horse, he smelled the battle afar off, he mocked at fear, and was not affrighted, neither turned he back from the sword. He said among the trumpets, Ha! ha!

Fancy what a trial it was to be bidden retire into the wilderness, seemingly to do nothing. How irksome to sit there month after month, silent and idle, while idolatry and licentiousness ran riot over the land; while Ahab and Baal (seemingly at least) reign in undisputed sway. But, the first qualification of a great commander is to learn to obey. God peremptorily commands a retreat, and Elijah shews greater bravery in promptly obeying than in confronting Ahab at his own palace.

Now, here comes into prominence a great principle which claims a few moments' careful study—the principle of secret and unseen forces. Winter is a reign of death apparently, yet what is winter but nature's great laboratory wherein full preparation is made for all the beauties and bounties of next spring and summer, and for the fruitage of autumn. While asleep we seem to be losing time and money, yet nothing pays so well as sound sleep and plenty of it, and never are we really accomplishing so much as then. Much the same in the moral sphere. In a fast and fussy age like ours how apt we are to fancy we are doing nothing for God or man unless we

are performing some public labour, serving on committees, *etc.*, conducting meetings, teaching in the Sabbath school, preaching, writing for the press, giving large contributions, *etc.*; while biding still awaiting God's orders, passing months in the sick chamber, only a tax and a trouble to others, shut up in prison, maybe, for conscience's sake, this we count time lost and a calamity.

This incident in Elijah's life sets us right on this point. It reminds us that John Bunyan while in Bedford gaol twelve years, was doing more to demolish Satan's kingdom than when abroad preaching the Word; Paul while a prisoner at Rome was doing much as when traversing sea and land proclaiming the blessed Evangel, Jesus, while forty days in the wilderness, enduring temptation, is as fully employed as when preaching the sermon on the mount, or casting out devils.

..... "God doth not need  
Either man's work or His own gifts: *who best*  
*Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best.* His state  
Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:  
*They also serve who only stand and wait.*

Brother, hold yourself ready to visit lonely Cherith. It is God's way with His own. If He has any special honour in store for you, any unusually important work for you to do, He will send you to school for a while in the valley of humiliation.

The gold must pass through the fire to remove the dross. The kingdom and the crown can be reached only through much tribulation. Only make sure that you understand your marching orders, then carry them out, cost what it may. This is Christian life. This is serving God.

### THE MARRIAGE QUESTION.

In a pamphlet by Rev. D. B. Blair, published at Halifax in 1873, we have a "Dissertation on the Degrees of Kindred which Bar Marriage." I now invite attention to one or two points I find there relating to "marriage with the deceased wife's sister" only; other points are important, but I keep to this one question, and as Mr. Blair has stated the argument generally put forward as forbidding that marriage in a very fair way, and so that it can be fairly met, I wish shortly to state my objection to it.

1. On page sixteen, after giving the common table of forbidden degrees, he says: "The number of prohibitions is thirty; fifteen are expressly prohibited, and the other fifteen by inference. Now, whatever doctrine may be deduced from Scripture by a *just and necessary* inference is as much taught there as what is expressly stated. *It may therefore be fairly assumed* that when marriage is expressly forbidden between relatives of a *certain degree of nearness*, it is unlawful between other relatives who are in the same degree," *etc.*

It is this "assumption" to which objection is taken. If I could agree with Mr. Blair in his premise the conclusion could not be disputed. It does not, however, appear to me to be a fair and necessary inference to say, because a brother's widow is forbidden, *therefore* also is a wife's sister. The relation in which they stand to a man is *analogous* but not *identical*; the one may be forbidden while the other is not. There is no necessity of inference which justifies us in assuming that the latter marriage is interdicted.

2. On page fifteen Mr. Blair says: "When a man is forbidden to marry his brother's wife, this includes the *correlative* prohibition of a woman marrying her husband's brother, as well as the *analogous prohibition* of a woman marrying her sister's husband, or a man marrying his wife's sister." To the "correlative prohibition" I assent; for the "analogous prohibition" I find no ground in Scripture. Let Mr. Blair *show* that ground and not assume it. It is not an axiom or self-evident truth.

