

Leaves of Healing The Life

The Life, Ministry, and Message of John Alexander Dowie

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JOHN ALEXANDER DOWIE

A LIFE STORY OF TRIALS, TRAGEDIES, AND TRIUMPHS

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the many ministers who are preaching the great gospel of deliverance in various parts of the world. May the dramatic life story of John Alexander Dowie be at once an inspiration and an object lesson to every man of God who ministers healing to the sick and afflicted, a ministry which to no little extent was brought back to the church through the efforts of the man of whom this book is written. This book is also dedicated to the author's father and mother whose faith in God found much of its source and inspiration during the years they spent in Zion.

The author wishes to express his appreciation and acknowledgement of the help received from Overseer Anton Darms, who so kindly checked the manuscript for accuracy, and who made available to him a number of books and rare documents of the Zion story. He also wishes to thank Rev. Theodore Mason who made it possible for him to secure an almost complete library of THE LEAVES OF HEALING.

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INTRODUCTION

The story of John Alexander Dowie is a fascinating one, and suspense and interest builds up as one proceeds with the narrative. However the purpose for which this book was written was of far more importance than merely to entertain. The life of Dr. Dowie is, in the writer's opinion, as well as that of many others, the greatest object lesson in the history of the church. First, it shows that when any man is chosen of God to be used in an unusual manner, God permits him to go through a training period, which sometimes includes trials and tribulations of the most severe nature. Second, it will be seen that the great successes of Dr. Dowie began only after he fully embraced the message of Divine healing. It was the great miracles of healing that were responsible for giving his ministry its power and authority. Third, it was at that moment when he began to engage in secular activities, and departed from the simplicity of his earlier days, that his decline began. All these things are lessons of solemn interest to us today.

We are under no illusion that some will not be disappointed with certain things which we have included in this biography. While our dealing with the subject has been highly sympathetic, we have felt that we would not be fair to our objective, if we did not tell the whole story as it happened. Some believe that Dr. Dowie could have done no wrong, others believe that he was a mountebank and a deceiver. Neither view is correct. God raised up John Alexander Dowie, for a specific work, which was to reintroduce Divine healing to the Church. In a considerable measure this purpose was fulfilled, although his errors of judgment at the closing period of his life are to be regretted. We believe that the church has received an enormous impetus of faith because this man has lived.

GORDON LINDSAY

CHAPTER I

THE DRAMATIC APPEARANCE OF DOWIE UPON THE WORLD SCENE

THE Christian generation of today knows little of a story, which is as unique and fascinating as any that has appeared in the annals of the church since the days of the apostles. Though forgotten today, in the rapid moving of events, the name of John Alexander Dowie was known to millions throughout the world at the turn of the century. The story of Dowie is that of a man with an amazing mission—a mission that in its scope took in nothing less than the whole world. It is an account of a reformer who, fighting against the greatest of odds, single-handedly challenged the apostasy of his time, and succeeded in bringing to the attention of the church visible, if not to its acceptance, the message of the Gospel of healing—a message of deliverance for the whole man, body, soul and spirit.

Against overwhelming opposition, a hostile press, bitterly opposed clergymen, antagonistic city officials, unscrupulous lawyers, who, hired by the combined opposition, used every loophole of the law and legal technicality to stop him, he fought for and maintained the right to pray for the sick. Despite the fiercest persecution, numerous illegal arrests—as

many as one hundred in a year—he outwitted and foiled his enemies, and succeeded in bringing to the attention of the world, the great truth that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever, and established the right for the minister of the Christian Church to obey Christ’s command in the Great Commission to lay hands on the sick for healing.

The rise of John Alexander Dowie to international prominence came with an abruptness that reminds one of Elijah, who many centuries ago suddenly appeared before the King of Israel to challenge by a test of fire, the apostasy of the Baal prophets, or of John the Baptist, who “as a voice crying in the wilderness” made his presence known in a dramatic call of repentance to a nation unprepared to meet the Lord Who was already in her midst.

When Doctor Dowie first set foot on American soil, he was forty-one years of age, and as far as this country was concerned, was virtually an unknown minister of the Gospel. However, news of the arrival of a man who preached Divine healing, and who got results, soon spread abroad, and he began receiving calls from up and down the Pacific Coast. He at once launched into a series of healing missions, which eventually took him to Chicago, where within a few brief years, a series of dramatic events were to plummet his ministry before the attention of the entire world.

In 1893, just at the starting of the World’s Fair in Chicago, John Alexander Dowie decided to make his headquarters permanently in that city. He built a small unpretentious wooden tabernacle, just outside the doors of the Fair Grounds. This unimposing structure, contemptuously referred to by his enemies as a “miserable little wooden hut,” became the scene of his first important efforts in his warfare against the vice and iniquity of the great metropolitan city—at that time a city of about two million inhabitants. The services held in this tabernacle did not have an auspicious beginning. Many passed by “the little wooden hut” as they thronged the grounds of the World’s Fair, but they gave it only passing notice. Their interest was in the excitement of that colossal Vanity Fair, which included such hair-raising and blood-curdling features as “The Siege of Vicksburg,” or the “Blood and Thunder” of Buffalo Bill and his Whooping Indians. A few dropped into the tabernacle, and they returned bringing others with them. Nevertheless, the work was small and discouraging.

A bitter winter followed that brought gales and storms of unusual violence, sweeping in from the waters of Lake Michigan. Dowie’s strength and courage was severely tried during those dark days. But with coming of spring of 1894, a break came. Notable miracles of healing were now taking place and these began to draw attention. Before long, large crowds were attending and indeed, contesting for standing room in the tabernacle.

With success, came an attendant persecution that was perhaps to set a world’s record, and which included no less than one hundred warrants for the arrest of Dr. Dowie during the year 1895. In one of the most bitter of persecutions in the history of America, a relentless opposition, determined to drive Dowie and Divine healing from the city. But these enemies reckoned not of the mettle of which their despised opponent was made, for Dowie possessed a resourcefulness unusual for a non-professional man, unversed in law, and a stubborn courage that accepted no defeat. He pled his case in courts, which were completely dominated by his enemies. The results in these lower courts was a foregone conclusion. When he lost, much to the exasperation of his adversaries, he carried his cause to the higher courts, where the inequities of the lower courts were quickly overruled. His enemies, frustrated and enraged, impotently fought on, until through sheer exhaustion and loss of popular support, they were forced to give up the fight, retire in confusion and acknowledge their complete defeat. Significantly, many who engaged in this persecution against Dowie, either died shortly after, or for some reason or other were compelled to retire from the scene of public life. One such example was the editor of the Chicago Dispatch, a Mr. Dunlop, who had taken the lead in the persecution by the press, and was to find himself, less than two years later, behind penitentiary bars, his own wicked life and crimes exposed before the world.

Actually, the persecution contributed to the bringing to pass the very thing that his adversaries least desired, and least anticipated would happen. Instead of Dowie being ignominiously driven from the city as they had confidently expected, their persecution had given Dowie such publicity that he was able to move into, and fill the largest auditorium in the city of Chicago. There, from Sunday to Sunday, thousands of people gathered to listen to the man whose dynamic ministry was affecting the lives of countless thousands, in a fashion that Chicago had never before

witnessed. In that great auditorium, multitudes acknowledged Christ as their Saviour and, under the searching preaching of this man of God, many relinquished evil habits and made restitution for their wrongs.

And now, the unusual talents of John Alexander Dowie had opportunity for their fullest expression. His voice cried out against sin in high places and low. The evils of tobacco, liquor and drugs were scathingly denounced, much to the dismay of the great vested interests which engaged in their sale and distribution. He exposed the shams and hypocrisies of an apostate and decadent church. Iniquity in the government or in the pulpit alike, brought forth his stern and uncompromising censure. Several times, attempts were made upon the life of Dr. Dowie, but all attempts failed. He gave the forces of iniquity no respite, and continued to blast at social evils wherever he found them, sparing none.

