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Sermon for the Times.
BY REV. W. W. PERCIVAL, M. A.
PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING LAST IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

"And the Lord said unto Joshua," &c.—Joshua vii. 10-13.

You will remember that Achan, at the fall of Jericho, in reckless defiance of the express command of Jehovah, stole from among the spoils a Babylonish garment, a wedge of gold, and 200 shekels of silver. On account of that wickedness, the army of Israel met with disastrous defeat, and some thirty-six men were slain. This led to an investigation and discovery of the guilty party, and Achan and his unhappy family were stoned to death in the valley of Achor. The result was, we find, that great prosperity immediately attended their enterprises. The army of Israel marched out of that valley, where probably they had buried their thirty-six battle-slain comrades, and where with their own hands they had stoned to death the author of all their misery, to victory and glory. They were now a better army, a stronger army, than they ever were before. No army after that could stand before them. They swept right on to the possession of the land. Thus the "valley of Achor became to the nation a door of hope."

Now, it appears to me, that there are lessons in this suggestive historical incident, of a very practical character, that it would be well for us to remember.

I.—That evil of every kind, is a source of weakness, trouble and disaster.

Look at this bright picture. It's a battle scene. Yonder are 3000 Israelitish soldiers with battle axe and glistening spear, marching against Ai. They have just fought their first battle, and won it easily, they are, therefore, now flushed with victory, as they march from the smoking ruins of Jericho, to crush and destroy Ai. The idea of defeat never once crosses their minds, and everything truly augurs success. Their enemies are troubling with fear. They have heard of the overthrow of the strong-walled city of Jericho, and it has struck consternation and dread into their souls. If great Jericho could not stand before Israel, if her massive walls toppled over at the war-whoop of God's hosts, what can comparatively defenceless Ai hope for. On comes the proud victorious forces of Israel. As the men of Ai see them approach, although filled with a nameless dread and fear, they yet, nevertheless, are resolved to fight for their homes, for their wives and little ones. They sallied forth to meet them, to repel the invaders of their country, if they can; if not, at least to die in its defence. The two armies meet. Then is a flashing of steel, a crushing of helmets, a terrible hand-to-hand struggle, not long but exceedingly fierce. At length the forces of Israel give way, they break, they become panic-stricken, and ignominiously flee from the field. The men of Ai have gained a glorious victory, and, consequently, there is wonderful rejoicing in the streets of Ai, and loud lamentations in the camp of Israel.

But what is the cause of all this terrible disaster? Was their bad generalship on the part of Joshua? Did he lose his head? Did his intrepid courage forsake him? No. Joshua was not to blame. Was Israel's army outnumbered by the foe? No! Was there mismanagement or bungling of some kind upon the part of the officers, or cowardice upon the part of the men? No! No! Then there is a mystery somewhere. What does Joshua do? Just what many a brave general has done since—he goes down upon his knees and asks God the secret of all the trouble, and the answer comes. What is it? "Israel has sinned." That was the secret of their defeat. The generalship was good enough, and the army was strong enough, but there was an Achan in the camp. One man, to gratify his terrible lust for gold, brought about this terrible national disaster—this crushing defeat to Israel's army.

Now there are Achans in the Conservative camp at Ottawa—and not a few of them either. There are Achans in the Liberal camp down in the Province of Quebec—and not a few of them either. Men who have fallen in love with the goodly Babylonish garments, the wedges of gold, and the shekels of silver. Men who have prostituted the honourable, and responsible positions, in which by the suffrages of their fellow citizens they have been placed, for their own personal ends. They have used their official positions to enrich themselves and their friends. To my crude way of thinking there is no comparison between the sin of Achan, and the sin that these modern political Achans have committed. But let us see! Achan stole during the excitement of a siege of battle and from his open and avowed enemies. But our political Achans in Ottawa and Quebec, have been raking in their silver shekels and wedges of gold in the most cool and systematic manner, apparently, for a

number of years. Achan stole from his enemies, but these men have stolen from their friends. That is, they have squandered upon themselves and their friends, the hard earnings of the tax-payers of this Dominion—your money and mine.

Now as Achan was a source of weakness to Israel, and brought about the ruinous defeat of Ai, so the political Achans, be they found in either Conservative or Liberal Camp, I care not which, they must and they will eventually, bring about the utter defeat and ruin of the party to which they belong.

The moral sense of the public, I know, or at least, I fear, has become materially blunted, by the systematic bribery and corruption, that has been practiced for years, especially in connection with election contests. Yet, it is not, thank God, totally dead; and the events that are now taking place, will be sufficient to arouse such a wave of popular indignation, all over this broad Dominion, from the surf-smitten shores of Nova Scotia to the placid waters of the Straits of Fuca, as will hurl from place and power, the party that will dare to throw the mantle of protection around the Achans that are in their camp. I think we have made tolerably plain our first position, that evil is a source of weakness and a cause of trouble and ruin. I notice

II.—That the only remedy for the evil is the utter and complete destruction of the Achans. Joshua went to work in a very systematic manner to discover the offender. He examined tribe by tribe, and man by man. He did not employ "a committee of enquiry" to do the work, or probably it would have taken a long time to do it, and then it would be only very imperfectly done. Some one has said, that if a committee had been employed to build the ark, the deluge would have come long before it was finished, and all the people would have been drowned. No. Joshua had no committee of enquiry, but he did the work himself. And finally "Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken." (Read verses 18-26). What a strange sight that is which we behold in the valley of Achor. We are almost led to cry out, "Why, Joshua are you not making a mistake! Are you not crippling your own strength, and helping on your enemies, by diminishing your own forces? Besides, Achan has been a good man and true, and has served our cause well in the past, therefore, you should condone his offence as much as possible." But no, brethren, Joshua made no mistake. He knew that the destruction of evil is always strength—never weakness.

