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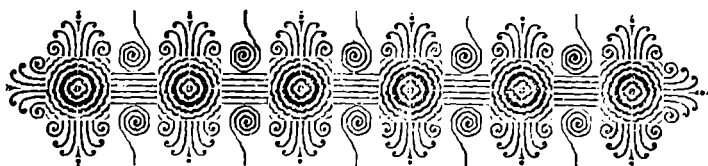
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A table of contents for *The Sword and the Trowel* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sword-and-the-trowel_01.php



THE
Sword and the Trowel.

SEPTEMBER, 1901.

Fasting and Backsliding.

A PRAYER-MEETING ADDRESS, BY C. H. SPURGEON.



EAR FRIENDS, I asked you specially to pray, just now, for those who are backsliding, for those who are declining by little and little from the ways of God, that eternal mercy may stop them, and bring them to a better and happier condition.

You have noticed in the papers, lately, an account of a fasting man; and I am afraid there are some people who are doing spiritually what that foolish fellow is trying to do physically; he is seeking to find out how long he can fast; I think he is going to see whether he can live for forty days without eating. I do not recommend any of you to follow his example; and it strikes me that, if I did, you would not be likely to try it; there are not sufficient fools in the world to make such an experiment as that practicable on a very large scale. God has made it a law of our being that we should eat in order to live; but this stupid man means to ascertain how long he can violate that law, and still live. I have known some professing Christians who seemed to be trying to see how long they could live without eating spiritually. Prayer is neglected, the reading of the Scriptures is forgotten, attendance upon the means of grace is very much slackened; and as for coming out to a week-night service, that is given up altogether. If they are not quite going without all spiritual food, yet they are trying to find out on how little they can exist. If they try the experiment long enough, they will be like a valuable horse that a Frenchman had, which managed to live on next to nothing. He had at last brought the poor creature's allowance down to one straw a day, and then the experiment failed, for the animal died. Some professors have got down to one service on the Sunday as their

In the morning, they went forth, crying, "We have found HIM at last,—the One of whom the prophets foretold,—the One who pardons, pacifies, and purifies, the One who takes away the sin, who reconciles the sinner to his God, who brings the lost sheep home, who turns the shadow of death into the light of the morning." "*Behold!*" It is the word for us all. Men who have fallen away from heavenly things, men who have wandered far into the dark, men whose lives are defiled, and whose consciences are burdened with the sense of guilt, behold the Lamb which taketh away the sin! It is not a laborious function; it is nothing like that of the prophet or the Christ; we have but to behold. I remember a medical student saying to me, "But how does He take it away; and where does He take it to? Till you explain these things, I cannot believe." "But," I answered, "if one of your patients were to say to you, 'Tell me how the disease is to be taken away, explain to me the way in which your drugs will operate, or else I will not trust you,' what would you reply? Would you not tell the man his duty was, not to enquire too closely, but to trust? And you would do your best to cure him if he did that, would you not? Just so is it with Christ. I may not understand all the deep mysteries of the cross in its relation to my soul; but I know that it is written, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

Arabs in North Africa.



IN harvest time, these Bedouin send us few sick; they are too busy money-making. This affects our numbers; so only 600 visits have been recorded in May and June at the Soussa Medical Mission. But much time may be spent over *one* case; for, to "make the message plain" is no small difficulty. We have given away several thousands of "Wordless Books" in this effort; and now that our stock is finished, we should be grateful for some more.

Ignorant of all reading, a fresh religious idea is, to a country Arab, a wonderful difficulty. For example, I was speaking lately, to an intelligent youth, on Abraham being justified by faith. He listened well, and when I thought I was getting on, he remarked, "But you make a mistake; my name is Selim, *not* Abraham;" showing that, till then, he had taken in just nothing.

There is one language the Arabs understand readily; and that is, kindness. Said a patient, a day or two ago, "My friends wanted me to go to another doctor; but I said, 'No, I am going to that one; he is a good man, and *his wife is good, too.*'" Another man, staying in the baraka, after I had dressed his carbuncle, (an abscess the size of a cheese-plate,) volunteered the statement that he "was believing in Jesus *more* now;" and among old patients, of one or two years ago, who have lately returned, we have found the Gospel truths, then sown in their hearts, still alive and fresh, so that much the same feeling comes over us as when, in the garden, we break off a twig from some dry-looking plant or tree, and finding it green and moist within, we exclaim, "Ah! it is all right; it is *not* dead."

One has heard of the pastor who claimed a three-fold ordination,—the people ordained him by coming to hear him, the Lord by blessing him, and the devil by opposing him. This third kind of recognition has been coming to us lately in connection with our work at Mòknine. For a supposed offence, we have been accused before the police authorities, and told that, if we continue to go there, prosecution will follow. Accordingly, we have moved our dispensary to another market, where, close to our room, I have noticed "the street of the devil," so, dear readers, we shall need your prayers, for some people seem to share the opinion of the Roman Catholic priest in Morocco, who politely (!) said to me, "You! why, *you* are the *very* devil himself!"

Meanwhile, we rejoice in God, and go forward. In this place, Djemal, which we are now visiting, I call to mind a man who, about to shake hands with one of us, drew back, and said, "No; this hand of mine once touched the tomb of the prophet; it shall never touch the hand of an infidel." That action suited well the proud spirit of Islam, so different from that of HIM who "loved us" and "gave Himself for us," and who has bidden us welcome to Him the most unworthy.

T. G. CHURCHER.

Soussa, Tunisia, North Africa.

Baptized after 25 Years' Delay.

ONE of the most interesting incidents, from a religious standpoint, in which I was ever concerned, was when, at Coromandel, New Zealand, I had the joy of baptizing (in a pool situated in a most romantic part of the farm of good Brother Elmslie) a believer, seventy years of age, who confessed that, twenty-five years before, he had been convinced as to his duty and privilege, and for a quarter of a century had been disobedient to the heavenly vision, and therefore sinning against light and knowledge. He had made application to the authorities at the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle to have the ordinance administered there; but whilst waiting for a sufficient number of candidates to come forward, he had been appointed to a position in his profession at Coromandel. On his arrival, he sought out the few Baptists there, and expressed to them his strong desire to follow the Master through the flood.