Then in 1896, Dr. Dowie organized the Christian Catholic Church, with a charter membership of five hundred. This number rapidly grew into thousands. For some time, Dowie had contemplated the building of a great city, to be inhabited only by Christians, where the use of tobacco, liquor and other kindred vices would be perpetually barred. With this in mind, he negotiated secretly for the purchase of 6,600 acres of land on the shores of Lake Michigan at a site 40 miles north of Chicago. Once the land had been secured, sub-divided and opened for lease, thousands of people rushed to secure leases which by contract were extended for a period of 1,100 years. Within two years, nearly ten thousand people had been drawn to this new city which he had named "Zion". Factories and industries were invited to find sites in the community, and one industry, for the making of fine lace, was imported from Great Britain—machinery, managing personnel and all.

Meanwhile interest in the Christian Catholic Church continued; branches began to spring up in cities all over the nation. Missionaries and workers were sent to establish churches and missions in various parts of the world. During these years, Dowie planned one enterprise after another, laboring with a feverish intensity, as a man working against time. He organized what he called the Seventies, which, in a methodical way, went out two by two, carrying the Gospel to every home. Later he disbanded the Seventies and organized in their place, the Restoration Host. He engaged in a "three month's holy war" against Satan's forces in Chicago.

Dowie was a prolific writer, editing during his ministry, sixteen volumes of a weekly publication, called LEAVES OF HEALING, of quarto size, each volume having from 800 to 1000 pages. He wrote poetry. He made a trip around the world. In one of his boldest ventures, he chartered a series of trains which carried thousands of his followers to New York City. During the day his followers systematically went from house to house carrying tracts and information about his work, while in the great night services, he spoke to vast multitudes in Madison Square Garden. It was a Herculean effort; nothing like it since the Crusades had ever been attempted in the church.

Dowie was now received by congressmen, by governors, and on one occasion, by President Theodore Roosevelt, who left a cabinet meeting to meet him. Dowie continued to dream. He was restless and looked for "more worlds to conquer". He proposed to strike the devil such a blow, that if it were possible, would usher in the Millennium. In accordance with this proposal, he planned on building "Zions" all over the earth, with the largest one at Jerusalem. It was at this point that his dreams became visionary, and a dark and ominous cloud settled upon his affairs.

But we must pause for we are getting ahead of our story.

We should not fail to mention that the man God used in these epochal adventures of faith, endured dark years of discouragements and reverses, when to all appearances everything seemed lost. He knew what it was to taste the bitterness of poverty, to be scorned as a ne'er-do-well by his relatives, to find himself in a position unable to adequately support his family. Once he ran for public office, and was soundly defeated.

During those days, however, he did have a most remarkable experience which was to influence mightily his future. While pastoring at Newtown, suburb of Sydney, a devastating plague swept through the area, threatening to wipe out the whole population. It was during the hours of tragedy that God revealed to him the glorious ministry of healing, and he was able to pray the prayer of faith with such results that the plague, as far as his people were concerned, was stayed—not another member of his flock died from the epidemic.

Despite this vivid experience of God's manifestation of healing power, Dowie was not then prepared to enter fully into such a ministry. Man is a natural imitator of what he sees others doing. There appears to be uncertainty and insecurity in taking unknown paths. Dowie tried the usual methods that he saw other reformers using. He denounced the evils of his day with an eloquence, of which he was not lacking. He fought vehemently against the liquor evil, helped organize temperance societies, and became champion of those opposed to traffic in alcoholic beverages. At the insistence of friends, he ran for public office, thinking that a seat in the Australian parliament might be God's way in which he might most effectively secure a reformation of social conditions. In the interests of reform, he corresponded with William Gladstone, the famed English statesman.

But at every step his plans seemed destined to frustration. He got into debt, his fair weather friends forsook him, and his own relatives thought that he was beside himself. It was only after years of the bitterest of trials and tribulations, that he gradually became aware of God's great plan for his life. Little by little as his soul reached out, at first in a kind of desperation, then with more certainty, he began to see the light. As he entered into a ministry to the sick and the afflicted, the tide of failure turned. Slowly at first, but finally, success came his way. In a few years his ministry attracted international interest. Then in a meteoric rise to fame, as a champion of the truth of Divine healing, he found himself plummeted into the spotlight of world attention. But before we begin a more detailed narration of the life of this man of God, and trace the story of God's dealings with him, we shall take the liberty to quote from the lines of Overseer Anton Darms, who knew Dr. Dowie personally. These words graphically summarize the unique ministry of this prophet of the Nineteenth Century.

"John Alexander Dowie holds a unique and definite place in the development of apostolic ideals for the Church of the Twentieth Century. His life, mission, and work present a fascinating, romantic object lesson for those interested in progressive Christianity.

"Singlehanded, as Elijah of old, he denounced the decadent order of the day, and protested mightily against apostasy, both of the Protestant and Catholic divisions of the Church, and heralded a New Day of a thousand years when Jehovah would hold sway over a redeemed earth.

"Like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky, John Alexander Dowie started on his world-wide mission of setting forth the Word of God, and putting into practice, the ideals and principles of the coming Messianic Kingdom; and thereby succeeded in making "Zion" a household word throughout the whole world.

"It has been said that in him were treasured up the rarest gifts and talents ever given to man. As an iconoclast, he denounced evil in high and low places, tore off the mask of unfaithful shepherds behind the pulpit, protested against the shams and the fads of a giddy world, and heralded the death-knell of a dying age.

"Sudden and unexpected as was his entry upon the public arena, so sudden and unexpected also was his demise, compelling thousands of devoted followers to whom God's Inspired Word was a sealed book, to acknowledge that his faithful ministry had resulted in making the Bible a new book to them."

CHAPTER II

EARLY LIFE OF JOHN ALEXANDER DOWIE

JOHN Alexander Dowie was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, May 25, 1847. Those who attended his birth could scarcely have dreamed of the impression that this child should some day make upon the world. As many others who have been signally used of God, not excluding the Lord, he was born in poverty. In his early years, he had opportunity to observe the darker side of life, and to witness, first hand, the misery and sorrow which resulted from sin. Very early in life he

developed a deep revulsion to evil, and his hatred of it, was later to find expression in his fierce denouncements against sin, which he saw brought nothing but heartache and sorrow to the human race.

The lad's childhood days were not happy. He was often sick, and more than once his parents despaired of his life. His attendance at school was irregular, partly because of the shabby condition of his clothes, and partly because he was sick so much of the time. His young mind, however, had a keen thirst for knowledge, and he made the best of such opportunities that he had. Some of his friends were kind enough to lend him books which he read eagerly.

Being a precocious lad, he read the Bible through at the age of six years.

John Alexander received a definite call from God at the early age of seven. He accompanied his father as often as he could on preaching journeys. He also attended the street preaching of a humble minister by the name of Henry Wright, and, through listening to him, was led to give his heart to God. This obscure preacher could have had little realization that one in his audience was destined some day to speak words that would turn thousands to Christ, and who should also, in no little measure, be the instrument in the hands of God to restore to the Church the ministry of healing.

Even before his conversion, the young lad was to develop a hatred for the iniquities of the liquor traffic. He suffered the consequences of intemperance of some he loved, and, as a child, learned of the sorrows of others who became victim of the curse. A temperance movement was rising in Scotland at the time and at the age of six, he signed a pledge against the use of intoxicating liquors. Toward tobacco too, he developed an early antipathy. As a lad he took his stand against its use and later was to become the world's greatest champion against the accursed nicotine habit.

