

BACK TO THE FORSAKEN ALTARS

(Continued from last issue)

And the God who worked in the days of Saul, the murderous persecutor, changing him into Paul, the loving Apostle, proved Himself the same mighty Transformer in the case of Africaner.

By the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit the chief's heart is broken with godly sorrow for his crimson past, as he hears from Moffatt's lips the message of John 3:16. Tremendous is his contrition; glorious is his conversion. For him old things pass away; in Christ Jesus he is a new creation. His days of blood are over; his days of blessing have begun. The butcher has become a benefactor. So great is the grace of God. He became one of the most wonderful Christians who ever adorned the doctrine of the cross. I feel that when I get to God's Golden City out of my highest privileges in that metropolis of the saved will be to meet Africaner.

Something that particularly distinguished him was his love for the Word of God. He became a mighty Bible student, and would spend hours and hours at a time reading the Sacred Book. Deeply he went "into the secrets of God."

And he not only loved the Book and its Author, but fervently he loved his fellow natives. There was a meekness and humility about him that endeared him to everyone.

Of course he thought everything of the missionary who had been the means of his transformation, and sought to please him always. Moffatt said to him one day:

"Africaner, I must make a trip to Cape Town, and would like to have you go along."

He responded, "I thought you loved me. But would you have me go to that city, where I will be hung by the officers of the law?"

Then he added, "Den't you know that I am an outlaw and the government will pay a thousand rix-dollars to the person who brings in my head?"

Moffatt was able to persuade him that his life would not be in danger, that he, the missionary, would be responsible for his safety.

So they set out together, the Scotchman and the African. They reach the farm of the man of whom we learned at the beginning of this brief history. His uncle had been killed by Africaner.

Moffatt and the farmer are walking toward the wagon of the missionary. They are talking, as I have already stated, of the famous chief. And the farmer learns something that at first he refuses to accept, for Moffatt has said, "Africaner is now a Christian."

"I can believe almost anything you say, but that I cannot credit; there are seven wonders in the world—that would be the eighth."

Then the missionary shows what divine grace has done in the past in changing lives; he shows how Manasseh, the evil king of the Old Testament, was transformed; he calls attention to Paul's conversion. He refers to the work of regenerating grace in their own day. But the farmer, himself a Christian, is still incredulous, insisting that Africaner was beyond such miraculous operations.

The two men have by this time come close to the wagon; near it sits a native, with a say very earnestly: "Well, if what you assert be true respecting Africaner, I have only one wish, and that is to see him before I die; and when you come back from Cape Town, as

sure as the sun is over our heads, I will go with you to see him, even though he killed my own uncle."

Moffatt points to the smiling black man, and simply says: "This is Africaner."

If the farmer had heard a terrific peal of thunder from a cloudless sky, he would not have been more startled. Awe-struck he looks intently at the Hottentot as if he were viewing another planet. He sees a person in whose face meekness and kindness shine. Can this man, so lamb-like in his gentleness, be the one who raged like a lion over the vast African spaces? He gasps: "Are you Africaner?"

The one addressed rises, takes off his hat, bows to his questioner, and says, "I am."

Again the farmer speaks, with eyes lifted to the sky he says: "O God, what a miracle of Thy power! What cannot Thy grace accomplish!"

A PICTURE TO YOU

Before us lies a picture of a book, a pair of glasses, a lamp, and an empty chair. Look at it a long time. What does it say to you? The book is marked "The Bible." On the blank pages between the Old and New Testaments are, perhaps, the names and dates of birth of your mother and father, yourself and your brothers and sisters. The writing tells, too, of the marriage of your parents, and perhaps the death of a little baby brother or sister.

Yes, you believe that this book is the Word of God, even though you have not treated it as such; that it tells you truly of man's origin, gives a history of his sin and troubles, and prophesies the time when the world shall be destroyed and the wicked punished and the righteous rewarded. You know that Jesus said, "The words that I have spoken unto you, the same shall judge you in the last days." And you believe that.

It is evening now; the lamp tells you that; its light shines on the words of the Old Book. Perhaps it is opened at the passage: "Let not your heart be troubled," or "In my Father's house are many mansions," or "Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city."

Some one has been reading the book, and has left. No doubt it was an old person; at least, he wore glasses, for these are left by the reader of the book. Who does your imagination tell you it was? You are right—it was your father or your mother. The past rises before you like a dream. You are a child again in your old home. It is evening now, the chores have been done, your lessons have been studied, and you are ready for bed. You see again your father in his quiet corner reading the old Book before the family retires for the night. He reads aloud. Mother is busy with her patching and darning for the children—for you. She listens as he reads aloud the words of comfort. It did not mean much to you then—but it does now.

Both of them were interested in your moral and eternal welfare, but you were not—not much, at least. Anxiously they tried to impress on your mind the life one should live; anxiously they tried to guide your feet aright; anxiously they prayed that you might see. But they did more than that—they set before you their godly lives. You were young and strong and not concerned, and "must see the

world or myself." Perhaps you came into the Church, but did not remain faithful; the allurements of the world drew you into by and forbidden paths. Or, perhaps you never opened your heart when the Master knocked at the door. You thought your parents were old fogies, you said you had your own life to live, you sowed to the wind and now—you are reaping the whirlwind. In the disappointment and despair of your failure, your mind turns back to your old father and mother. "O, that they were here, that I might talk with them about what I should do!"

The bright colors of the world have lost their brightness; the card game has no excitement now; the dance has given up its thrill; the licentious shows seem like mockery in a distressed world; your trashy literature looks like so much dirty paper; your cherished business has tumbled to the ground; your "friends" have deserted you or become your enemies. "Oh, that mother could speak just a word and relieve my troubled heart!"

"Backward, turn backward, O Time in your flight,

Make me a child again just for tonight!
Mother, come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore;
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair;
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep;—
Rock me to sleep, mother, rock me to sleep."

But mother cannot come back; father cannot come back. It is too late to seek their advice except from memory of what they said when living. You rejected it then. The vacant chair shows they are gone. You have only a vision of the past. You have learned very late that the attractions of this life soon grow dim. Your father and mother were anxious for you to see that; they pled with you. You cannot bring them back but you can go to them. "Tell Mother I'll be there, In answer to her prayer."

They threw an influence for good over your life but you pushed it aside; now you appreciate their effort. What about your children? You saw father read the Bible, your children see you read trash; you saw mother go to religious services rain or shine; your sons and daughters see you at a show in snow or sleet; you saw them close the day with a chapter from the Word of God, your children see you turn the dial for a last "song of fools." What a memory to leave your children! What a broken compass to put into their hands with such a dark night and such a stormy sea and such a rocky shore just ahead!

But there is a little time left—redeem it before it is gone. Why do you wait? Your golden opportunities will soon all be passed. Sin has nothing more to offer.

In the world you've failed to find
Aught of peace for troubled mind;
Come to Christ, on Him believe,
Peace and joy you shall receive.

—Uncle Dan

The Christian Register, organ of the Unitarian Church, has ceased publication and has been turned over to the trustees of the American Unitarian Association. The cause given is the lack of financial support. The Missionary Review of the World suspended publication with the December issue. The reasons given are lack of missionary interest and financial support.—Unoted Presbyterian.