**MY ROCK AND REFUGE.**

My spirit looks to God alone;
My rock and refuge is His throne;
In all my fears, in all my straits,
My soul on His salvation waits.

Trust Him, ye saints, in all your ways,
Pour out your hearts before His face:
When helpers fail, and foes invade,
God is our all-sufficient aid.

Once has His awful voice declared,
Once and again my ears have heard,
"All power is His eternal due;
He must be feared and trusted too."

For sovereign Power reigns not alone;
Grace is a partner of the throne:
Thy grace and Justice, mighty Lord!
Shall well divide our last reward.

—*Sel.*

## Visitor Pulpit.

### DYING LIKE A FOOL.

A Sermon preached by P. S. Henson, D. D., at the First Baptist Church, Chicago.

"Died Abner as a fool dieth?" II Samuel iii. 33.

Abner was the first cousin of Saul and commander-in-cheif of the armies of his royal kinsman, whose changeful fortunes he had followed, from his memorable coronation at Gilgal, to his melancholy immolation on the mountains of Gilboa. In the civil war that was hotly waged between the adherents of David and Saul, Abner "made himself strong for the house of Saul," and in his own robust personality gathered up almost all the strength that was left to prop the tottering throne on which sat the youthful and imbecile Ishbosheth, whom Abner had caused to be proclaimed as king.

He was the power behind the throne that was greater than the throne itself—the Bismarck of this eventful period of Israel's history. Ambitious, arrogant, conscious of power, he dared to invade the supposedly sacred domain of the harem that Saul had left, and appropriated a concubine that chanced to please him, without condescending to consult Ishbosheth, or so much as saying, "By your leave, sir." And when the king presumed, very naturally, to make some protest, Abner, in a towering passion, wished to know if Isnbosheth considered "him a dog's head" to be affronted with impunity, and informed him that he was well aware that God himself had swern to David that he should be seated on the throne of Saul, and now he proposed to stand aside and let the will of the Lord be done. The king cowered before the audacious captain and did not venture to answer a word, "because he feared him."

Straightway, in pursuance of his purpose, "Abner came to David to Hebron and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that were with him a feast. And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee and that thou mayst reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away and he went in peace."

Far be it from us to execrate the memory of Abner for his abandonment of a cause that he had upheld so sturdily till now. We only blame him for not having abandoned it long before. He had had indubitable evidence, time and again, as to what was the will of Israel's God, and so, all this while had been fighting against his conscience. And now in the presence of a personal indignity, resentment reinforces conscience, and he negotiates with David to deliver over Israel to his rightful rule.

No wonder that David received him graciously, for he was the head and front of all the oppositien to his kingly authority. And further, notwithstanding his proud, imperious will, that would not readily brook control, he had very manly qualities and was every whit a soldier. David sent him away with every mark of distinguished favor, and with every assurance of a lasting peace, in lieu of the strife that had raged so long. Fortunate was it for the amenities of the interview, that Joab, David's grim and grizzly generalissimo, was absent at the time upon a military expedition, for if there was a soldier of whom he was likely to be jealous, more than any other, or a man whom he hated with a deadlier hate than any other, it was the one whose hands had been stained with the blood of Asahel, Joab's younger brother. Accordingly, when on his return a little later he learns that Abner had come and gone, come upon such an errand, and gone loaded with such honors, all the smouldering fires of jealousy and revenge flamed up and broke out; and with eager strides pursuing his unsuspecting victim, and encountering him, without a word of warning smites him to the earth with a swift and sure and terrible blow.

Alas for Abner and alas for David! It was but a moment ago that the great captain had gone forth from the King's presence, all radiant and jubilant, and now he lies a ghastly corpse. Very keen was the pang that David felt. A soldier himself, he was prepared to appreciate the magnificent soldierly qualities of the now dead hero. And so he said as he reverently and tearfully bent above the bier "Know ye not that a prince and a great man has fallen in Israel?" And further than this, Abner aforetime had been David's foremost enemy, and now had come to him under a flag of truce. He had surrendered unconditionally, had been David's honored guest, and received the pledge of David's friendship, and then he had been treacherously slain almost in sight of the king's pavilion. David experienced such a pang as would have been felt by our great Union commander, if after receiving the sword of his renowned confederate antagonist at Appomatox Court, House, Lee had subsequently been assassinated by some desperate federal officer.

