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## Poetry.

### Mizpah.

"The Lord watch between me and thee  
when we are absent one from another."  
Gen. xxxi. 49.

A broad gold band engraven  
With word of Holy Writ;  
A ring, the bond and token  
Which love and prayer have lit.  
When absent from each other,  
O'er mountain, vale, and sea,  
The Lord, who guarded Israel,  
Keep watch 'tween me and thee.

Through days of light and gladness,  
Through days of love and life,  
Through smiles and joy, and sunshine,  
Through days with beauty rife;  
When absent from each other,  
O'er mountain, vale, and sea,  
The Lord of love and gladness  
Keep watch 'tween me and thee.

Through days of doubt and darkness,  
In fear and trembling breath;  
Through mists of sin and sorrow  
In tears, and grief, and death;  
The Lord of life and glory,  
The King of earth and sea,  
The Lord who guarded Israel,  
Keep watch 'tween me and thee.  
*The Argosy.*

## Religious.

### The Census.

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE BAPTIST CHAPEL, RHYL, April 3, 1881.  
By REV. W. WALTERS.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies."—Numbers i. 1-3.

This fourth book of Moses is called Numbers, because it contains an account of the enumeration of the children of Israel, both at the beginning and the close of their forty years' wanderings in the wilderness. The passage I have just read is the Lord's command to take the first census of the people. It was given thirteen months after their departure from Egypt. The enumeration was restricted to the men of war, the males above twenty years of age; and was to be made with a careful distinction of the tribe, family, and household of every individual. By this census several important purposes were answered. The military strength of the people was ascertained; there were six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty men of war; that was the number of males above twenty years old, and all such were fighting men. The relative strength of the tribes was ascertained; and a reason found for their disposition, both when on march and in their encampment round the tabernacle. The means were also supplied for forming an exact genealogical register of the nation.

Nearly forty years after, when the journeyings of the Israelites had come to a close, God commanded a second census to be taken, restricted like the former to the men of war. We have an account of it in the twenty-sixth chapter of this book. "The Lord spake unto Moses, and unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying, Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their father's house all that are able to go to war in Israel." As the result of this enumeration, it was found that there were only six hundred and one thousand, seven hundred and thirty fighting men. One or two observations may be made on this second census. It was not taken till after the plague which fell upon Israel as a punishment for their whoredom with the daughters of Moab, and which destroyed twenty-four thousand persons. This terrible visitation, and other judgments which had preceded it, had done much to sweep

away the old generation, whom God had sworn should not enter Canaan. The consequence was that during the forty years in the wilderness the people had slightly decreased; and the number of fighting men were fewer at the second census than at the first. In the tribes of Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, and Asher, there was an increase; while in those of Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Ephraim, and Naphtali there was a decrease. Reuben suffered less through the conspiracy of Korah and other outbreaks; and Simeon, whose numbers now were not half what they were forty years ago, had probably been chief in the iniquity with the daughters of Moab. What a change had taken place in Israel since leaving Egypt! All whose names were recorded in the first census were dead, with the exception of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb; and Moses was to die soon. In all this God displayed His holiness and justice, visiting the people for their transgressions, and yet He displayed also His mercy and faithfulness in the wonderful increase in some of the tribes, so that Israel still had a numerous seed.

One thing was common to both the first and the second census, and that was that God commanded Moses to levy a tax of half a shekel (about fifteenpence of our money) on every man whose name was enrolled. The law concerning this tax is in Exodus xxx. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel is twenty grains); an half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord. Everyone that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls." This half shekel was not a voluntary contribution, but a tax enforced by Divine command. It was to be a ransom, an atonement for the soul. There was an acknowledgement in it of the right, the proprietorship God had in their lives; His power over them; the fact that they were forfeited by sin; and that it was of His mercy that they were not consumed. The amount was the same in all cases, rich and poor. We see the teaching of this when we consider the nature of the tax. All souls are of equal value in God's sight; all have sinned and come under equal condemnation; all are equally dependent on God's care; all are exposed to His wrath; and all are debtors to His mercy. The money was to be devoted to the building and service of the tabernacle, and the worship of God. Thus the people would remember God, and He would remember them.