Years afterward he was to relate before a large congregation in his Chicago Tabernacle, a boyhood experience, in which he was led of God to make his decision regarding the use of tobacco. He spoke as follows:

"Now Friends, I want to thank God today for the way in which He led me, when very young, and the way in which He led my father, to lay down that tobacco, and to lay down that liquor. I once looked at my father smoking, and thought I would be big if I smoked too. So I took one of his pipes and some of his Cavendish. I went with several boys, and we climbed the Cat-nick, and got to the top of Salisbury Crag. There after nestling under Arthur's Seat, one fine afternoon I said, 'We'll be men.' And I did what he had done: lit his tobacco, and tried to smoke as he did. Some of the boys said, 'Johnny take care.'

'Well,' I said, 'never fear; I know how to smoke.' I thought I did, but the first draw I took filled my eyes, my nose, and everything, and I thought that surely Abaddon or Apollyon from the depths of hell had got me now. But I persevered. I took another draw after a while, and managed to get that down into my stomach. I tried to breathe it out, but it went through my nose, and a good deal of it went down into my stomach. By the time I got my third draw, I began to feel—Oh, my!

"I looked at Edinburgh Castle across the valley, and whatever had happened to it? The Castle was spinning around, and St. Giles Cathedral was running a race with Holyrood Palace, and Arthur's Seat was drunk. I looked at the Pentland Hills, and they were chasing after the other hills around there; I tried to look at Craigmiller Castle, and it had shifted its place to another side of the lake, and was running after Duddiston Church, and Duddiston Church was running after Craigmiller Castle. I looked again at Holyrood, and it was bumping up against Edinburgh Castle, and I looked down in the valley and it came up and hit me on the nose. I lay back, and oh, I was so sick. I vomited everything I had eaten. O my stomach! I should have been thankful to anybody, if they had put me out of misery.

"When I went home late in the evening, I tried to walk in a straight path with my feet, but I could not. There was no pavement wide enough for me, for I was drunk. I think I had not taken more than three draws. My mother did not know what had happened, so she said, 'Poor John Alexander is sick,' and she comforted me; and if she had known the truth, she ought to have 'scalped' me. But really the one to be 'scalped' was my father. I was a wee, wee chap. I was no more than six years old, because after that experience with Abaddon, I signed the pledge in 1853, against tobacco, opium and alcohol, which by the grace of God, I have kept.

“It was just before I signed the pledge that I did this. I came to the conclusion that if it were necessary for me to pass through all that dirt, muck, and misery to become a stinkpot, worse than a pig, I would not do it.”

When John Alexander was thirteen years of age, his parents decided to emigrate to Australia, a country to which his uncle had already gone. The journey required no less than six months, as the vessel on which they engaged passage, was an old sailing ship. Despite the meagerness of his education, he had learned enough to be able to tutor a number of the children on board the ship and thus pay his own way over. Arriving in Adelaide, the youth began to make his own living, working for his uncle, Alexander Dowie, who was then laying the foundation of a prosperous shoe business, and whose daughter he later married. For his services, he received his food and eighteen shillings a week.

After a few months, young Dowie left the employment of his uncle and took another job. He advanced from time to time in various positions until, though still in his minority he commanded a substantial salary, and was accounted a more-than-ordinarily promising young business man. At length he became confidential clerk for the resident partner of a firm that was doing a business of two million dollars a year.

But all through these years, God was speaking to this young man. Ever tugging at his heart was a call to the ministry. The writings of Dr. Dowie do not particularly elaborate on God’s dealings with him during this time, but it is known that even from early years, he felt a distinct call to God’s service. As he was drawing near to his twenty-first year, he made a most important decision. With the money that he himself had earned, he took up a study under a private tutor, and began to prepare himself for the ministry. After fifteen months of tutelage, he left Australia and entered Edinburg University as an Arts student, where he remained for three years, taking voluntary courses in the Free Church School. We have only a sketchy account of his experiences while at the university. It is known that the young man found himself in little sympathy with the dogmatic theology of the day. He proved a brilliant scholar; yet, because of his variance with the professors and the accepted dogmas, he was not regarded as a model student at the university. But he was eager to learn and his thirst for knowledge was such that he read constantly and having a retentive memory, he gained a background of knowledge that in the years to come made it possible for him to converse intelligently on practically any subject.

Throughout his youthful years, God was dealing with him, and preparing him for an unique work. Even before he entered the ministry, he was to learn that God heals, though at that time, Divine healing was a subject of which few had even heard. At that time, he was suffering from chronic dyspepsia. He was brought to trust God for healing, and in answer to prayer, was completely delivered of this affliction. Yet, it was many years before he was to gain a real conception of the truth of Divine healing as it is set forth in the Scriptures.

While young Dowie was in Edinburg, he became a sort of “honorary chaplain” in the Edinburg infirmary, and there had the opportunity of attending the clinics of the famous surgeon, John Simpson. He listened to his lectures, heard the diagnosis of the doctors, while the patients lay under chloroform. He saw that surgery, unable to cure, must resort to removing the diseased organ. Dowie watched many of the operations, and witnessed the deadly results. He heard from the lips of the professors the confession that they were only guessing in the dark, and their experiments led him to have a strong antipathy to surgery and medicine.

While in the midst of study and work, he was called home by a cablegram from his father, the reason being unknown to him at the time. He made the long journey back to Australia and upon arriving there, found upon the examination of the books of the partnership firm of which his father was the senior member, that a receivership was inevitable. Young Dowie wound up the affairs as best he could, and although handicapped by the debts incurred by his hasty return to Australia, set himself to his chosen life work, the ministry.

NOW that young John Alexander Dowie was ready to begin preaching the Gospel, the question that confronted him, and indeed the question which has confronted many a young minister was, where should he begin? For a time he thought of returning to Scotland. But before fully making up his mind, he visited a community in South Australia, by the name of Alma. While there he received a call to the local Congregational pastorate. At first he declined, but after further consideration, he felt that Divine Providence was directing. On April 1, 1872, he accepted the call. His work there was divided between several congregations. The central church was located two miles from Alma, which was about sixty miles north of Adelaide. His ministry included appointments at preaching stations which were located several miles distant from each other.

Upon taking over the pulpit, the young minister did not lose any time in beginning his denouncement of the popular evils of the day, especially of the use of intoxicating liquors. Dissipation was not uncommon amongst the ministry, not to speak of those in the pew, and the community in which he now found himself laboring as his first charge, certainly was no exception to the rule. As might be expected his bold preaching against sin did not make him popular with certain members of his parish. Open resentment soon began to manifest itself, because of the searching character of his preaching. Nor was the youthful pastor slow to detect this. However many of the members supported him, and not a few worldly people of the community were attracted by his message. Nevertheless the work moved slowly, and despite his most energetic efforts, he was unable seemingly, to rouse the congregation from its lethargic condition. The results, as they appeared in proportion to the efforts, seemed to him disproportionate. He believed that it would be a waste of time to tarry longer at Alma. In December he sent the following letter of resignation to the church:

Alma, December 5, 1872

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

After much prayer and consideration for the Divine guidance, I have determined to relinquish my office as your pastor; and now, therefore, resign it into your hands. I propose this to take effect on the Sabbath, December 29th.

It is with much regret that this decision has been arrived at. My hopes in accepting your call have not been realized; but I can only view this result as God's appointment.

I shall ever feel the deepest interest in your spiritual condition, and that of the people amongst whom I have here laboured for the Redeemer.

In all your future movements, I earnestly implore the direction of the Lord by His gracious Spirit.

When this time of probation has emerged into the eternity of bliss purchased by Christ's work for our souls, I trust there to meet you where pain is unknown. Until then, "May the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do His will."

I am faithfully yours in Christ,

John Alexander Dowie

The church accepted "with profound sorrow" his resignation.

