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BROAD MEN AT THE NARROW GATE.

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Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.—Matt. vii., 13.

THE average preacher is more anxious at the beginning of a pastorate to produce a good feeling, than to create a profound sensation. A great deal often depends upon first impressions. A man's usefulness will be affected very considerably by the manner in which he begins his work; and he who is gentle in speech, conciliatory in thought and peaceable in expression, has secured an advantage of the utmost importance. Hence, in the opening of a ministry, themes are usually chosen upon which the preacher and the people are in perfect sympathy; no disputed matters will be advanced, no startling doctrines will be discussed, no questionable statements will be made; but some grand harmonious truth will be presented, and made the basis for the opening discourse. Perhaps this is wise, it seems expedient, indeed, it would appear to be most prudent; but it was not the course chosen by Christ. True, He opens His mouth at the word "Blessed," and runs through an octave of beatitudes, thus gaining the attention and securing the favor of His auditors; but the fingers of His thought soon fell upon other keys, and before that sermon closed He had antagonized almost every form of Jewish life, swept away traditions that were the growth of centuries, arraigned hypocrisy as a culprit before His bar, denounced, with awful severity, many of the habits and customs of that time, and, like His great fore-runner John, He had laid the axe at the root of the tree, and smote with an energy both human and Divine. Phases of religious life and duty were discoursed in the clearest and plainest manner, and as He unfolded the higher mean-

THE SOUND IN THE MULBERRY TREES.

By REV. THEO. L. CUYLER, D. D.

And let it be when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself.—II. Samuel v. 24.

THERE is a scene in Israelitish history which has a happy significance for the present time. It is full of suggestions for the hour. The scene is laid in the valley of Rephaim, south-west of Jerusalem, where an army of Philistines are moving upon the Jewish capital. David confronts them with the Lord's host. An inquiry for Divine guidance brings to David this remarkable answer: "Fetch a compass behind the Philistines and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be when thou hearest the *sound of a going* in the tops of the mulberry trees that then thou shalt *bestir* thyself; for then shall the Lord go out before thee." What this "sound of a going" was exactly we cannot tell. It probably resembled the march of an army in the air. A host of unseen angels may have moved above the mulberry groves, striking terror into the hearts of the barbarians and sending them into precipitate retreat. As they retreated, they fell into the hands of the Israelites (who had swung around to their rear), and were routed with complete discomfiture.

Whatever that "sound of the going" may have been, it was a direct signal of the Almighty to His servants. David was waiting for the signal. When God moved, he moved. He co-operated with the Lord, and a glorious victory was the result. Now, there are some ears of corn growing in this page of Bible history. Let us pluck and eat.

The first truth we gather is, that God signals to His people to take certain steps at certain times. Then it is their duty to bestir themselves. When the deluge was about to descend upon a guilty world, Noah was commanded to bestir himself and prepare an ark for the saving of his household. When the fire shower was coming upon Sodom, Lot was laid hold of by God's angels and urged to escape for his life. When the children of Israel were in peril of being overwhelmed by the Egyptians, God signaled to them the order to advance, and by a majestic pillar of cloud led them through the parted sea. All sacred history is studded with illustrations of this truth. Martin Luther, discovering the "open secret" in the

convent Bible at Erfurth, and hammering his theses on the church door of Wittemburg; the young Wesleys, awakened at Oxford and sent out to awaken slumbering Britain, were simply God's agents bestirring themselves at the Divine signal.

And, then, God has His "set times to favor Zion. One of these was the memorable day of Pentecost. The faithful men and women in the upper room heard a sound as of a mighty rushing wind, and the baptism of fire descended. God moved, and His people were on their feet promptly. Filled with the Holy Ghost, they began at once to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. All Jerusalem is stirred with this new and strange activity. Every Christian is at work—one preaching the new Gospel, another healing the sick, others ministering to the poor and suffering. Each man, each woman obeys the signal. The word of God grows mightily and prevails. The secret of this marvelous success is that Christians promptly and thoroughly *co-operated with the Divine Spirit*.

Here is the lesson for the hour in the American churches. The indications of God's providence are unmistakable. Not more distinctly did Israel hear the sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry trees than the churches of this land now hear the signaling voice of the Lord Jesus to bestir themselves for prayer and personal effort. The wide-spread financial distress is one indication. Fearful demoralizations in public and private life furnish another proof of the imminent need of a reform such as Heaven's power and grace alone can bring. Let God's people in every community simply *conspire with the Holy Ghost* and obey the Divine leadings. To do this, each man, each woman must feel the drawings of the Master's love, and lay hold of their own individual duty. Each man, each woman, giving himself and herself to Jesus in fresh consecration, must do just what the spirit of God puts in their way. The power of the Apostolic Church laid in *personal devotion* to Christ's cause. It was not what ecclesiastical bodies did, but what Peter did, and Paul did, and Dorcas did, and Onesiphorus did, that makes up the brilliant record of holy achievement. And if at the present time individual self-consecration and individual effort is swallowed up in the indiscriminate herd of mere numbers, then the looked for "revival" will end in a rainless gust of wind and driving dust. God's voice now is to each one of His children: "Bestir *thysself*!"

Don't wait for your Church to move, or any Moody to come. Ask God's Spirit what to do, and then act with that Spirit. Christians are quickened one by one; sinners are to be led to Jesus one by one. My brother, what art *thou* doing?

This passage of God's word has a personal application. There are times when each child of Jesus hears the "sound of the going in the mulberries." Let them be improved. Do not let us lose heaven's fair wind. When we get into close union with Jesus in prayer, let us ask for great blessings. When we get fresh insight into the Word, let us open it to others. When our hearts are stirred with sympathy for sinners, then is the time to "pull them out of the fire." If the Holy Spirit is striving with us, then is the time to strive with Him to save men from eternal death. As God moves in us, let us move for the salvation of those within our reach.

One more turn let us give to this text. A time of trial is often a time of especial blessing. I have read of a German baron who stretched between the towers of his castle a set of iron wires. In calm weather the wires were silent, but when the winds arose these metallic chords began to play, and in the height of the gale this hurricane harp gave out glorious music. So is it with a child of God. In seasons of calm and quiet prosperity he may too often become silent, inactive, useless. But when the storms of trial strike him, his soul-harp awakes to new melodies of love and faith, and his life becomes as a stringed instrument struck by the hand of Jesus. Some who read these lines may be in a severe gale of adversity or bereavement. Open your heart, brother, to the voice and the influences of the Divine and Loving Spirit. Let the time of trial be the time for doing God's will, and at least one soul will taste the joys of a true *revival*.

ALL THE frivolities, the errors, and the failures, the effeminacy of popular religion spring up because men trouble themselves about the way of worship rather than the object of worship; because men are more concerned for that which they call their opinions in religion than that which is God's; because they want to make religion, and define religion, and display religion, rather than to evidence religion by meek and loving lives.—*Archdeacon Farrar*.