And yet more and worse, for David had hoped that the surrender of Abner would end the sad fractricidal strife, but falling thus by a treacherous blow, what better could be expected than that the old fires would be fanned into fresh fury, and so his most deeply cherished plans be doomed to bitter disappointment. And so he mourned with an intensity of grief even like unto that which but lately has bowed the head of England's greatest premier, when full of generous and philanthropic purposes for long afflicted Ireland, he is halted by the mangled corpses of Cavendish and Burke. "And King David himself followed the bier, and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound nor thy feet put into fetters; as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou." It is as sometimes we have known when the battle-scarred hero of a hundred fights has ignominiously fallen in a bar-room brawl. Shame, shame for such a man to die such a death, for he died even as a fool dieth.

#### THE SUICIDE.

And now we turn from that time to this, and from Abner to the men right around us and to ourselves. Die we must some day, in spite of inward protest aud outward struggle, for it is appointed to all men once to die and after death the judgment. But no man wants to die as the fool dieth, and hence it becomes us to inquire who they are that die that way, and there never perhaps were so many as now.

And first of all are those miserable wretches, who just because they are miserable, sever with their own rash hands the cords that bind them here, and plunge unbidden into the abysses of eternity. They forget that the mind is its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven. They rush out of the world as if the grave were a peaceful chamber, and death a dreamless sleep. They fail to realize that death is not the end, but the beginning, and that the concentrated misery of a myriad wretched human lives on earth is not to be compared to the exquisite torture of a moment, spent by a single soul, in the world of woe that lies beyond the boundaries of this present life. The man who impiously takes his own life, because he has not the courage to bear life's burdens and meetits responsibilities, is not only a coward but a fool, and "Died as a fool dieth" should be engraven on his tombstone.

#### THE FOOLHARDY.

And he is but little better who exposes himself to needless risks—who jumps for the boat when just leaving the slip—who clutches the train after it has started, and jumps from the train before it has stopped, and is drawn from under it a mangled corpse. And so of him who prides himself upon perilous adventure, just to show it can be done—who must climb highest on the rocks, or float the farthest down the rapids. Such exposure is not an evidence of manliness, but of foolhardiness and atrocious wickedness, and he who loses his life in consequence, dies not as a hero, but as a fool. And the like is true of him who recklessly disregards God's laws of health—who needlessly exposes his body to be injured by the elements—who gorges it with indigestible viands, hastily edvoured—who burns it out with hot rebellious liquors—who breaks down its framework with baneful narcotics—who wear sit out with ceaseless worrys—who in life's eager competition drives it mercilessly ahead with utmost strain of heart and brain, until suddenly the crash comes, and the poor broken body is laid out for burial. Such men die as the fool dieth, for the passing pleasures and the perishable prizes are not worth so much.

#### THE DISAPPOINTED.

When the foremost and most potential journalist of America stepped down from his high place of power to enter the lists as a presidential candidate, and went down to the grave from the sheer mortification of defeat, we cannot fail to feel that even grand old Horace Greely died at the last as the fool dieth.

#### THE RICH FOOL.

So does he who lays up treasure for himself, saves it, hoards it, hugs it, to the very verge of the churchyard mold, who can scarce afford a coat to his back, or a morsel to his mouth, who is rich as a prince and yet lives like a pauper, and only relaxes his miserly grip when death thrusts him out of the world naked as he was born. Or he may not be a wretched miser, but only a prosperous and money-loving man of the world. The Great Teacher portrays him in one of his masterly parables. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, What shall I do, for I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said: This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whoso shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

No doubt he had a pompous funeral, and there was much of glowing eulogy, for a man who had won such splendid success, but God pronounced his life a failure, and Heaven saw that he died as a fool dieth.

