

ELIJAH CONFRONTS GREAT KING AHAB

King Was Just as Covetous as Pampered Palace Occupants of Today

A CRIME AND A PREACHER

International Sunday School Lesson For Oct. 3 Is "Elijah in Naboth's Vineyard"

(By William T. Ellis.)

Any preacher who points out the particular sins of the powerful people of his own community is pretty likely to be told to "stick to the simple Gospel." Yet the "simple Gospel" has always been a social Gospel, and a Gospel of justice, whether preached by Paul, Peter, Jesus, John the Baptist or the old Hebrew prophets.

To-day's lesson shows us our old friend Elijah again confronting wicked King Ahab, with Queen Jezebel in the background making mischief. This time the incident is one of social justice, when a common man was wronged by the mighty king — and had God's doom pronounced upon him for it. The timeliness of the message leads us to remark that if the preacher of religion will only stick to the Bible he can find the most pertinent truth for our own times. This Book is a book of God, and so a book of justice and righteousness. There is no shelter behind it for the rich and powerful defrauder of the people.

A Woman's Plot and Crime

A few words suffice to tell the story itself. Like the most modern of landowners, King Ahab coveted an adjoining field. This belonged to Naboth and was his family inheritance. By the law of Moses he was not permitted to let it go out of his family. So he refused to sell, and the peeved king threw himself down on his ivory couch and sulked like a small boy who has been denied sweetmeats.

Jezebel, the heathen wife who ruined Ahab's career, took matters in her own hand and conspired with officials to arrest and condemn Naboth on the charges of treason and sacrilege. Thus, after the most approved of modern high-handed methods, "big business" wiped out the small competitor who would not sell out, and Ahab got his field. But he never enjoyed it, for along came Elijah with a clean-cut word as to what the Ultimate Judge had to say about that sort of thing. There is no cure for the ills of the social and commercial order like the fear of God.

An Old Picture of Human Nature

This page out of the court life of more than two centuries ago reads like the secret memoirs of court life. It is vivid and revealing. We see behind the curtain, and find the Great King Ahab just as covetous and just as petty and just as sulky as a pampered palace figure to-day. Human nature is human nature, and kings and queens of old did not differ greatly from the common women in our own land and time. The man sulkingly accepting a decision which he knew to be just, and the woman unscrupulously encompassing the end sought by her husband through foul means, might be a contemporary portrait.

The rights of the case are clear. There is such a thing as the sacredness of property. That principle holds civilization together. All peoples and courts have regarded it. Formerly, property rights were deemed superior to human rights. Happily, we see more clearly now; the supreme social struggle of the past one hundred years has been to establish the supremacy of human rights. Some archaic minds have not yet learned the relative value of the two, although the Bible teaching is clear.

One danger, in our new social mood, is that we shall despise property rights. These have a sanctity that the demagogue does not often see. One high purpose of government is to protect people in the possession of their just property rights, while at the same time conserving the welfare of the community.

When the King Sulked

Elijah and Naboth are the only two creditable figures in this story. Ahab acted like a spoiled boy and not like a king. He sulked in his palace, and made all about him miserable by his selfishness. The picture of this royal crybaby on an ivory couch is not a pretty one. As for Jezebel, she played the tigress part. A woman without a code will go to even greater lengths than a man. Her plot, in which the grafting officials had a part, was the same sort of misuse of the courts of justice as we sometimes see to-day. The life of Naboth was sworn away in the same fashion as was the life of Jesus, and on the same charges.

The covetousness of Ahab, the ruthlessness of Jezebel, the cowardly complicity of custodians of justice, all conspired to create a condition that provoked the wrath of the Most High himself.

Frederick the Great and the Miller. I well remember the old mill that stands by the palace of Frederick the Great at Potsdam, and the story connected with it, which Carlyle tells: "Annoyed by this inconvenience to his favorite residence, the king sent to inquire the price for which the mill would be sold by the owner. "For no price," was the reply of the sturdy Prussian; and in a moment of anger, Frederick gave orders that the mill should be pulled down.

"The king may do this," said the miller, quietly folding his arms, "but there are laws in Prussia; and forthwith he commenced proceedings against the monarch, the result of which was that the court sentenced Frederick to rebuild the mill and to pay besides a large sum of money as compensation for the injury he had done. "The king was mortified, but had the magnanimity to say, addressing himself to his courtiers, 'I am glad

to find that just laws and upright judges exist in my kingdom."

Enter the Prophet

By the wicked plot of Jezebel, Ahab secured the coveted vineyard. But when he entered it, and began to plan the improvements he would make, he was startled by the stern figure of the Prophet Elijah.