There is yet another interesting fact to be noticed in connection with these enumerations of the children of Israel. We have a full account of it in the third chapter of Numbers. Soon after the first, "The Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers" (they had not been counted in the general census); "every male from a month old and upwards shalt thou number them. And Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded. All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the Lord, throughout their families, all the males, from a month old and

upward, were twenty-two thousand." In the other tribes, the males were numbered from twenty years old and upwards; one of the chief ends to be answered being military. The Levites, however, being exempt from war, and devoted to the service of God, it was desirable that they should be early instructed and fitted for their work. At the same time that Moses took this census of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. And thou shalt take the Levites for Me (I am the Lord) instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel." And Moses obeyed the Divine command, and found the number to be twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be Mine, saith the Lord." This was part of the arrangement whereby God separated the Levites for Himself in the priestly office. In memory of the last plague of the Egyptians, in which all the first-born of Egypt died, while the destroying angel passed over the homes of Israel, the first-born of the Israelites were dedicated to the Lord. God now arranged to take the Levites as their substitutes; and it is a singular coincidence that the numbers so nearly agreed—the first-born males of the whole people from a month old and upward being only two hundred and seventy-three more than the whole male population of the Levites from a month old and upward. These two hundred and seventy-three were to be redeemed, as there were no substitutes for them, by a payment of five shekels apiece; the redemption money to be given to Aaron and his sons.

Another memorable census of the people of Israel is recorded in the Bible, and the record carries with it a lesson of instruction to all time. I refer to David's enumeration, of which we have two accounts, one in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, the other in the twenty-first chapter of the First Book of the Chronicles. The facts were these. David, influenced by some motive or another, resolved to number his people. He said to Joab, the captain of the host which was with him, "Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people." Joab and the captains of the host who were with him endeavoured to dissuade the king from his purpose, but to no avail. The king's word prevailed. Joab and the captains of the host departed to fulfil the royal command. They went through the length and breadth of the land, and returned to Jerusalem after an absence of nine months and twenty days, having numbered all the tribes except Levi and Benjamin. The thing was displeasing to God, and when it was too late the king saw its sinfulness. Gad the prophet was commissioned to go to him with this message:—"Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things: choose thou one of them that I may do unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or, wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or, that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait; let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning even to the time appointed; and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand." This was a sad end to David's measure. He had brought the wrath of God upon himself and upon his nation.

In what respect was the monarch's conduct offensive to God? The people, as we have seen, had been numbered before, once and again, and that by God's command. Purposes of great usefulness connected with the national welfare might have been secured now, as on the former occasions. What made that such a sin in David, which was a pious act in Moses? Josephus intimates that David's sin consisted in his not levying the half-shekel tax required for the service of the Lord's house. "Now King David," he says, "was desirous to know how many ten thousands they were of the people, but forgot the commands of Moses, who told them before hand that if the multitude were numbered they should pay half-a-shekel to God for every head." In this opinion other writers agree. It must be admitted that the law was clear, that the taking of a census was to be accompanied by the payment of the half-shekel ransom money, and that a plague was to be the penalty of neglecting this regulation. It is true, also, that in this case the tax was not imposed, and a plague followed. Still, it must be remembered that Joab does not assign this as his reason for objecting to the census, nor does David refer to it in his penitent confession of sin before the Lord. I think we must fall in with the general opinion that David's guilt consisted in the spirit which prompted him to number the nation. He was now old and full of days. He had closed a long career of bloody and successful war, and subdued all his enemies round about. Possibly, ambition projected other schemes of conquest, to be carried out probably by Solomon; and he would, therefore now ascertain his military strength. It was a turning away from trust in the Lord to reliance on the arm of man. It was this spirit of the deed that seems to have constituted its great sin.

Consider, then first of all, what a momentous work the counting of human souls is. It is a business of vastly higher moment than the counting of sheep, horses, or cattle, of silver or gold. You fill up the papers left at your houses with names that represent intelligent, immortal beings, made in the image of God—beings that rank only a little lower than the angels—beings capable of great achievements, susceptible of inconceivable blessedness or misery; each individual of them according to Christ's calculation, of more value than the whole material world.

