

CAMP MEETING

By H. C. Mullen

The purposes and possibilities of a camp-meeting are undeniably of the very best, but like most everything else a camp-meeting is largely what we make it. The purpose is for a real spiritual feast—a time of refreshing to the saints, the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of believers. It is a time to be given up to spiritual activities. A retreat from the worldly pursuits of life—a time when everything else is made secondary or put aside entirely if possible, and all interest and power focalized on the one grand issue. This will mean sacrifice of many human pleasantries and will take hard work and a set purpose.

Some go to camp-meeting for an outing. Some because the crowd is going, some to eat and sleep and rest. Only a few go to pray and push and pull. The more of the former that come the harder it will be for the latter. It takes a lot of prayer and faith on the part of someone to counteract the influence of mere campers and bathers and boaters. For a camp-meeting to be of any use it must be kept spiritual, and here is the supreme test, here the battle issues, here the victory is lost or won. Ten days of camping and visiting can be run very nicely without the presence of the Holy Ghost, but a successful camp cannot.

A clergyman of another denomination who had just returned from a camp-meeting among his own people told me that the only visible result of the entire camp was the professed conversion of one girl, and he thought even this a doubtful case. Something is wrong in an instance like this. When the combined efforts of an entire camp cannot move sinners to confession and believers to holiness it is at least a sad reflection upon their spirituality.

Quite recently another prominent minister of another body told me that he was planning to go to Beulah camp this summer, and he remarked that he was going "to get warmed up."

This set me thinking on two important lines. It convinced me that people expected us to have "fire," and it caused me to think what a pity it would be for people to come expecting to find spiritual fire and it should be lacking, and they would have to go away disappointed. Our calling and mission is to have "fire" and it is our only hope of success.

Our work in general and camp-meeting in particular are fast coming to a crisis. The only thing that can save us from impending disaster will be a going back to old principles and a gracious outpouring of the Holy Ghost. This can come only by the old rugged path of confession, self-denial, separation from the world, and obedience to God's plain commands. These things are hard and contrary to the flesh and it is so much easier and pleasanter to substitute fine preaching and theatrical singing, proper order and formalism, and mere professional religion having the form of Godliness but denying the power thereof.

May God have pity on the poor deluded souls that once had the fire and the vision of a real experience of salvation and now have cooled off and slumped back to a fossilized frigid formalism and are seemingly satisfied to cast in their lot with the dead churches that no longer stand for revivals, no longer try to get people converted, much less sanctified, and would not know what to do with a converted person if they had one. I

am not shooting in the air when describing the above characters for we have them among us, or that have gone from us, by the score. They would try to put up a bluff and try to make us think that they are satisfied, but they know that they are not and they know that we know it too. They will be more honest when death stares them in the face and their false hopes and subterfuges fade away like the morning mists before the blazing sun.

May God help us as holiness people to keep the vision of a spiritual religion, a religion wrought by the Holy Ghost and witnessed to by the same Blessed Spirit. Let us rally round the standard and once more go in for camp-meetings of power and blessing that will astonish the devil and demonstrate to the old world that there is yet a remnant that believe in the old time religion, that saves from all sin here below, that gives peace passing all understanding, while the rivers of pleasure doth flow.—Amen!

"THE SIGN OF A MAN'S KNEES IN THE SAND."

For three and a half years there had been neither dew nor rain in Israel. Their dire distress had divided the people into seven companies. The story of Israel's death is told in James 5:16-18 and the 17th and 18th chapters of 1st Kings; ours is told in press and pulpit, playhouse and prison-house, courts and capitols—everywhere.

COMPANY ONE. The Ahabite self-seekers. "Ahab went up to EAT and to DRINK" (I. Kings 18:42). Feeding their stomachs and gratifying their craze for amusement and pleasure, the Ahabites are a mighty company in America today.