Involuntarily there broke from his lips the cry, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" That phrase classified both men, Ahab had lived such a life that every friend of truth and justice and godliness was his enemy. His own conscience condemned him. Also the words revealed that Elijah was the embodiment of justice and righteousness. He represented Jehovah. Nobody expected him to wink at wickedness on the part of his wealthiest parishioners. He did not have one gospel for the rich and another for the poor. Instead, he proclaimed "the whole counsel of God." Truth and God always find the evil doer. "Be sure your sin will

find you out." The immutable laws of God operate on the side of the oppressed and against evil doers. Ahab might win out by his "pull" with a venaal court, but in the long run, he and his wife were condemned to the fate of the outcast and the criminal. God is for justice. He may seem long in acting, but He asks ultimately, "God does not always pay on Saturday, but He always pays," says the Italian proverb. "The mills of God grind slowly," but they never cease to grind.

PAROLED PRISONER GOES BACK TO PEN

Charles Wise, a paroled prisoner from the Eastern Penitentiary was arrested Wednesday night and will be returned to Philadelphia to-morrow. Wise has two years to serve on a larceny charge. Since he has been in Harrisburg, the police have received numerous complaints about him. On several occasions he flourished a revolver in saloons. Wednesday night he was raising a disturbance in North Seventh street.

Memorial Service For Late W. K. Alricks

Memorial services for the late William K. Alricks will be held by his friends at his grave in the Harrisburg Cemetery on Sunday afternoon at 3.30 o'clock, weather permitting. They will be in charge of the Rev. James F. Ehlitt, rector of St. Andrew's Protestant Episcopal Church, of which Mr. Alricks had been senior warden for several years at the time of his death on October 3, 1912. Decision to hold such a service was made by St. Andrew's vestry last month. The service will be public and a general invitation has been extended to Mr. Alricks' friends and especially to the members of the Alricks Association, the Allison Hill men's club named for him. In case of bad weather the service will be held in St. Andrew's Church, Nineteenth and Market streets, at 3.30.

Officers of the Eighth Regiment, N. G. P. are being examined by mail. Questions prepared by United States Army officers have been sent out by Colonel Joseph B. Hutcheson and Lieutenant Colonel Maurice E. Finney who are in charge. Each answer sent in must be accompanied by an affidavit certifying that no books or other help were used in completing the answers. All answers must be in by October 15.

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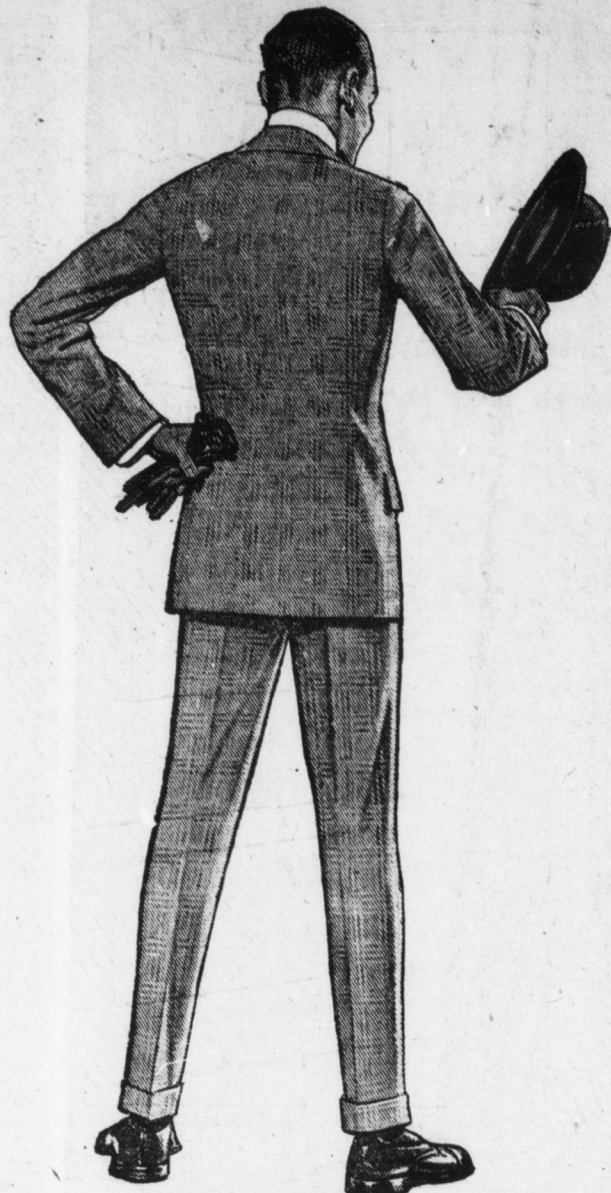
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