In the second place, this general census of the people brings home to us the varied circumstances of men. Some papers will be filled up in the palaces and mansions of the wealthy, others in the humble dwellings of the poor; some amid all the comforts and dear affections of a happy home; others amid the strife and misery of domestic wretchedness. There will be the names of the healthy and the strong, with whom life is full of busy activities; and the names of the afflicted, pining away on beds of sickness, and waiting for death. The fatherless child and the widow will be there; and the child still blessed with a father's protection, and the wife rejoicing in a husband's love. All ages will be enrolled, from the infant of days to the aged man of fourscore years and more. Those who have the use of their mental faculties will be counted, and those who are imbecile and insane; those who are blessed with the possession of their senses, and those who are blind and deaf and dumb. All positions in society; all professions, trades, handicrafts, all the thousand various phases of the life of this English nation in the nineteenth century, will be photographed to-night on the census-roll and yet in spite of all these varieties of position and circumstance, the millions of our people are one in the great essentials of humanity. "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all."

Again, the enrolment of so many millions of people brings before us the vast extent and minute care of God's fatherly dominion. All whose names are recorded to-night\* are under His government. They are all His offspring,

and in Him they live and move and have their being. His Providence watches over them. He supplies their wants. Not one of them lives outside the range of His control and love. He hears the prayers of those who pray, and sends the blessings they need. If you are a father you sign yourself at the top of the list on your paper, "Head of the family"; but God is the head of all the individual souls returned to-night. Nay, more, He is the head of all the families of the earth. "All souls," He says, "are mine." He governs all the nations; and yet not a hair of your head falls without his knowledge.

To those of us who remember the census on former occasions the return of it brings to mind the rapid flight of time. Ten years have passed since the nation thus enrolled itself last. Some can remember the decade before that, and the one before that, and the one before that also, and still further back into past years. But it all seems like a dream. The years have gone; gone, like a weaver's shuttle; gone, like a vapour; gone, like a swift stream; gone, like a watch in the night; gone, never to return. We do not appreciate this as we ought while time is passing; it is only after it is gone that the lesson comes to mind. As we think of the present and the future, the years seem long; as we reflect on the past, they seem like days only, or hours. How often we say of events that transpired twenty or thirty years back "It only looks like yesterday!" My hearers! what account has this time, so rapidly gone, borne to God concerning us? Has it told a tale of usefulness? or has it reported our idleness and misdeeds? Have we wasted the past? or have we used it well? Think, I beseech you to-night, of the brevity of human life; of the speed with which all your opportunities are passing away. These religious privileges will soon be gone. Christian Sabbaths will be gone. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. To-day, if you will hear the voice of God calling you to accept His mercy, harden not your hearts.

Finally, this general census carries us on in imagination to the last day. Then all the nations of the earth will be called to render an account to God. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Everything sinks into insignificance compared with the decisions of that day. The Lord grant that we may then appear among His saints!

With them numbered may we be,  
Now and through eternity!

\* In England the census returns are made up of the whole people, where they slept on the given night previous to the returns being filled.

### From India.

#### THE POWER OF CASTE.

Yesterday we had a most painful scene at a baptism. It is only three weeks since that two Sudras were baptized, yesterday two more were baptized—one of them Nariah, one of our teachers, has for a long time desired thus to obey the Saviour.

The morning services were all over, and a large company were gathered around the baptistery to witness the rite. They had sung a hymn and Josiah had just commenced to make an address, when he heard some one coming with a great cry. In a moment, Nariah's wife burst like a mad one into the company and threw her arms about her husband. He stood for a while, and then she tried to draw him away. Then he tried to break away, but she held him fast. A number of the Christian women crowded around and endeavoured to break her grasp but she threw them away like children, and the painful scene went on. At last I told them to sing a hymn. While this was being done the baptism of the other candidate began, and I unlocked the woman's grasp, she sank to the ground and rolled, and beat herself with her hands. The husband was baptised and went to change his clothes. His wife was cry-