From Alma, John Alexander Dowie received and accepted a call to a pastorate at Manly Beach, near Sydney. The congregation there gave him a warm welcome, and people filled the church auditorium to overflowing. Prospects seemed bright, though he was deeply stirred by the general impenitence of the population, and in a letter, he remarked of the possibilities of judgment being visited upon the people because of their sins. An excerpt from this letter written December 3, 1873, is as follows:

"The grasshoppers are becoming a yearly source of danger. There seems, in prospect of a dry season, to be serious grounds for apprehension, owing to their increasing numbers. I am sorry that from other causes the crops in many

places will fall short. But I am quite sure that what is given will be far in excess of the deserving of the reapers for God never deals out to us the full deserts of our sins, nor rewards us according to our transgressions, either individually or nationally. We are, however, so used to His overflowing bounty that we demur and bitterly complain, as if wronged, when He checks its super abundance. How foolish and wicked that it! Yet it is a folly of which thousands are daily guilty, and that folly is also the basest ingratitude.”

Throughout his life there was a restlessness in the spirit of John Alexander Dowie. He seemed, from the beginning, to have a feeling that he was a man with a mission, and that he must be fulfilling it. However, it was many years before he was to understand the full nature of that mission. But God was teaching him, and one of the first things the Lord showed him was the hopelessly lost condition of the human soul without Christ. It was while he laboured near Sydney that he became impressed by the wickedness of society, and its utter need for regeneration through the power of the Spirit of God. In October, 1874, he wrote:

“The awful sights and sounds which I saw and heard in the neighborhood of the Australian Hall, and elsewhere, have deeply impressed me with the conviction that there is a terrible amount of evil and misery in this city. The half could not be told of what is known, and it is my firm belief that not one tithe of wickedness is apparent to the onlooker. In all classes there is a terrible flood of moral evil, and while men are discussing mere externals in religious matters, vast numbers of souls are hardening in vice and are wholly slaves to bodily and corrupt passions. Nine tenths of infidelity in all classes has, in my opinion, its roots in immorality; for instinctively the human soul cries out to the living God until it is silenced by sins consciously opposed to all ideas of purity, and only then does the fearful and guilty heart question God’s existence, deny His laws, reject His Son, and flee from His presence.”

But with this revelation of man’s utter hopelessness without Christ, there was another lesson that God would teach him—that to a great extent, man’s heart is dead to spiritual things, and his ears are closed, so that he who would reach the masses with the Gospel, must first bring to the prisoners, bound in Satan’s fetters and chains, the ministry of healing and deliverance. Only then would men in areas where apostasy and wickedness had a strong hold, rally in great numbers to the call of repentance.

Young Dowie was first to learn of such a ministry, when during the horror of a great plague that swept over Western Australia, he was led to call on God for some means to stay the power of the pestilence which was taking away the young and old alike. In his desperation, as he looked to God, certain Scriptures were brought to his mind that gave him new light and which met his need in that terrible hour. At once he began to pray for the sick, and so remarkable were the answers to prayer, that as far as his congregation was concerned, the plague was stayed. In the following chapter, we shall let Dr. Dowie tell this story in his own graphic and moving language.

CHAPTER IV

THE STAYING OF THE PLAGUE OF DEATH

JOHN Alexander Dowie continued his ministry in Manly till the close of the year 1874. The smaller churches where he had been ministering afforded him considerable time to pursue his studies, and he used this time to a good advantage. But he was beginning to long for larger fields. Opportunity opened for him to take the pastorate at Newton, a suburb of Sydney. It was while he was in this city, the tragic event which we have mentioned took place, which in the Providence of God was to have so vital an influence upon his future. A terrible plague swept through that part of Australia, and in the vicinity of Sydney, people were dying in such numbers that the young minister was appalled. Within a few weeks he had officiated at more than forty funerals, and the sick and dying were everywhere. The tragedy

and sorrow of the people struck his own sensitive spirit with great force. Dr. Dowie tells the story of it, and how God spoke to his heart and showed him His promise of healing:

I sat in my study in the parsonage of the Congregational Church, at Newtown, a suburb of the beautiful city of Sydney, Australia. My heart was very heavy, for I had been visiting the sick and dying beds of more than thirty of my flock, and I had cast the dust to its kindred dust into more than forty graves within a few weeks. Where, oh where was He Who used to heal His suffering children? No prayer for healing seemed to reach His ear, and yet I knew His hand had not been shortened. Still it did not save from death even those for whom there was so much in life to live for God and others. Strong men, fathers, good citizens, and more than all, true Christians sickened with a putrid fever, suffered nameless agonies, passed into delirium, sometimes with convulsions, and then died. And oh, what aching voids were left in many a widowed or orphaned heart. Then there were many homes where, one by one, the little children, the youths and the maidens were stricken, and after hard struggling with the foul disease, they too, lay cold and dead. It seemed sometimes as if I could almost hear the triumphant mockery of fiends ringing in my ear whilst I spoke to the bereaved ones the words of Christian hope and consolation. Disease, the foul offspring of its father, Satan, and its mother Sin, was defiling and destroying the earthly temples of God's children, and there was no deliverer.

And there I sat with sorrow-bowed head for my afflicted people, until the bitter tears came to relieve my burning heart. Then I prayed for some message, and oh, how I longed to hear some words from Him Who wept and sorrowed for the suffering long ago, a Man of Sorrows and of Sympathies. Then the words of the Holy Ghost inspired in Acts 10:38, stood before me all radiant with light, revealing Satan as the Defiler, and Christ as the Healer. My tears were wiped away, my heart was strong, I saw the way of healing, and the door thereto was opened wide, so I said, "God help me now to preach the Word to all the dying around, and tell them how 'tis Satan still defiles, and Jesus still delivers, for 'He is just the same today.'"

A loud ring and several loud raps at the outer door, a rush of feet, and there at my door stood two panting messengers who said, "Oh, come at once, Mary is dying; come and pray." With just a feeling as a shepherd has who hears that his sheep are being torn from the fold by a cruel wolf, I rushed from my house, ran hatless down the street, and entered the room of the dying maiden. There she lay groaning, grinding her clenched teeth in the agony of the conflict with the destroyer, the white froth, mingled with her blood, oozing from her pain-distorted mouth. I looked at her and then my anger burned. "Oh," I thought, "for some sharp sword of heavenly temper keen to slay this cruel foe who is strangling that lovely maiden like an invisible serpent, tightening his deadly coils for a final victory."

In a strange way it came to pass; I found the sword I needed was in my hands, and in my hand I hold it still and never will I lay it down. The doctor, a good Christian man, was quietly walking up and down the room, sharing the mother's pain and grief. Presently he stood at my side and said, "Sir, are not God's ways mysterious?" Instantly the sword was flashed in my hand—the Spirit's Sword, the Word of God. "God's way!" I said, pointing to the scene of conflict, "how dare you, Dr. K—, call that God's way of bringing His children home from earth to Heaven? No, sir, that is the devil's work, and it is time we called on Him Who came to 'destroy the work of the devil,' to slay that deadly foul destroyer, and to save the child. Can you pray, Doctor, can you pray the prayer of faith that saves the sick?" At once, offended at my words, my friend was changed, and saying, "You are too much excited, sir, 'tis best to say 'God's will be done,'" he left the room.