#### THE UNPREPARED.

And in a like way dies every man who goes into eternity all unprepared for its solemn realities. For every man knows that he *must* go sometime, and he knows that he *may* go soon and suddenly. He knows that when he goes he shall not return to rectify life's errors, or renew his solemn probation. He feels deep down in his soul that there are great unsettled questions that ought to be considered and adjusted, for he has a conscience ill at ease, and a voice like the far-off echo of the knell of doom sounds out evermore, "Prepare to meet thy God."

And he also knows, or may know, that such preparation is absolutely possible, for God himself in infinite tenderness and at infinite cost has made provision adequate for the wants of every earnest humble soul. No money, no merit, no weary working, no painful penances are here required. Only believe—only look and live—whosoever will let him freely partake—this is God's order; this is God's gracious offer, and in view of this magnanimous provision and in sight of Christ's uplifted cross, for any human being to go down to perdition is not only to die most pitifully, but to die as the fool dieth.

#### SAD INCONGRUITY.

And while, in truth, in the case of any human being this is painful and deplorable, while even the street gamin and the hateful hoodlum has a soul whose value is above all estimation, still there are some whose circumstances and characters have been of such a sort that the loss of their soul's strikes us with a sense of stronger incongruity and fills us with a profounder pity. Some men are made of stuff so vile, their lives are spent on so low a plane, that when at last they come to an ignonimous and miserable end, we recognize an illustration of the eternal fitness of things, and sometimes feel a positive satisfaction when a double-eyed and devil-possessed villian, like the murderer of Garfield, is overtaken by the retribution he so richly deserves.

But on the other hand there are men whose taking off, in the manner of it, awakens within us indignant recoil and cuts us to the heart, with a sense of unseemliness. So David felt when this veteran of a hundred battle fields was stabbed to death by a dastardly assassin. So have we felt when in a disgraceful bar-room fray some bright-browed and delicately nurtured boy has fallen beneath a murderous blow.

And not only so, but the same sad incongruity confronts us in the case of a model man like that rich young ruler that once came to Christ, genial, generous, exemplary; a pattern of moral propriety, and yet lacking the one thing without which, in spite of so-called natural virtue he cannot possibly attain unto eternal life. He lives without God and he dies without hope.

God forbid that we should confound all moral distinctions and take leave of common sense, and intimate as is sometimes done, that there is no difference between such a decorous moralist, and the red-handed ruffian that makes war directly upon all that is sacred in government and religion. There is a difference, and both God and man mark it.

And yet if there be any truth in the Bible, mere natural virtue will not suffice as a passport to the skies. A man must be born again; as a poor, helpless sinner he must fly to the shelter of Calvary's cross; he must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And when God, giving us a category of the lost, tells us that "The fearful and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sinners, and idolaters and all liars have their part in the lake of fire," it is noticeable that the unbeliever is ranged in the fore front of the very fending.

Some of us have sometimes watched as a prison van has poured its promiscuous occupants into the criminal dock. And among the low-browed, blear-eyed, brazen-fronted men, and the hideous caricatures of womanhood, lost to virtue and to shame, we have seen some fair-browed, pallid-faced youth, who, in his person and bearing, gave evidence of having known something of culture and refinement, but had been lured from the paths of rectitude by emissaries of the devil, and had been encompassed in the meshes of the net of the destroyer, and now is jostled and jammed in that desperate crowd of guilty wretches, and we think of home and mother—of the sunny years of childhood, and the splendid possibilities of manhood, flung away, and we say instinctively—Its a pity and a shame! In some sense, indeed, he is yet more guilty than his miserable companions in the prisoners's dock, for many of them were born into an atmosphere reeking with foulness—drank liquid poison in a drunken mother's milk—and have scarcely had a glimpse of, or a chance for, a decent and virtuous life. And yet, in spite of all this, our thoughts and our hearts go out to the wild and wayward boy for whom so many prayers have gone up, and so many tears have flowed, and around whom have clustered so many tender loves and generous hopes. Aye, there are brave young fellows that go reeling by us with downy but wasted cheeks tinged with dissipation's fever flush, and we cannot help begrudging them to the devil. Yes, and there are older men, above suspicion and above reproach, who in all life's manifold relations do carry themselves in most manly fashion; and women, most gentle and beautiful, and tender and true; most wifely and sisterly and womanly—for that word comprehends it all—and yet they have never yielded to the God who gave them life and light, the homage of their hearts and the service of their lives, nor recognized their need of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor surrendered to the claims of that gospel which proffers a pardon bought with precious blood; and as we see these youths and maidens, these friends and neighbors, so amiable and estimable, turning away from the world's only hope, and so risking the loss of a priceless immortality, we cannot refrain from asking, shall these too, die as the fool dieth, and at last go down by the side of the pit? God forbid that any who hear me this night should come to such an end and awake in eternity to shame and despair.

