

WHEN THE DEAD CAME BACK

"The International Sunday School Lesson For Nov. 16, Is "Witnesses of Christ's Glory."—Luke 9:28-36.
By WILLIAM T. ELLIS

Silence shrouds the spirit world. It is "the bourne from which no traveler returns." Only by inference and from the Bible do we understand aught of it. Faith alone speaks clearly upon the question of immortality. Even since I penned the opening sentences of this paragraph the postman has brought me a pertinent testimony of faith in a noble Christian, suddenly stricken: "We must be glad for him, for he is in the presence of the Master he so dearly loved and served; and I am looking forward to the eternity we shall spend together."

Once the gates of glory swung outward, to let Moses and Elijah return to earth for a momentary visit. The silence of eternity was broken. The departed came back, recognizable in their own personality—what tremendous implications in that fact!—and conferred with the living. Three kindred spirits, all ministers to mankind and sufferers for their loyalty to God, separated by centuries in their mortal life, foregathered on the towering slopes of Mount Hermon and talked of the most important theme in the history of eternity. Moses and Elijah winged their swift way from celestial realms to bring comfort and counsel to a Comrade who was greater than they, in his hour of soul-train.

A Message From the Mountain. Trailing through northern Syria one has the impression of being dominated by Mount Hermon, with its glistening snow-peak, rising nine thousand feet into the clouds. From the Lake of Galilee, from Nazareth, from Damascus, from Tyre and Sidon, from the uplands of the Orontes Valley, one sees ever the majestic peak of Hermon, the highest mountain of the Holy Land, the center of countless legends, the depository of the snows which in summer the natives of the lowlands cool their drinks with, and the scene of the transfiguration of Jesus.

Somewhere on the heights of this beautiful mountain the three greatest representatives of God upon earth—Moses, Elijah and Jesus—kept a rendezvous. All three had been homeless, harassed, hunted, and persecuted. At untold cost they had borne their testimony to God. All were mountain-loving men; the name of Moses being forever associated with Sinai, that of Elijah with Carmel, and that of Jesus with the Mount of Olives. It was a congenial trysting place at which they met.

Standing out above all other considerations in this lesson is the message that heaven has comfort for earth. God cares for man's sorrows. There are resources in the eternal realm upon which needy mortals may draw. Messengers from the presence of the Father above are available for ministry to mourners below. There are not two worlds, unbridgeably separated but only one great universe, in all of which God is king. In his sight there is neither time nor space. The route from his throne to man's place of prayer is always open; Mt. Hermon is not far from the gates of glory.

Down, But Looking Up. The background of this Transfiguration story was the soul-spentness of Jesus. He had been through the agony of his first Passion, the great renunciation and the vision of the cross which had fully come to him at Caesarea Philippi. So he took his three closest friends, Peter, John and James, off for a "retreat," a time of solitude and prayer, on the side of Mt. Hermon. The record runs that "as he was praying" the transfiguration fell. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world knows."

"I know not by what methods rare; But this I know, God answers prayer. I know that he has given his word, Which tells me prayer is always heard And will be answered soon or late; And so I pray, and calmly wait. I know not in the blessing sought, Will come in just the way I thought. But leave my prayers with him blest." Assured that he will grant my quest Or send some answer far more alone

What Sidney Lanier calls "the passionate pleasure of prayer" was the instinctive recreation of Jesus. Everything turned him to prayer, and prayer in the lonely spaces of the open air. On the heights, underneath the trees, he found the Father, and the answer to his every question, and a fellowship beyond anything that earth could give. America's first interpreter of the spiritual significance of nature, Sidney Lanier, has caught the meaning of the trees for the troubled spirit: "Ye hispers whisperers, singers in storms. Ye consciences murmuring faith's under forms, Ye ministers meet for each passion that grieves, Friendly, sisterly, sweetheart leaves, Oh, rain me down from your darks that contain me Wisdoms ye winnow from winds that pain me,— Sift down tremors of sweet-within-sweet That advise me of more than they bring—repeat Me the woods-smell that swiftly but now brought breath From the heaven-side bank of the river of death,— Teach me the term of silence,—preach me The passion of patience,—sift me,— And there, or there As ye hang oh with your myriad palms upturned in the air Pray me a myriad prayer.

"Oh, if thy soul's at latter grasp for space, With trying to breathe no bigger than thy race, Just to be fellow when that thou hast found No man with room, or space enough of bound To entertain that New thou tell'st thou art— 'Tis here, 'tis here thou canst unhand thy heart And breathe it free, and breathe it free By rangy marsh, in lone sea-liberty."

was praying the appearance of his face underwent a change, and his clothing became white and radiant. And suddenly there were two men conversing with him, who were Moses and Elijah. They came in glory, and kept speaking about his death, which he was so soon to undergo in Jerusalem. Now Peter and the others were weighed down with sleep; but, keeping themselves awake all through, they saw his glory, and the two men standing with him. And when they were preparing to depart from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we are thankful to you that we are here. Let us put up three tents—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

"He did not know what he was saying. But while he was thus speaking, there came a cloud which spread over them; and they were awe-struck when they had entered into the cloud. Then there came a voice from within the cloud: "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to him."

