

to go to was where I was a scholar in the Sunday School years ago. When you get home, will you promise me to take this old pledge-card that I signed when I was a boy—I used to carry it next my heart, even in my worst days,—and will you lay it on the form in the little room, to show that I do repent, I do come back, although I shall never see home again? For a moment all was still, then once more, in words almost inaudible, Brown said, "I am forgiven; Christ's blood has cleansed my heart. Pray Jim,—quick, now, I'm going!"

"Our Father, which art in heaven." It was the first prayer that came to Jim's lips. Their hands were clasped; they were

RETURNING HOME TOGETHER.

But ere the Amen was reached, one prodigal had entered the Father's house, and, kneeling on the mud floor, a new and wonderful sense of pardon and peace crept into Jim Halke's soul.

The prayer meeting had been a small one in the little London mission hall, and the missionary was just about to close the door and go home, when he heard a hurried footstep outside, and turning, he saw a soldier in a big overcoat, standing nervously at the door. "Sir, you don't know me," he faltered, "but I used to come here years ago. Will you take me into that room there," and he pointed down the aisle, to the side-room.

The request seemed a strange one, but the missionary switched on the light, and complied.

"Sir, where was the elder boys' class held in this room ten years ago?"—"That was before my time," was the reply, "but I have often been told that it was held here by the wall, the boys sitting on this form. Their teacher used to sit on a chair in front of them. Were you one of them?"—"No, sir, but

I'M A CHRISTIAN,

and I want to ask you a favor. Will you kneel down by me, here, sir, at this form, while I reconsecrate my life to the service of God, and pledge myself to do my level best to win my comrades for Christ."

"Yes, my lad, that I will, gladly," was the reply.

It was in solemn silence that they knelt down, side by side, and then, putting his hand in his tunic, the soldier drew out a tattered pledge-card. Almost illegible were the words, "Arthur Brown," written in a round, boyish hand.

It evidently meant so much, that the one who knelt by his side asked gently, "What is that?"

And Jim Halke laid it reverently on the form beside him, buried his face in his hands, and with a sob whispered, "My chum!"—Selected.

What He Expected

Mark Guy Pearce tells of the quaint Yorkshire class leader, Daniel Quorn, who was visiting a friend. One forenoon he came to a friend and said, "I am sorry you have met with such a great disappointment."

"Why, no," said the man, "I have not met with any disappointment."

"Yes," said Daniel, "you were expecting something remarkable to-day."

"What do you mean?" said the friend.

"Why, you prayed that you might be kept sweet and gentle all day long. And, by the way things have been going, I see you have been greatly disappointed."

"Oh," said the man, "I thought you meant something particular!"

Great Stories of the Bible

II. Gideon's Victory

Judges, 7th chap.

(TOPIC FOR WEEK OF JUNE 15TH.)

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"THIS is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," writes the Christian apostle, and one could not find a better illustration of the deep truth of his words than in the story of Gideon's triumph. The story of this great judge is indeed more than a series of historical chapters; it is a psychological study of the growth of a religious man's soul.

The Scriptural introduction to Gideon presents him to us as a typically commonplace man of religion; that is, not indeed as a man whose faith has suffered a total eclipse, but as one in whom most certainly a partial eclipse of faith is occurring. That partial eclipse of faith in him is borne witness to by a series of facts to which the historian seems to be at pains to draw our attention. First Gideon is found fearfully submitting himself to the almost intolerable domination of the devouring engorged that the angel messenger flings him with an arousing message, and Gideon bears witness to his own lack of faith in the reply he gives to the heartening and challenging greeting of the heavenly envoy: "Oh, sir, if the Lord be with us, why, then, is all this befallen us? And where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of?"

In the second place he timidly begs off from the high task to which he is called. He underscores and italicizes his own insignificance: "Oh, sir, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. But when lack of faith takes that form in particular it has distinct promise of betterment in it. Moses so begged off at first from the big task God called him to do. King Saul did likewise; so did some of the prophets; yet it is not remarkable that these were "workers together with God," who supremely learned the mastery of faith and won a glorious place in the roll of faith's immortals.

The greatest evidence of the partial eclipse of Gideon's faith is found in his repeated demands for miraculous assurances. Without doubt, in the timidity of his faith, he very much overdoes the excellent maxim, "Be sure you're right, then go ahead." He wanted assurance to be doubly and even trebly sure before beginning his great work of emancipation.

But, after all, faith was not totally eclipsed in him. He has enough faith in God to bring him light and courage and loyalty to conscience. His father might "conform," and others about him might likewise "conform" to the popular Baal worship, but Gideon is apparently the one loyal religious man of the period. He is down-hearted, because the God of his fathers does not seem to "be the God of their succeeding race," but he is not resting his hopes upon any broken reed of Baalism. His compatriots and fellow-townsmen know him evidently as a worshipper of Jehovah, for when he first screws his courage up to the bare edge of his peril, and under the shadow of the darkness overtakes and destroys the altar of Baal and its "asherim," the

townfolk have no difficulty in pitching upon him as the perpetrator of the seeming deed of sacrilege. They knew at least where his religious sympathies lay. And by the way, how wonderfully that story of Gideon's first great act of Judgeship—the iconoclastic reformation of Israel's religion—brings out the fact that one bold man can often make others as advanced in thought as himself, but not yet quite so bold, find articulate expression for their convictions. Gideon's father, as we have seen, was a "conformer," but it is quite clear, too, that his heart was not very much in the Baal worship. His son's bold defiance of that outsharpened wonderfully the logic of Joash's conscience, and made him in a remarkably brief time a somewhat telling and caustic critic of the popular god. Moreover, there were others—a great many others—who had accepted Baalism in a meaningless way, and whose religious worship was only a habit. They needed only Gideon's one act of reforming boldness, and Joash's sharp theological jibe at Baal to make them discover where their own religious sympathies lay and to line up with the young reformer who ere long was to be an emancipator. Doubtless our readers have noticed that it is frequently so. Great reformers get themselves launched not because one strong masterful personality overawes the multitudes and carries them along with him whithersoever he will, but by one clear-thinking and daring individual lifting up his voice with a great and unflinching conscience to that other who have long thought as he thinks and long felt as he feels grow articulate too, and the one voice swells into a thousand or more, and the reforming purpose runs like wildfire through a community or a nation. It is surprising how unexpectedly definite and assertive the temperance sentiment of a municipality becomes when one courageous soul "lifts up a standard for the people."

When once Gideon's faith began to pass out of eclipse it moved very rapidly into splendor. With judgment begun thus at home, and the people of his own tribe probably once more worshipping the neglected God of their fathers, Gideon turns to wrestle with the problems of foreign domination and the public disquiet and discomfort arising from it. It marks a great advance in his faith that he sends out his rally cry at all. The local reformer who has been hitherto so settling right the people's religion might be superciliously overlooked by the Midianite overlords, but the insolent military leader who had blown his war trumpet in defiance must be sharply and effectively dealt with. Gideon made himself a marked man—a man with a price on his head—by his boldness in the movement out his messengers to the surrounding tribes. But the new and larger courage of Gideon has grown out of a new contact with God—a fact of which the historian is careful to inform us. The defiant trumpet blast shakes the surrounding hills, he meets the truth of Gideon for "the Spirit of the Lord" has come upon Gideon; or, as the striking passage has been translated, "The Spirit of the Lord clothed himself with Gideon."

It was a braver deed still that was done by the young emancipator, when at the command of Jehovah he published to his soldiers the proclamation by which