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If you feel dull, drowsy, debilitated, have sallow color of skin, or yellowish-brown spots on the face or body, frequent headache or dizziness, bad taste in mouth, internal heat or chills alternated with hot flushes, low spirits and gloomy forebodings, irregular appetite, and tongue coated, you are suffering from "torpid liver," or "biliousness." In many cases of "liver complaint" only part of these symptoms are experienced. As a remedy for all such cases Dr. Pierce's "Golden Medical Discovery" has no equal, as it effects perfect and radical cures. At all drug stores.

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### A CHINESE MARTYR.

A poor Chinaman, after he was converted, went about the town in which he was living with two large placards, one in front and the other on his back, with affectionate texts from God's Word, inviting sinners to come to Jesus. He was beaten and knocked down, but rose quietly, without any attempt to retaliate.

Many were induced, through his instrumentality, to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" The number of these increased, so that the Government became alarmed; he was apprehended; ordered to recant and deny Jesus. He steadfastly refused, and was beheaded.

All over China they openly worship the devil, and excuse themselves by saying, "Oh, kind Jesus. He never did any one any harm, we need not mind Him; but we must propitiate the bad spirit."

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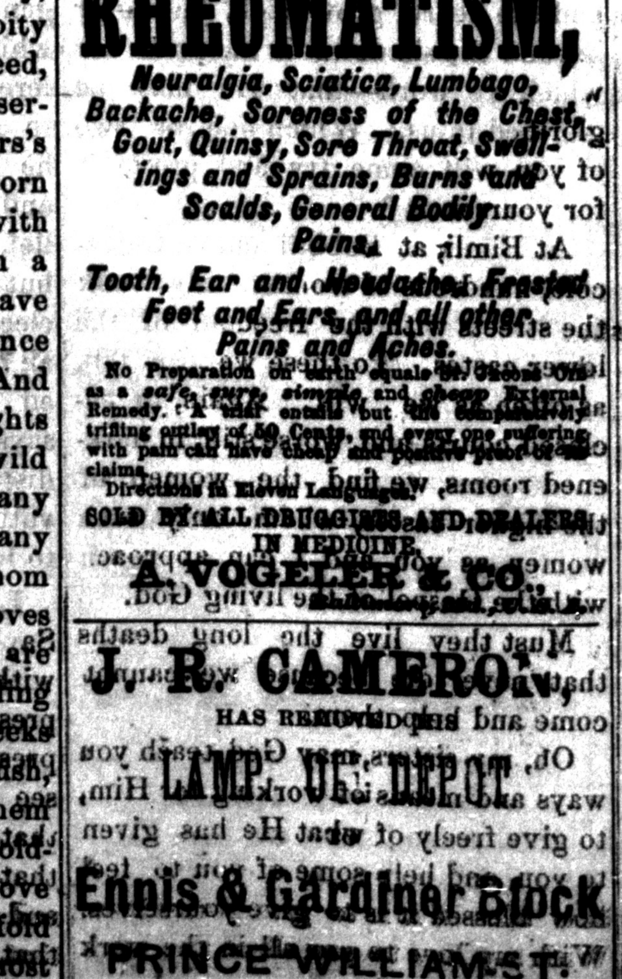