"After this voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They kept it to themselves, and said not a word to any one at that time about what they had seen. That mountain and Victorians. As well as for Jesus and the three, day had suffered ignominy and repudiation, and tasted bitterness and despair. Now their reward had heaven there were found no others so well qualified for the supreme task of comforting the Christ as they. Moses, Elijah and Jesus were congenial spirits. All had travelled for the people and the glory of Jehovah. Now, in a fellowship that ignored the ages—such indeed, is the "communion of saints" and the spiritual unity of the centuries—they were lifted up to a new level of spiritual apprehension.

All the world has wondered what the five supreme commissioners in Paris talked about, and the mystery envelops the intimate conversations of the great. But we are not left in doubt concerning the conversation between Moses, Elijah and Jesus. There was only one theme worthy of the occasion—the approaching death of Jesus at Jerusalem. It hunted upon the Master's self-elevation to his disciples. It was the topic that so proudly engrossed eternity. God himself, the redeemer of the heavenly realm, the angels and ministers in glory, are most of all interested in the sacrifice of the Son of God; it has been revealed to the eternal chorus of the new song about the throne is an ascription to the Lamb that was slain. In conferences of Christian leaders, and in the sermons of preachers of the Gospel, we do not hear more of the ambassador sent from heaven to earth to interview the Saviour himself?

A Glimpse of Possibility. Compared with "miracles" and inane "messages" from the other world, this Transfiguration story is dignified, reserved and majestic. It was a foretoken of the glory that awaits all who follow in the train of Jesus, the Transfiguration experience which seemed to draw aside the outer veil of flesh which hid the radiant spiritual personality of Jesus, so that the shining fiber and texture of his soul was revealed, was but a glimpse of the possibility possessed by mortals. Awed by the spectacle, the three disciples wanted to build booths and

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remain right there on the mount of special privilege. Like many others since, they wanted to maintain life on a levee of ecstasy and thrill, not realizing that the rare experience would lose its power if it became normal. Instead, the three quickly learned that life must be lived, not on mountain tops, with celestial guests, but down on the plain of everydayness where the diseased and demon-filled people await the ministry of those who have been on the heights. One's religion is tested alike by the mountain top and by the plain.

Before they went down, however, the disciples had the added testimony of the Voice which declared, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to him." More fortifying to their hearts than even the vision of the transfiguration was the assurance that their ever-present Leader was none other than the Son of God. It was he who would help them through the experiences of the coming days. As Christian Rosetti prayed: "Jesus, who didst touch the leper. Deliver us from antipathies; Who didst dwell among the Nazarenes, Deliver us from incompatibility; Who didst eat with some that washed the cleaver and the plow, Deliver us from fastidiousness; Who didst condone Samaritan inhospitality, Deliver us from affront taking; Who didst provide the sacred Didrachme, Deliver us from offense giving; Who having called didst recall Saint Peter, Deliver us from soreness; Who didst love active Martha and contemplative Mary, Deliver us from the respect of persons; Deliver us while it is called to-day, Thou who givest to-day and promisest not to-morrow."

The Lesson Story of the Transfiguration, as told in the Weymouth translation, is as follows: "It was about eight days after this that Jesus, taking with him Peter, John and James, went up the mountain to pray. And while he

SHIP CARRIES XMAS CHEER American Transport Loaded Down With Gifts For the Doughboys in Siberia

New York, Nov. 14.—The Army transport, Marica, to sail late this week from the foot of Fifty-eighth street, Brooklyn, for Vladivostok, Russia, is the Santa Claus ship carrying Christmas cheer from the Knights of Columbus to the American troops in Siberia. The Marica will touch at San Francisco and then start on her journey across the Pacific. The Knights of Columbus have loaded several thousands of dollars' worth of supplies on the transport, including bags of flour and grease for Xmas doughnuts, 19,000,000 cigarettes, candy, crackers, Christmas cake, chocolate, bouillon cubes, tooth paste, athletic equipment, woolen mufflers and mittens. According to the latest news from Siberia given by Garry McFarry, former musical comedy star, who is director of the Casey activities, the American troops are scattered as follows: 25% are in Vladivostok, 5% are distributed in camps on the railroad line for a distance of 350 miles and the remainder are at a point 2,000 miles from Vladivostok. The Knights will have three Catholic army chaplains and four lay secretaries traverse the great distance playing the role of Santa Claus. While the Knights distribute creature comforts free only to the Americans, they are compelled



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through an agreement to furnish entertainment and play host to the other Allied troops including Japs, Russians, English, French and Italians. Among the novelties in the shipment are one dozen hair clips which will be of use if it is assured to clip the beards of the soldier men. There was no information regarding the exact use Siberia will make of the clippers, but the Knights sent them anyway, believing that they may be put to good use in making the Bolshevik clean shave. Included among the athletic equipment are two dozen footballs which are to be used in games between the Americans, Russians, Japs and Chinese. The Americans have made it a rule not to play football with any team which refuses to clip the shredded wheat facial camouflage realizing that the silken whiskers might be used to conceal the ball during a game.

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\$2.50