Excited! The word was quite inadequate for I was almost frenzied with Divinely imparted anger and hatred of that foul destroyer, Disease, which was doing Satan's will. "It is not so," I exclaimed, "no will of God sends such cruelty, and I shall never say 'God's will be done' to Satan's works, which God's own Son came to destroy, and this is one of them." Oh, how the Word of God was burning in my heart: "Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." And was not God with me? And was not Jesus there and all His promises true? I felt that it was even so, and turning to the mother I inquired, "Why did you send for me?" To which she answered, "Do pray, oh pray for her that God may raise her up." So we prayed. What did I say? It may be that I cannot recall the words without mistake, but words are in themselves of small importance. The prayer of faith may be a voiceless prayer, a simple heartfelt look of confidence into the face of Christ. At such a moment words are few, but they mean much, for God is looking at the heart. Still, I can remember much of that prayer unto this day, and asking God to aid I will endeavor to recall it. I cried:

“Our Father, help! and Holy Spirit, teach me how to pray. Plead Thou for us, oh, Jesus, Saviour, Healer, Friend, our Advocate with God the Father. Hear and heal, Eternal One! From all disease and death deliver this sweet child of Thine. I rest upon the Word. We claim the promise now. The Word is true, ‘I am the Lord that healeth thee.’ Then heal her now. The Word is true, ‘I am the Lord, I change not.’ Unchanging God, then prove Thyself the Healer now. The Word is true, ‘These signs shall follow them that believe in My Name, they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.’ And I believe, and I lay hands in Jesus’ Name on her, and claim this promise now. Thy word is true, ‘The prayer of faith shall save the sick.’ Trusting in Thee alone, I cry, oh, save her now, for Jesus’ sake, Amen!”

And lo, the maid lay still in sleep, so deep and sweet that the mother asked in a low whisper, “Is she dead?” “No,” I answered, in a whisper lower still, “Mary will live; the fever is gone. She is perfectly well and sleeping as an infant sleeps.” Smoothing the long dark hair from her now peaceful brow, and feeling the steady pulsation of her heart and cool moist hands, I saw that Christ had heard and that once more, as long ago in Peter’s house, “He touched her and the fever left her.” Turning to the nurse I said, “Get me at once, please, a cup of cocoa and several slices of bread and butter.” Beside the sleeping maid we sat quietly and almost silently until the nurse returned, and then I bent over her and snapping my fingers called “Mary!” Instantly she woke, smiled and said, “Oh, sir, when did you come? I have slept so long;” then stretching her arms out to meet her mother’s embrace, she said, “Mother, I feel so well.” “And hungry, too?” I asked, pouring some of the cocoa in a saucer and offering it to her when cooled by my breath. “Yes, hungry too,” she answered with a little laugh, and drank and ate again, and yet again, until all was gone. In a few minutes she fell asleep, breathing easily and softly. Quietly thanking God we left her bed and went to the next room where her brother and sister also lay sick of the same fever. With these two we also prayed, and they were healed. The following day all three were well and in a week or so they brought me a little letter and a gift of gold, two sleeve links with my monogram, which I wore for many years. As I went away from the home where Christ as the Healer had been victorious, I could not but have somewhat in my heart of the triumphant song that rang through Heaven, and yet I was not a little amazed at my own strange doings, and still more at my discovery that HE IS JUST THE SAME TODAY.

And this is the story of how I came to preach the Gospel of Healing through Faith in Jesus.

The plague was stayed as far as John Alexander Dowie’s congregation was concerned. Not another person from his flock died of the epidemic. It was through this grim pestilence of wholesale death, that God revealed to him the nature of the ministry which later was to bring him into world prominence. It would have been well if the young minister could have entered into it fully at once. But the Divine healing ministry was almost unheard of in those days, and there were numerous other lessons the young preacher had yet to learn. He was to suffer many reverses and sorrows, and be tested in the furnace of fiery trial and affliction, until at last there was born within his soul the full realization of his appointed destiny.

And so, from this early manifestation of God’s power to heal, which John Alexander Dowie was to remember and later to give due heed, we must return to a narration of events which transpired in his life during the years immediately following. Shortly after this miraculous intervention of Providence which stayed the terror of the plague, the youthful minister was married. In the following chapter, we shall record some of the circumstances which were associated with that important event in his life.

CHAPTER V

HIS MARRIAGE TO JEANIE

WHILE young Dowie was at Manly, just before he left to take a pastorate at Newton he became exercised in the matter of his choice of a life companion. The story of how he came to choose a wife and to win her, is an interesting interlude

of his early career. In a letter to his parents he speaks informally of his feelings about marriage, and we quote a brief excerpt from it:

“O tell it not in Gath, else the Phillistines will rejoice!’ If only the dear creatures in Manly, who have ‘engaged me’ at least six times, to widows and maidens of all sorts, could look over my shoulder now, it would be such fun. But I am like Aesop’s frogs, who appealed to the boys who stoned them, calling out ‘What is fun to you, is death to us!’

“Seriously though, I am feeling that if I am to settle in New South Wales or elsewhere, I ought to marry, and if I do, I mean to. ‘But to whom,’ you say! ‘How can I tell?’ ‘But do you not know?’ ‘No, I do not know; but the Bible tells me that ‘A good wife is from the Lord’, and since I want a good one at all risks, I will ask the Lord to send her to me.”

Actually however, he had already fallen in love with his cousin, Jeanie. At first he had felt that the relationship was a bar to marriage. But as time went on it seemed to him that he had given all of his first love to this young lady and he did not find that he could recall it. He said nothing about the state of his feelings, however, until some little time later, when he learned that Jeanie was planning on attending a ball. The thought that the girl he loved was attending such a worldly affair cut him to the heart. He wrote her a letter, warning her of the danger, and at the same time, as he afterwards put it, “let the cat out of the bag”, by informing her of his own personal feelings, and that his action proceeded from “a very deep and special care for her welfare.”

The young minister was not long in learning that his well-intended letter was far from being kindly received. Stunned by the abrupt answer, his feelings were too deeply wounded to say anything further. He at once pressed his plans for taking a pastorate at a distance, and six weeks later he went to Manly Beach, took up his duties there, believing that time and distance and new associations would work a cure. But as the weeks and months went by, he secretly had to admit that his thoughts concerning his cousin were not substantially altered.

In his anxiety to forget, he absorbed himself in work, and crowded every waking hour with occupation. This eventually resulted in a severe illness, and necessitated his taking a period of rest. Shortly after his recovery, he supposed he had fallen in love with another young lady, but this did not last long. His own words concerning this brief affair were:

“I cheated myself with a vain illusion of another love at the end of the year, but that soon vanished, a good deal to my pain for awhile, but now I see it was for the best, for it was only a beautiful, transient, desert mirage.”

As the young man laboured on in his work, he suffered an increasing loneliness of heart, and feeling acutely the lack of a home, he came to believe that he would be a better minister if he had a wife, and made it a matter of prayer and frequent thought.

Then one day he received intelligence from his parents that his uncle and Jeanie were coming on a visit. The young man did not know whether to be glad or sorry. Because of the relationship, he realized that his only course was to make their visit as agreeable as possible. He determined, however, that he would in no wise renew his attentions or make any proposal to Jeanie unless he saw some reason for encouragement. He did keep this resolve until the last Monday of the visit. On the evening of that day, the uncle being weary, retired early, and Jeanie, who had attended prayer-meeting, sat chatting with the young minister. Soon before they were aware of it, the young couple found that their conversation had glided into the matter of their feelings toward each other. Jeanie made reference to the letter written two years before, and acknowledged that her cousin had been quite right in his advice. Moreover, she admitted that she cared very much for him, and her feelings were such that she would be willing to be his wife, but for one circumstance, that they were cousins.

Still, the young minister felt that this barrier of relationship was only a seeming one. He considered it had no real grounds in reason, and was in fact only a superstition. It is interesting to note at this day, three quarters of a century later, that science, after many years of observation, has come to the conclusion that a cousin relationship is no physical handicap in marriage unless there appear tendencies to similar abnormalities in both families.