COMPANY TWO. The mourners over the drought. The Scriptures do not need to mention this crowd. They are a sure crop in every drought. We can see them gazing mournfully at the deep cracks in the earth—signs of the worst drought Israel ever had suffered, but they were not closing a single crack by their complaints. They are still with us today.

COMPANY THREE. The seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, Israel's modern religion (1 Kings 19:18). But neither were they bending their knees to Jehovah to any apparent purpose. Looking for the restoration of the worship of Jehovah in Israel, they were doing nothing effective to bring it to pass. They represent the solid but silent body of Church members who today listen appreciatively to an orthodox pastor, or without protest to a destructive modernist.

COMPANY FOUR. The straddlers, or "middle of the road" men. The sample shown was Obadiah. He was a believer in Jehovah and a supporter of the prophets, but running with the machine (I. Kings 18:3-16). He tried to look out for the glory of God with one eye, and for his position in Ahab's corrupt court with the other. Obadiah's name can be written many times, with varying spelling, in our land today.

COMPANY FIVE. The bread and water prophets. A hundred prophets of the Lord, in a cave, divided into two camps, looking for their bread and water. This is perhaps the saddest spectacle on the whole horizon. Here were men, called of God to the prophetic office, and having God's message, hiding from

danger in a cave, looking to Obadiah for their daily support of bread and water, but neither preaching the Word nor praying for a revival. We need not look in vain for this company in our midst today.

COMPANY SIX. The sky-gazer—a lad with an intent, wistful face, gazing upward, looking for the "sign of a man's hand in the swy." (I. Kings 18:43-54). Spiritual, unselfish, unworldly, we love the lad; yet he was doing nothing to bring to pass that for which he longed and watched. We must look beyond the gazers for the sign of a revival to find the man of whom God used to turn the tide.

COMPANY SEVEN. One man—Elijah. He worte in the sand the sign for which God was looking—"the sign of a man's knees in the sand." It was when Elijah furnished that simple sign, which any one of the others might have furnished, that here was the "sign of a man's hand," "a sky overcast with clouds," "a sound of abundance of rain," and "a very great rain." Clad in an ox-hide mantle, knees in the sand, and head between his knees, one man won the victory.

While the Ahabites today look for their restaurant signs and movie signs; while the calamity mourners look for more and deeper cracks in the spiritual life of the Church; while the seven thousand with dustless knees listen with equal urbanity to orthodox or modernistic sermons; while the Obadiahs look to see some Ahab for the signals of the machine; while the hundred prophets of the Lord look for their "bread and water" instead of declaring the whole counsel of God; while the sky-gazers gape for some supernatural sign in the heavens;—God is watching for the sign of a man's knees in the sand."

In what respect does the one differ from those of the other six? Not PHYSIOLOGICALLY—he was a man. Not PSYCHOLOGICALLY—he was a man of like passions. Not THEOLOGICALLY—he was a righteous man; but so are all believers in Christ. HE DIFFERED GEOGRAPHICALLY—"As Jehovah liveth in whose presence I stand" (I. Kings 17:1). He lived in God's presence, hence his knowledge of God's will, his courage and certainty in prophecy, and HIS RESISTLESS POWER IN PRAYER. His life was not Ahab-ward, north earth-ward, nor other-ward. Therefore he furnished the sign for which God looked, and is still looking—"The sign of a man's knees in the sand."—Great Commission Prayer League.

DISTRACTION DURING PRAYER

"Fervent prayer," says an old divine, "like a cannon ball planted at the gates of heaven, makes them fly open." The common fault with most of us is in our readiness to yield to distraction. Our thoughts go roving hither and thither, and we make little progress toward our desired end. Like quicksilver, our minds will not hold together, but rolls off this way and that. How great an evil is this! It insults God. What would we think of a petitioner if while having an audience with a prince, he should be playing with a feather, or catching a fly?—Sel.

Lord, it belongs not to my care

Whether I die or live;

To love and serve Thee is my share,

And this Thy grace must give.

—Richard Baxter