3. On page fifteen Mr Blair goes on to say, that it is clear that the fourth section of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Westminster Confession rests on "an impregnable foundation of Scripture truth," and adds, "It is only to *relations by blood* that the prohibition extends. There is not a single instance of a wife's relatives by marriage being *expressly* forbidden to the husband, or of a husband's relatives by marriage being forbidden to the wife. *The instances given in Leviticus do not warrant us to extend the prohibition to them. Therefore they are not included in the phrase, 'near of kin.'*"

Now, *mutatis mutandis*, Mr. Blair has in the last two clauses enunciated the ground on which I oppose his assumption from analogy, *viz.*: There is not a single instance of a wife's relatives by blood in the *collateral line* being expressly forbidden to the husband or of a husband's relatives by blood in the *collateral line* being forbidden to the wife. The instances given in Leviticus do not warrant us to extend the prohibition to them. *Therefore they are not included* in the phrase, "near of kin." If an instance can be given I will yield the question. But as the "collateral line" of a wife's relatives is referred to only in verse eighteen, and there not to prohibit marriage, I hold that the law does not by *fair and necessary inference* prohibit marriage with a deceased wife's sister or niece or aunt.

4. On page twenty-five, Mr. Blair says: "In the seventeenth verse a man is interdicted from marrying a woman and her mother, or a woman and her daughter or her grand-daughter, for it is wickedness to do so, because they are near kinswomen," that is, are "near of kin." To this I assent (1) women related to a wife in the "direct line" of ascent and descent are interdicted, (2) one of them is expressly said to be "near of kin"—but note well, not a word is said of the "collateral line," nor is a sister said to be "near of kin," in the sense of being included in that law-phrase. "On the same ground," Mr. Blair goes on to say "it is wickedness to marry two sisters, for two sisters are one flesh or near kinswomen according to verse thirteen." We turn to verse thirteen and we find that the "ground" is not the same, as Mr. Blair says it is, but "she is thy mother's kinswoman." Unless we *assume* that the mother and wife are "one with the man," in the same sense it is obvious that a "mother's kinswoman" when a wife's is not, and that the prohibition may rest on grounds which do not apply to a wife. To *assume* that the ground is the same is a fallacy. Besides the law expressly forbids the one and does not, except admittedly by analogy, seem to forbid the other. The law nowhere says "thou shalt not marry a wife's sister, for she is one flesh with thy wife. Or, in other words, the law of Moses interdicts a mother's sister, on the ground that she is included in the phrase "near of kin," but does not interdict a wife's sister on the ground that she is near of kin to the wife. The law does not include wife's sister, niece, or aunt in the phrase "near of kin." The law affects only relatives by blood of the wife in the direct line, and does not affect those in the collateral line.

If Mr. Blair or some other writer will fairly meet this issue, it will do much to promote unity of sentiment among us. But so long as I (and others think as I do) find no Scripture warrant for the assumption founded on "analogous relationship," I cannot assent to the statement that a man may not marry *any* of his "wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own." I think some of his wife's blood relations are interdicted, but not all; not the sister, niece, or aunt.

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### SEVEN YEARS IN THE INDIAN MISSION FIELD.

(Concluded.)

Year by year it becomes more evident that India will never accept a system of religion from another people. No foreigner will ever lead out her dusky millions from their present darkness into the kingdom of the light of God. Her leader must be found among her own sons, he must be from within her own borders; but how, you ask, are we to reach him? Give the people the power to read, and the Bible without note or comment, and the man will *make himself known*. First of all, *primary education* must be our gift to the masses, so that the power of the press may be brought to bear.

It has always struck me that argument, as a convincing medium, must be very carefully handled to be successful, though quiet, earnest talking may be most effective. There is much in *mode*. Missions should in no wise relax their efforts in breaking up and preparing the soil. The intellect of India has been following for centuries, and in due time we may reasonably expect a golden harvest; we must labour, while we wait. Since the establishment of Christian missions in India, a slow but radical change has been going on. Ideas that had long been fixed as axioms in the national mind have become revolutionized, and we