The army of Israel marched out of that gloomy valley, stronger and better than if they had a thousand Achans in their midst. No Ai throughout all the land of Canaan could stand before them now. The valley of Achor was to them the door of hope. The same principle is true to-day. Is there an Achan in your camp, my Liberal or Conservative friend? If there is, then away with him to the valley of Achor at once, and stone him with stones until there is not a particle of political life left in him, and then pile a great heap of stones on top of his rotten political carcass, that they may serve as a warning to politicians in future generations. It is well for parties and Governments to remember, that just like a chain, they are no stronger than the weakest link; that, just like a ship, they are no stronger than the weakest plank. Your political craft, from stem to stern, from topmast to keel, may be as fine a looking craft as ever sailed over the stormy sea of politics, but if away down below water-mark there is a rotten, worm-eaten plank, then the ship is doomed, and will probably founder in the first tempest.

In conclusion, permit me to offer a few observations relative to our country and its future outlook. First with regard to the country itself. I have not the least hesitation in saying that we have a grand country, the sun to-day shines upon none better. I can speak with some little authority upon this subject, as I have lived for some years in every province of this Dominion, with the single exception of the Province of Quebec, and have travelled pretty well over that. We have everything within ourselves that is necessary for the development and maintenance of a great nation. Both to the east and west we have the finest fisheries in the world, capable of indefinite development, and a source of unlimited wealth. In minerals we have gold, silver, copper, iron, lead—in fact everything in the mineral line, and all in a state of infancy. We have the grandest coal fields to be found anywhere, both to the east and west, and also in the centre of our country. We have some of the finest lumber that grows, and any quantity of it. We have millions and millions of acres of the finest agricultural land, capable of sustaining a population of millions of people. Oh no, if we have not prosperity it is not the fault of the country. The country is all right. This brings me to the enquiry:

Secondly—Have we made, as a coun-

try, any material prosperity during the last ten years? Facts, stern, hard, implacable facts, compel me to have to answer this question in the negative. I do not candidly think that we have, not in any particular, and certainly not in point of numbers, according to the figures given us by the recent census. I don't intend to trouble you with many figures, for it will be difficult for you to remember them. Still a few are necessary. According to the recent returns we have now a population of 4,830,000. In 1881 we had a population 4,325,000, the rate of increase during the decade has been a little over 11 per cent. But during the last ten years, at a cost to the country of \$3,000,000, we have secured about 900,000 immigrants. Without at all reckoning the natural increase of that number, the country to-day has a population in round numbers, of 400,000 less than the addition of the original immigrants alone would give. This simply means that 400,000 of them, that we have at a great cost brought out to this country, have been lost to Canada. Again, when you take the natural increase of the whole country, which, putting it at the very low estimate of 14 per cent., would give us 600,000 more. The question then arises, what has become of the 1,000,000 of people that we have lost during the last ten years? Where are they? Some of us perhaps might venture to guess, but we will not.

Again, going back to the census of 1871, or for twenty years, we find the population at that time was 3,686,000. During the twenty years 1,300,000 immigrants have settled in the Dominion, so that the population at present should be 5,000,000, without taking into account the natural increase of the 1,300,000 immigrants, as well as the people who were here before they came. It follows then that during the last twenty years we have actually lost more than all the natural increase of all the people. But where have these people all gone? I would rather not answer that question. I will leave you to guess. But another question presents itself here, and one that we must look in the face. When will we ever become a nation at this rate of increase? The answer is very simple and plain—We never will! But this brings me to enquire:

Thirdly—What is the particular cause of this state of things? You may rest assured that there is a cause. What is it? We pointed out to you already that it cannot be because there is any defect in the country itself, for that is not the case. The country is good and our resources are vast. What's the trouble then? It must be that there is some defect somewhere in the administration of affairs. Of course the Grits lay it at the door of the National Policy of the Government, and say that it is that that's ruining the country, and driving the people out of it by thousands every year. I know that I am not the man, and I am quite sure that this is neither the time nor place to enter into a discussion of this purely political aspect of the question. I wish to view it rather from the standpoint of an outsider, that is one who is outside the pale of party politics. The first thing that impresses me as such is the excessive extravagance that characterizes the administration of public affairs. The fact is we are pretty nearly governed to death. That witty Frenchman, Max O'Rell, in his book, "Brother Jonathan and his Country," commences with the sentence: "The population of the United States is fifty millions—mostly Colonels." This is an exaggeration no doubt. But it is no exaggeration to say that the population of the Dominion is four millions—mostly Legislators and Government officials. Perhaps you don't believe me. Well take a few figures. The Federal Government at Ottawa contains 300 members—215 in the Commons and 80 in the Senate—each getting his \$1000 a year, besides mileage. In the Provincial Legislatures there are 71 Legislative Councillors and 349 representatives in the Provincial Assemblies. Thus we have a grand total of 715 lawmakers to make laws for less than five millions of people; or one for every 1400 families. Prince Edward Island, with about one half as many people in the whole province as there is in the city of Toronto, has 49 Legislators, or one for every 440 families in the province. Well, we have plenty of Legislators. Whatever else we are suffering for, it is not for them.

Then with regard to public officials, from the Governor-General with his \$50,000 a year, besides as much more for incidentals, down to the messenger boy in the smallest Provincial Parliament—why there is a whole army of them—one half the entire population is fed and clothed at the expense of the other half, and yet people wonder we don't get along. We have just about one half too many public officials. It looks to me like putting a 900 horse power engine in a birch bark canoe. It will shake the frail thing to pieces.
(Continued on fifth page.)