However, Jeanie asked for time to think the matter over. Then there was the problem of securing her father’s consent. The following day, the uncle, becoming suspicious that something was transpiring between the young people, made inquiry, and upon being informed by his daughter of the conversation of the night before, strongly expressed his

disapproval of the proposed marriage. Just before boarding the steamer on the next day, Jeanie called her cousin aside and acquainted him with the attitude her father had taken in the matter, and what he had said.

Notwithstanding his uncle's disapproval, things had now developed to a point where with his reawakened love for Jeanie, the young man could not bear to look forward to life without her. Regarding his affection, Dowie in writing to his parents said, "I believe she loves me, and I do with a strange intensity, not the growth of a day, or with passion like a beardless boy's or a fool's devotion." The visit had so revived his love, that it seemed impossible to him that it could ever find true fulfillment in any person but her. Moreover, he felt that there was no reason that God would not bless such a union. He resolved to enlist the assistance of his parents. This was done in a letter which he wrote telling of events that had occurred during his uncle's visit of which part of it follows:

"When I began this letter to you, it was with full intention that it should be private, and without desire that other eyes should look upon it. But now when I begin to consider how you could aid me in this vitally important matter, it occurs to me that it might best be done by a calm conference with uncle upon this subject, and by showing him this letter, as a candid history and a permanent statement of my feeling regarding Jeanie. You might put before him my views on this matter, and ask him to consider whether her future peace and happiness may not be bound up in my getting her, even as mine appears to be.

"I know that he is a reasonable man who loves his child greatly, and he will be ready, I think, calmly to review the whole matter should it be properly laid before him. Unless I am greatly mistaken, he is well inclined and friendly toward me, and objects to the marriage upon no other ground but that our relationship has opposed this matter. Let me then address myself as briefly as possible to the subject, and state a few facts and considerations bearing upon 'the physical question' to which he attaches considerable importance....

"My conclusion is based upon the following facts—viz. That throughout the whole record of Jewish law and history, this practice was not only permitted, but especially permitted and approved in the most illustrious examples; and that no stricter or severer marriage code ever existed than that of the Jews, which moreover was of Divine authority. To take an instance, Jacob married Rachel and Leah, his full cousins and from these were descended the founders of the Jewish nation. The Mosaic Law, famous for its model purity, contains no prohibition of any sort...."

There is much more to the letter - Dowie in his earlier years, sometimes wrote letters of extreme length, even sitting up all night to finish them. In bringing this unique request to a close, he said, "Now father, I constitute you my ambassador to uncle; mother will do her part in a loving way, I know, should opportunity offer, and I beg you as early as you can, have a long chat with uncle all about it, presenting this letter as your credentials, and as my plea."

Apparently this letter, together with the good graces of his parents and the cooperation of Jeanie, had the effect of securing reluctant permission from the uncle to let the marriage take place. But that there must have been no little hesitation on the latter's part, is revealed in the fact that he was soon to find serious fault with his nephew's judgment and to give him some sharp advice, which was as unappreciated as it was unsolicited. But at any rate, permission if not whole-hearted approval, was granted and the wedding date was set for May ~6, 1876—just one day after the groom's twenty-ninth birthday.

In writing to his parents, he expressed his desire that the marriage be a quiet affair with no great fuss over it. In the letter he approved the idea that marriage was a religious act first, and a civil act next. "It is a great mystery—a type of the highest mysteries of our spiritual affinity with Christ—and it is the only institution, which ordained in man's innocency in Eden, has been perpetuated unbrokenly since. A marriage is a favorable occasion for a miracle of grace and since the House of the Lord is to be our marriage place, surely we may expect many bright and cheering tokens of His presence and transforming spiritual power."

The marriage took place quietly on the day appointed, and with his young bride, Dowie returned to intensive work in his pastorate in Newton. Jeanie was a young woman of excellent character, and although she was to suffer not a few trials and privations during the period in which her husband was getting established in his new ministry, and though misfortunes and unexpected reverses seemed to plague his steps with monotonous regularity, she bravely adjusted herself to each situation, making the best of it. Young Dowie showed a strong sense of responsibility, and never was

his heart more grieved than when his fortunes reached their lowest ebb, and it seemed that he was unable to supply the meager needs of his family. But those dark days were to pass.

We must record, however, that the couple was to go through a painful experience shortly after their marriage, due to the dissatisfaction of Jeanie's father with his son-in-law's way of doing things. It so happened about a year after the marriage that the wife, at her parents' insistence, went home to stay shortly before the birth of the first child. During that period, the young mother-to-be was constantly subjected to her father's pointed criticism of her husband. It is only too common a thing for such circumstances to lead to a rift between husband and wife. The husband was not there to defend himself, and the uncle, not able to understand or sympathize with his son's-in-law viewpoint, in his perhaps sincere although carnal reasoning, portrayed the young man's future plans to Jeanie in a most unfavorable light.

Such a rift did not develop, however, inasmuch as Jeanie, the good wife that she was, soon recognized that she was making a mistake to share in her father's critical attitude. She admitted her mistake and asked her husband's forgiveness. The fact was that the young man had written two or three letters, almost works of genius, that were so compelling in their logic that even the uncle admitted that he must have been mistaken in his appraisal of his new son-in-law. He conceded that any young man that could write such letters, must have merit, and was apparently of different stamp than he had supposed. But this is a story that must be reserved for the next chapter.

We have record of a letter written by young Dowie to his betrothed some three months before the approaching marriage. The letter is too long to quote fully here, but we shall give certain parts of it. Examination reveals a deeply thoughtful and spiritual tone throughout its entirety:

Newtown, Australia

April, 1876

Dearest Jeanie:

I know I wish to do all I can to secure your happiness and make you a good husband. Sometimes I fear lest I should even partly fail through lack of power or qualities which many possess, but then I am reassured by remembering that the will to be brings the power to do, in this as in other things. And I know I have the will to be true and loving to you. We shall ask God every day to chase all self-love, and self-will, away from our hearts and lives. Shall it now be true? Never until our wills are in accord with God's can we be happy truly and permanently; and it is a joyous thing to live the life God's will appoints. My griefs and my trials have all sprung from self-will, which after all is only another name for self-love, or self-worship; and God has found me a dull scholar in learning practically, how completely every life must fail in which the first principle is not an entire renunciation of self. It is a fearful delusion to imagine that the gladness and beauty of living can be found in a self-pleasing, feverish life of pleasure or ease. To do quietly as may be, cheerfully and with a light footstep, the work to which God has called us must be — and so far as I have experienced it is, the happiest of lives. Not knowing, or forgetting this leads many away into worldly by-paths, into meadows which look cool and green, into paths of sin, which bring the soul into dangers or dark Doubt, and into the hands of Giant Despair— as Bunyan would say—into the Highway of Death.

...Reverse the weaver's beautiful, silken, brilliant and almost perfect fabric. It is all a tangled mass of confused, disorderly threads on the side from which he wrought, very different indeed to the beauty upon which you look. So with life—the side from which we work looks tangled indeed, and without plans; but it is not so. Every man's life is a plan of God, in one sense. O that we could rise on the wings of faith and love, and view our lives from the heavenly side, which God looks upon!

If we "wrought out" in our lives with the ever present consciousness that He was "working in" our souls His own good "will and pleasure," we should not fret or murmur because all the threads did not seem straight, and because we could not quite see His design.

Wonderful lives are being woven by patient submission and love to God on earth. How much we have spoiled by sin and folly! Let us quickly do better together; and we shall be blessed in our doing, and one day God will show us all. To

get the spirit and temper, we need much prayer, and retiring from the bustle, need to seek God in stillness. I find it so amid my many failures and frailties, and I say to you, Jeanie dear, get often alone with God.

Here are a few verses which I wrote some time ago. They may tell you better what I mean. But do not think that I am all my words would make you suppose. I am very frail and very faithless, often it seems to me, but the words breathe my desires and hopes and strivings to be what Christ would have me.