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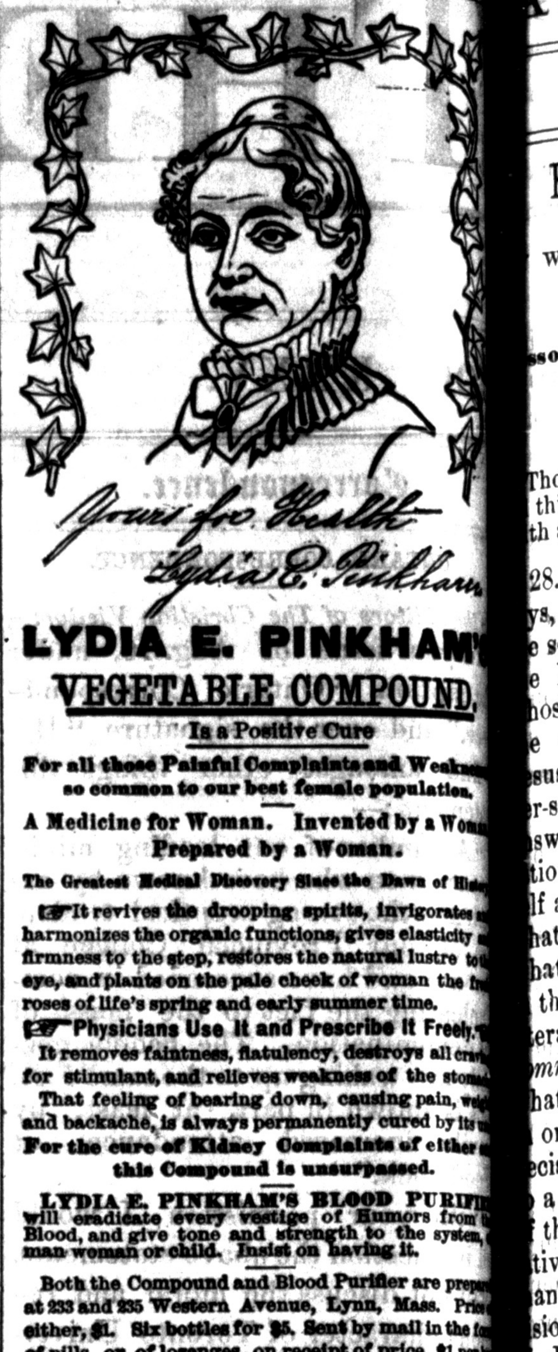



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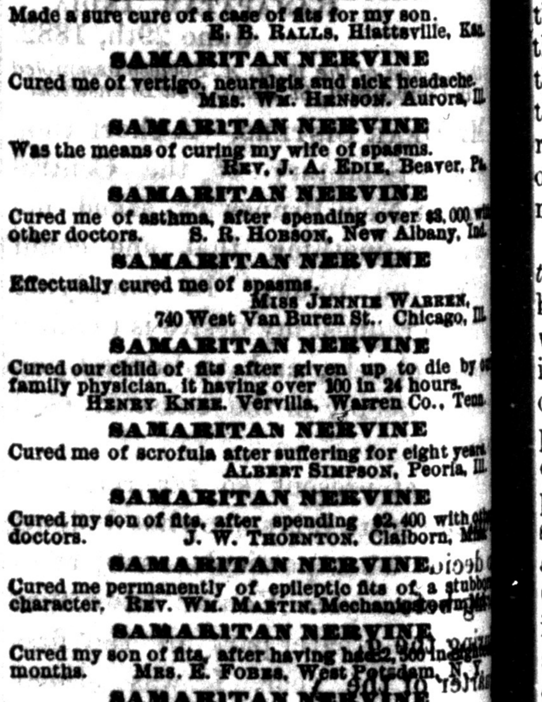

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