

the ships that sail the ocean were not grown under sunny skies, but on Norwegian bluff, Siberian steep, or Canadian slope, where the frosty air cuts like steel and the storm-blast sways them until they struggle like giants in a revel; but it toughens their fibre and fits them for service.

The country of one's youth has something to do with the formation of the man. The patient endurance of the Scotch Highlander seems to match the heather-clad, granite mountains of his homeland. Elijah, the greatest prophet, came out of the meanest province in the land. As an inhabitant of Gilead, he has been called "the highlander of Israel."

When God has a work to do He always has the man for the occasion. Luther, Knox, Wesley (sometimes the man is a woman), Miss Willard. Elijah was the man for the times. With the living God at his side he was more than a match for the host that bowed before dead idols. The Word of the Lord made him fearless as, with his blunt *thee's* and *thou's*, he struck terror into the heart of Ahab.

Baal and Ashtoreth were worshipped as representing the productive powers of nature. This famine was to prove that the powers symbolized by these gods were only effective by the will of Jehovah. Jehovah foresaw how terrible the famine would be, what importunity for rain would come upon Elijah, what danger to his life from the king, so he provided for his safety in a wild ravine, where the heated rays of the sun were kept at bay by the sheltering rocks and overhanging verdure. Fed by ravens and drinking from the brook he was God's ward. His fare did not extend to the luxuries but to the necessities of life. Elijah was as truly serving God in the exercise of caution in retirement as he had been in his public declamation against the godlessness of his times. Sampson tore down the pillars of the Temple of Dagon and perished with the Philistines. And when "the brook dried up," it seemed as if Elijah would perish with the famine-stricken. But God is never at a loss for expedients; so He commands him (v. 9). Elijah was timed to meet his hostess, although he had no previous arrangement with her. The right connection never fails when God conducts the excursion. The widow woman was there. Elijah's first request showed why he left Cherith, "Fetch me a little water." Water was a scarce article in those days, and she might have been excused if she had refused his request. As she was going to fetch it he called, "Bring me a morsel of bread in thine hand." The prophet had been used to roughing it and could take his fare in a plain way.

To find his hostess Elijah had not a specific, but only a very general address, a "widow woman," "Zarepath." But he was not mistaken in her identity (vs. 13, 14). This was true reciprocity. It is God's plan. "Give, and it shall be given unto you."

Chrysostom said, "A man does not become rich by laying *up* abundance, but by laying *out* abundance." This widow had to give up her limited *all* before she could possess the miraculous *more*. "Make me a little cake first." She closed with God's offer and God did as He had promised (v. 16). His meal and His mercy were kept in full supply. She gave the prophet a meal and the Lord sustained her and her son for two years. She realized God's interest on her investment "a thousand-fold in this world."

The darkest hour is often just before the dawn. Not until the brook dried up did God make further provision for Elijah. And the widow was preparing her last meal when the prophet met her, apparently an additional burden, but in reality a real helper. It is a sad thing to be in perplexity with no God to fall

back upon. You have God's sure word of promise as certainly as Elijah and the widow woman, if like them you trust and do good.

"Is thy heart a well left empty?

None but God its void can fill;

Nothing but a ceaseless fountain,

Can its ceaseless longing still.

Is thy heart a living power?

Self-entwined its strength sinks low;

It can only live in loving,

And by serving love will grow."



LESSON 3.—JULY 17, 1898.

Elijah on Carmel.

(Lesson Text: 1 Kings 18: 30-39. Memory Verses: 36-39.)

(Read chap. 17: 17 to 18: 46.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And when all the people saw it, they tell on their faces, and they said, 'The Lord, He is the God, the Lord, He is the God.'"—1 Kings 18: 39.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday: 1 Kings 18: 17-20. Tuesday: 1 Kings 18: 30-39. Wednesday: 1 Kings 18: 40-46. Thursday: Deut. 30: 17-20. Friday: Josh. 24: 14-24. Saturday: 2 Tim. 1: 6-13. Sunday: Rev. 3: 7-13.

The Heart of the Lesson.

There are few more impressive scenes recorded in history than this one on Mount Carmel. The hero of the occasion is the long-haired, skin-clad prophet, faithful and fearless, surrounded by a countless multitude. "All Israel." There were the four hundred and fifty black-robed priests of Baal, and four hundred prophets of the grove, a profligate crew who ate at Jezebel's table. There also was the king and his court officers. They had been summoned together by Ahab, at the bidding of Elijah, to settle the question as to whom they should worship.

People are interested now in any case where there are two claimants to a property, and the false has to be distinguished from the true, though the matter does not personally concern many who eagerly watch the proceedings. But the question to be decided on Mount Carmel concerned humanity everywhere, for all time. Elijah commands the occasion. His words are aimed, not at their apostacy, their idolatry, but at their hesitancy and miserable indecision. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" In the presence of the king, his court, and the priests, the people dare not declare for Jehovah; and in the presence of God's messenger, their past history, and their own conscience, they dare not declare for Baal. Pitiful attitude! They were in a strait betwixt two; they were silent. If the people had answered then, the trial by fire would have been needless. Elijah had calculated on this and was prepared for it. He was prepared by one grand demonstration to force upon them the impotency of their idol, and to compel them to acknowledge the supremacy of Jehovah. Elijah addressed the people, not the priests nor the king, they might shirk the issue. The point of the prophet lay in this, that fire was the element over which Baal was believed by his followers to have peculiar power. The sign of Baal was a burnished disc, representing the sun. The prophet made a bold offer, candid, fair, and honest, and "all the people answered and said it is well spoken." The priests of Baal dared not object, and hoped to retain the allegiance of the people. Perhaps, like Saul of Tarsus, they were sincere though in error; but sincere belief in error can't make the false true, nor prevent its evil results.

The prophets of Baal began early in the morning. Their's was the popular religion. They were in the great majority; but Elijah gave them the winning