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From Darkness To Light.

A CHAT WITH AN OLD MISSIONARY.

'Now, my friend,' said I, as, when supper was finished, I drew up a comfortable easy chair before the fire, 'it is long since I had the opportunity of talking to you about your work; so get into this chair and while you rest, tell me what instance do you consider the most remarkable which has come under your notice as a missionary?'

The old man leaned back in his chair and gazed dreamily into the fire. At last he said, 'I think the strangest case I have come across was that of a Rabbi whose name I

did your merchant friend carry out your suggestions and pass the books on to the Rabbi?'

'Indeed he did, and in a better manner than I could have done it myself. The Rabbi began upon the "Old Paths." He had not read far, when his zeal was kindled into a towering flame. "This M'Caul," he cried, "must be an apostate Rabbi, a Meshumed! He ought to be stoned! I must write a book against him, and it shall have Leviathan's teeth to break his bones." Vainly did his wife try to soften him down. She was afraid he would have a fever.'

'Ha! ha! ha! did the Rabbi write the book? Did he answer M'Caul?' I asked.

'Well—not exactly. He pored over the "Old Paths" day and night. At last he said,

up the New Testament and then (to use his own words) "his soul and all the powers of his spirit were chained to the book." He sat up night after night, reading it and comparing its statements and those of the Old Testament, passage by passage.'

'But,' I said, 'the quotations in the New Testament are mostly taken from the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, are they not?'

'Yes, they are, and that caused the Rabbi much greater difficulty in overcoming his doubts as to their being genuine, for, unfortunately, he was unacquainted with the Septuagint version. Now it happened that one night he became deeply interested in the Epistle to the Hebrews, so much so, that he did not think of going to rest till after the day had dawned. The consequence was that the congregation had assembled in the synagogue for morning prayers, and were wondering what had become of their Rabbi—their leader in prayer, their intercessor. A special messenger was sent to his house to summon him, and to see what had become of him. Aroused from his sweet slumbers by a furious knocking at the door, the Rabbi rose in haste, horror-stricken at his sloth, and, before he left the house, poured some water three times over his hands to purify them, so that he might touch the phylacteries and the talith and other sacred things. He stands in the reading desk, but his mind is bewildered and confused. He feels what he never felt before—how vain and artificial is the service; and the consequence is he makes blunder after blunder even in reciting the Shemang.* The Parnass† is amazed. Again and again he corrects the Rabbi. What can have come to him? Has some evil spirit possessed him? At last, fearing lest the wrath of God should turn against the whole congregation for the Rabbi's sin, he pounced upon the unfortunate man and beat him in the reading desk with might and main; so much so, that if some of those present had not dragged away the Parnass from the screaming Rabbi, the consequences might have been serious. For some days the Rabbi felt the pain of the blows inflicted upon him.'

'Poor fellow! I suppose what he suffered stopped all his researches into the truths of Christianity?'

'Indeed, my friend, you are mistaken. All that he had gone through only made the Rabbi the more eager and diligent in his search. The conviction dawned upon him that modern Judaism does not rest upon the sure foundation of the Word of God. He opened his mind to his wife, but, in spite of all the arguments he could bring forward, she would not so much as listen to him. At last one night he sent for me, and laid open to me all his troubles and perplexities, and then, at last, produced a number of questions which he wished answered. Having satisfied him on these points, I asked him, "Do you feel convinced of the Divinity of Jesus of Nazareth?" And thus he answered me—"That is one of the reasons wherefore I have sent for you. I have for a long time felt

must conceal for many reasons. That man was a great scholar, accomplished and shrewd, gifted with a knowledge of languages and as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But I knew full well that he was an enemy of Christ and his servants, and a mighty Pharisee. It would not do for me to go directly to him, and yet oh! how I longed to win him for the gospel!'

'Yes,' I said, 'a man like that would make a useful missionary, but anyone who strives with him or enters into argument with him must be prepared to suffer a fall or two. But how did you manage to reach him?'

'By the means of that useful instrument, a mutual friend. A merchant who knew us both, had often talked to me of this Rabbi and his hatred of the conversionists, and so one day I took down to this merchant a copy of the "Old Paths" and a New Testament, suggesting that a man of such learning and such zeal for the Talmud and the faith of his fathers, as was that Rabbi, should not suffer so many of his brethren and kinsmen to be misled with impunity; but that in order to cope with the missionary it was necessary for him to be acquainted with their weapons. Don't take an unfair advantage of your opponent. Put a good weapon in his hands if you want a fair fight.'

'This is very interesting,' said I. 'Well;

"This M'Caul is most certainly learned in the law and loves us Jews. But I won't read any more books of this sort. My mind gets upset through them." And so the Rabbi picked up the Talmud in order to bring his mind back to its proper state. But somehow or other he felt very disgusted with the subtle arguments of the Rabbis about washing of hands and cleansing of cups, etc. Up to this time he had not touched the New Testament. A day or two after, through my friend the merchant, I send him our tract, "Proofs that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah." The Rabbi read it, looking out in his Bible the passages quoted. He shook his head. "Stubborn facts these—very stubborn." He called his wife. "Come here, my dear. I must read this little book to you." "No," she quickly replied, "none of these books for me! Since you began studying them you are not what you used to be." "My dear," said the Rabbi, "why I only read these books that I may be able to write against those missionaries." His wife shook her head. "You only say so to put a plaster upon your wounded conscience." What his wife said led the Rabbi to leave the book alone, but he could not get their contents out of his head, and, what was worse, it grew more and more difficult to answer their arguments. At last one day he took

* The Jewish confession of faith. Deut. vi., 4.

† The ruler of the synagogue, an office similar to that of churchwarden.