How good to leave the world awhile

How good to seek our Saviour's smile

And follow in His way;

Oh, could we but our hearts resign

And fully trust God's own design

We soon should find it day.

Though night encompass us around,

Though foes despoil our holy ground

And cause our hearts to fear,

Our Savior, from the Mount of Prayer

The feeblest cry doth bend to hear

And quickly doth appear

The stormy seas His feet can tread,

They hear the Voice that wakes the dead,

Commanding, 'Peace, be still,'

And guided by our Pilot's hand

Our storm-tossed souls shall reach the land,

Preserved from every ill.

CHAPTER VI

IN-LAW TROUBLE

During the fall of 1877, Dr. Dowie's first child, a son, Alexander John Gladstone, was born. He was named after The Honorable W. E. Gladstone, Prime Minister of the British parliament, in whom Dowie had confidence as a Christian patriot. As already mentioned, Jeanie's folk thought it would be best for her to return and stay with them during the

period preceding her confinement. The husband was reluctant to accede to this and had a premonition that trouble might ensue, and in this he was not mistaken.

It so happened that at this time, the young minister had made a mistake in trusting certain persons in financial matters. This left him short of funds, and ill-advisably, he wrote to his uncle, explaining his difficulties. He was soon to learn of his mistake, for the uncle who had never been enthusiastic about the marriage, took it upon himself to reprimand severely the young minister, and wrote him a letter giving him some rather frank and unasked for advice. Worse than that, he almost succeeded in convincing his daughter that she had made a serious mistake in marrying her cousin, whom he was now inclined to believe to be an erratic young preacher, unable to get his roots down anywhere, and whose financial circumstances were going bad to worse. In his opinion, his son-in-law offered his daughter an unpromising and precarious existence. Although, it was a letter that could hardly be taken otherwise than as an insult to the young man's ability care for a wife and family. As might be anticipated, Dowie resented this communication exceedingly, and wrote a long letter to his wife, remonstrating in vigorous terms against his uncle's insinuations.

In reading, carefully, the letters which we may only record in part, it appears that the main objection Dowie's father-in-law had to hint, was that he did not have the proper appreciation of money, and was planning his future moves without due consideration to the financial remuneration. He considered it very ill-advised that his son-in-law should resign his present pastorate where his income was fairly substantial, and attempt to found a new church where the prospect of finances was to his way of thinking altogether uncertain. In the first of the letters, the young man wrote to his wife, thus:

“And Jeanie, my love, this is my answer to the words of your father who, instead of giving me sympathy, sneers at my faith. I do not need to be told that my life has been full of sins and errors of judgment, and certainly when I am suffering I do not need any of my nearest to join in the cry, ‘He saved others, himself he cannot save’, which comes to me now as to many since Christ heard it in the hour of darkness — though then it came from his enemies. I have confessed my sins to a forgiving and gracious God; I have even confessed to man, and I have done, am doing and shall do, what in me lies, aided by God, to see that no one suffers permanent loss through my errors, and through my over-confidence in those who should have been trustworthy.

“If you find yourself and our pet looked upon thus in the slightest degree, you are to come back to me at once, for I will not have that; no, not for a moment. I can keep you here as you know, and I would a thousand times rather submit to privation than have you there or anywhere looked upon as one of my troubles thrown upon other people, for you two are my greatest earthly comforts, whom it is hard to part with even for a time, and whom I want back the first day they cease to be happy at Adelaide.

“Please do not let your father imagine that I am asking him to help me, for I have not asked for a penny, and I am glad that I have not, and I do not intend to. I would rather go back into a business if it were necessary, than to ask any of them. So you will please let your father know in your own words, that I am sorry that I wrote to him about my troubles, that I did not, and do not, ask him to help me at all in any way, and that I want you to come back at once if there is any more said about me.... Indeed I am thoroughly sorry you went back now, and you will remember I had half a foreboding that something like this would occur.

“I had rather, though I am myself one of the very weakest of His children, build my house (upon the Rock of Ages) though it made but a very poor appearance to those—yea, I had rather do this, ten thousand times rather than own all the palaces and treasures of this world built on the shifting sands of Time, for they shall fall, and with all that cling to them, be swept away into the sea of Divine Wrath whilst the soul on Christ's foundation shall behold with joy the morning of a new heaven and a new earth, ‘wherein dwelleth righteousness alone.’”

“Well, now dear, I must say, anyhow, resolved I am to leave Newtown and though I can see how I could do a good work for Christ in Sydney, yet I do not feel as if I had yet received the command —‘Go forward into that city!’—”

Before this letter could get to his wife, the situation at her father's home had developed into a yet more antagonistic attitude toward the conduct of the young minister. At her father's direction, Jeanie wrote her husband a letter calling into question the wisdom of his plans. Apparently her parents were bent on “saving” Dowie from a course which they

thought was utter folly. The young minister's sharp reaction to the letter may be seen in his reply which, because of its great length, we can quote only the most pertinent portions. The reader may see that these letters are far from ordinary, and they give no little insight into the character and nature of this young man, who, getting ready to sever denominational ties, was about to launch out in an evangelistic effort of his own, in the city of Sydney. The first letter follows:

Dear Wife:

Your letter of the 22nd received today.

It certainly needed the assurance which you added in a tardy and brief postscript – “Do not think me hard in this: for I do love you so”—because there was no other trace of love anywhere in the letter.

I do “think it hard” and more, I think it full of unkindness and injustice to me, and written in quite an impudent manner. There is an utter absence of all true sympathy ... and a tone which I never could or would use toward you. It does not become you at all. I won't reply to it—I will ignore it altogether, else my vexation might cause me to say more than would be pleasant to read.

The fact is that you are thoroughly “demoralized”, that is, cowed with fear and doubt, through your residence among those whose only standard of success seems to be pounds, shillings and dimes. It is a thoroughly faithless letter, showing as little faith in God as it does in me, and but for the certainty that you wrote it, I would maintain you could not have written it. I dare say that you thought you were doing a smart thing in writing it, and imparting some very necessary chastisement to a foolish and weak-minded fellow who was too fond of you to resent it; but you missed your aim completely and have only fallen in my esteem as a consequence of your ill-timed and ungenerous smartness.

You are not the same wife now as when you left me alone in Sydney: for you left me as you had lived with me—bright and hopeful, believing in God and trusting in me. Not a single fact has been altered, except I am a little poorer than we thought, and that now my heart is burdened with a fresh sorrow in you.

How very kind you were in your condescension to my supposed craven spirit when you “thoroughly endorsed” your father's epithets, which could scarce have been more utterly abusive, had I been a low thief, in some parts of his letter, and which are insufferably impertinent throughout! Just look at a few of the things that you have “thoroughly endorsed.” I am said to have caused you “to go through an ordeal mortifying in extreme to all concerned but more especially in her who is your wife and who has such a fine, sensitive nature.” Don't you think that I was surprised to find you endorsing the sentiment that selling off our furniture was such an ordeal, when you never once expressed pain at our decision, but said you felt we were doing right, up to the last hour that I saw you?

Then you “thoroughly endorse” that “I have made a bad beginning”.... and “you ought to make a clean breast of the matter and show me a statement of your assets and your liabilities”.... “and for the future trust your wife with the spending of the money.” Don't you think I ought to feel honoured, cheered and comforted by all these kind things, so very flattering, are they not? Why, if I were the meanest cur that ever yelped, I would not submit to such all round kicking without one last dying bark of protest... To this man I owe nothing but a forbearing love, which he is trying to the utmost. I had rather break stones tomorrow on the highway than even turn a thought to him as my helper.

