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The Meeting Hereafter -- funeral sermon

The following is from the work, The Village Pulpit, Volume II. Trinity to Advent
A Complete Course of 66 Short Sermons, or Full Sermon Outlines for Each Sunday, and Some Chief Holy Days
of the Christian Year -- Author: S. Baring-Gould, year 1886

THE MEETING HEREAFTER

Funeral Service.

Joshua iii. 17.

"And the priests that bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."

INTRODUCTION.--That must have been a striking sight! The whole of God's people passing over Jordan. On one side, on that of the Wilderness, a crowd pressing down, and going into the deep river bed, on the other, those who had traversed, rising out of it, and spreading out on the high bank, looking down and watching those who descend into the bed, and cross through it to rejoin them. They stand in a blaze of light. The sun is setting, and the whole sky behind them is flaming with golden clouds, the light strikes in the eyes of those on the further bank, and they look down into the dark channel and shrink, it is immersed in shadow, but then again, they look up, and see the glory, and the forms of their fathers, and brothers, and mothers, and sisters, and children standing there, steeped in light, and they pluck up courage and go down.

They have no cause to fear.

In the midst of Jordan stands the Ark of the Covenant, and it will not move from that place till the last has passed over.

SUBJECT.--That story may serve for our comfort. We, like the Israelites, are on our journey, and we have to pass through the dark bed of the stream of Death, before we can enter into the promised land.

And we have two subjects of consolation.

(_a_) We have the Ark of the Covenant standing in Jordan to secure the path.

(_b_) We have our dear ones watching and waiting for us on the farther shore.

I. We have the Ark of the Covenant standing in Jordan to secure the path. "Lo, I am with you always," said Christ, "even unto the end of the world." That Ark signifies His abiding presence in His Church, which stands between the living and the dead, a Church on this side, militant, on the other, triumphant, a Church on this side made up of good and bad, of tares and wheat, of sheep and goats, on that side, a Communion of Saints.

The Ark and the priests stood in Jordan, so does God's Church and priesthood ever remain, so long as the world lasts, and that world will last till the number of the elect has been made up, till the last of the people of the Lord is passed over Jordan.

The Ministry will remain to teach the way of the Lord, and point the path through the river bed, and to cheer those who are downhearted, to lift up the finger and bid them look to the further shore, and to the glory there, and to those who stand on it watching.

The Sacrifice will remain, the atoning Blood for the remission of guilt, the altar will remain as well as the pulpit, the priest as well as the teacher, sacrifice as well as instruction. Ever throughout the year, the atoning Blood will be pleaded with the Father for the pardon of the sins of the people. The Bread of Heaven, the manna will remain, to be man's spiritual food and sustenance, and strengthen the heart for the passage of Jordan.

The presence of Christ will remain, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the waves, they shall not overflow thee." Therefore, well says David, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

II. Metabus, King of the Volsci, was pursued by his enemies. He carried in his arms a little babe, his niece Camilla. In his flight he came to the brink of a river, deep, troubled, and strong in current, and it arrested his flight. He would not have been afraid of the stream himself, had it not been for the little child. He hesitated. What should he do? He dare not enter with the babe, as he must use both arms to battle through so strong a stream. The enemy were behind. He heard their shouts! From a distant hill-top they had spied him. He could not find it in his heart to desert the little one whom he loved so dearly.

Then, what do you suppose Metabus resorted to? There were a great many reeds by the river side, with his dagger he reaped them down, and he wrapped the babe up in rushes and reeds thickly round it, and tied them together with his girdle, and then he raised the little bundle in both his hands, and flung it with all his might across the river. After that he sprang into the water and swam across to the other side. He picked up the dear little bundle, took the child out, found it quite unharmed, and escaped with it lying next his heart.

My Brethren! Is not this something like us?--we may have our little ones, and be called on to part with them. There lies the river, the dark rolling river of death. We must cross sometime ourselves. Safety is yonder. Danger, destruction, here. In God's name, trusting in Him when He wills it, we part with those so dear to us. We wrap them up in their white wraps, and close them from sight in their coffin, and cast them away. They are gone--over the river, and then we are ready in our turn to plunge in and follow.

Now it is a great encouragement to us to follow when we know that those we love are passed and are in safety. You parents who have parted with

your darlings, you have wrapped them up and cast them away. Whither? They have only flown across the river, and when you leap in and swim through, you will find them there--your Camillas, safe and smiling on you, on the other side.

CONCLUSION.--Ah! my brethren, what a happy meeting that will be! Father, mother, brothers, sisters, children, whole families gathered together. What embraces! What tears of joy! What stories to tell of past troubles! What gratitude to God for his mercies shown! What thankfulness for His Ark that rested in the midst of Jordan, that supplied direction, sustenance, propitiation, comfort, and nourishment for the journey.

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