And I feel I would indeed be a distruster of God to think that I should ever be left to his tender mercies. Remember that I thought it only a duty to tell him my affairs, as your father, and that I never asked him for help at any time, and never gave him any warrant for thus abusing me. And what right or reason have you to “endorse” these sentiments? It is likely that this will strengthen our bonds of love or fit us to train up our child for God?

... You say I have left you destitute: for you endorse the charge your father makes in these words, “You have no other place to go to, and you have nothing whatever to provide for your wife and child, which is your first duty as a Christian man, and there are no miracles performed to provide for ministers' wives and children.”

No, how can you grieve my heart with such a cruel, unwifely, and untrue charge as this is? How do you think I sleep with such charges for my pillows? Why I can't sleep at all.

Don't be afraid: you need not go with me unless you choose. I have never forced and never will force your inclinations. I will reason with you, and show you the way as far as I can, and if you won't do the thing heartily because it is right, I am sure you will never be able to love, to live with, to aid, and to comfort me; nor shall I be of any good to you. I will provide for you as largely as I can, if you elect to stay where you are.... I say this not loving you less, but so far as I can, as much as ever, though I have set my heart supremely upon God, as I have always told you, and I will not allow even you to keep me back from the right, or cause me to pluck "the forbidden fruit", to me, of worldly conformity to which your father's words would lead me, if I followed your course.

If you do not fulfill my request at once, do not be surprised if my letters are brief and few: for I shall not feel justified in writing much, nor shall I expect you to care to hear much from me. But if you can come back to me right willingly and with true love, confidence and sympathy, then you are coming back to one whose heart is most willing to receive you, and who has never distrusted or reproached you until now, but from whose heart every trace of distrust and reproach will flee the moment he knows you are once more wholly true to him in heart. O Jeanie, you don't know how deeply you have wounded my heart. If you will not, then a dark cloud which only death can remove will hang over my life until it ends. The saddest day for me you ever lived was that in which you re-entered your father's house; for it has separated in sympathy two hearts that had always been true to each other until the poison of distrust, fear and reproach was instilled. I pray God may bless you and my boy and make you happier than I can be.

Your husband,

John Alexander Dowie

(This letter dated Nov. 19, 1877, tells of the restoration of his wife to his heart.)

My Beloved Wife:

Your two long and loving and satisfactory letters of the 10th and 12th are now before me, and I thank God that I can once more feel that there is no fear in your love for me, and no doubt in your heart as to your being wholly and truly my own trustful and beloved wife. Surely then I may praise God for this token of good, and be grateful to Him that He so directed my thoughts and guided my pen that I was able to break the spell of the Enchanter, Fear, who had well-nigh alienated us in heart, under the most specious of pretenses. I fear that this victory may lead me if I do not take care, in the toils of an Enchantress named Vanity; for I cannot help remembering that twice I have won you to my heart by my pen, which has stretched across the lands and seas, and gained each time "a famous victory."

But I have no desire to fight such battles again - especially the last - or gain any more such costly victories. Madame Vanity cannot make me forget the hard knocks, the deep wounds, and many heart agonies I suffered in the fight, and the danger that I felt there was, lest I should injure you, my beloved, whilst fighting to get you out of the hand of your enemy—a man had need to be a good marksman who would shoot a lion as it was bounding off into the forest in triumph with his "one little ewe lamb". It is the sort of experiment which one does not wish to repeat; and I trust that my darling "ewe lamb" which I had given of "my own meat" which has drunk of "my own cup" and which lies "in my bosom"—my own dear wife—will not be enticed away again either by cunning foxes or roaring lions.

Nothing could be more complete than your restoration to my heart after receiving your letters; and my only regrets were, first, that there ever was any cloud between us—though even that we shall yet see was overruled for good—and second, that there was a letter of mine upon the way, which was written and sent before I received either of yours, that might pain you needlessly. However, I dispatched a telegram ahead of it, which has, I trust, taken away the sting. I only wish it could be brought back to me unknown to you; for it is the letter I least like of all that I have written, in some parts at least, which I need not now particularize. Just look upon it as another shot fired by me into the body of the aforesaid lion, which my first shot killed outright, though I knew it not; and forgive me, if I have borne too hardly upon you, as fully and freely as I forgive you.

Your letters have driven my weariness from my heart, as the sun drives away the mists of the night—and proved a true comforter from God. To see you so truly with me again, and to know that even your father had been so favorably affected by what was, I must confess, rather stern handling in some parts, was so unexpected and complete a change

of the whole situation of affairs, that it seemed too good to be true, and my heart found relief in what you women call “a good cry”, and a very grateful tribute of prayer and praise to God.

Candidly you must admit, and you do, that I put upon his letter its apparently correct interpretation; and desirous as I am not to bear too hardly upon him—for I do love him, and them all very dearly—but you must permit me to say that he has not only failed in a correct conception of my whole position, and worse still, he failed to realize his changed position toward you, now that you are my wife; for though he can never change in his relation to you as your father, yet his power to direct you has passed away by his own consent and God’s ordination into other hands That is the cardinal mistake which he made; and now that he sees something of these mistakes — from what you have written I infer that—surely I can overlook them: for after all they sprang from his great love for you, his child, and therefore he evidently thinks with me, and there we fully agree, that we cannot love you too much.

I am very sorry if I have seemed to insult him in any way by my expressions, some of which I would be prepared to greatly modify. Indeed it seems very generous of him to praise the “ability and talent” of a letter which dealt so severely with his letter to me; and I respect him all the more for the remark, which is, I fear, more flattering than it deserved – for my letter was simply an honest examination of his, to a large extent, and made no claim to anything of a “masterly” sort since literary achievement was not in all my thoughts. When we come together again, if the Lord spares us, we must pray more together and read God’s Word more together and talk over it at regular times. But my love, when I think how imperfectly I have discharged my duties to you in many ways, and when I know how weak and foolish and sinful I often am and have been, I can only wonder at God’s mercy in giving me so comforting a love as yours is to me. My heart longs for the time when we shall prove to each other how true it is that our love never was broken, and now it is stronger than ever.

Let your heart be perfectly at rest concerning our future, for it is in the best of hands, come what may, I can see that future far more clearly than I can solve the mysteries of the immediate present. I seem like a man that has his goal in sight on some mountainside, but there lies between a misty valley, where fogs cover all from his eyes, as he passes through them, across the little river from whence they rise. Going on, going on, watching, praying and working is all that I can do, certain that whatever happens I shall get out on the right side; but I won’t turn back because I can’t see all I would like of the road before me...

Your loving husband,

John Alexander Dowie

CHAPTER VII

DOWIE LEAVES THE ORGANIZED CHURCH

THE time had arrived when John Alexander Dowie was to make a most important decision—a decision which was not only to give a new direction to his own life, but was, in the years to come, to profoundly effect the destinies of tens of thousands of people. As the reader may have anticipated. Dowie’s habit of thinking for himself did not lend itself to a sympathy for the cold, formal, unimaginative ministry of his day. His own soul flamed with the passion of a crusader who hoped to reach the masses for Christ, and he was perplexed and impatient with apathetic churches that seemed so unconcerned, when all around were the dying thousands.

It was true that his efforts in pastorates where he had labored had been attended with no little success, but he was quite aware that his aggressiveness, instead of being appreciated, was being less than enthusiastically received by the leaders of the denomination. He also knew that the progressive methods that he was employing to reach the masses

were viewed with suspicion if not hostility. In a letter to his wife, he declared that in his estimation, the system of the Congregational Church killed initiative and individual energy, made men denominational tools, or worse, caused them to become worldly-minded, and “left them high and dry and useless for the most part—good ships, but badly steered and terribly overladen with worldliness and apathy.”

As the year 1877 drew to a close, John Alexander Dowie, in resigning from his pastorate at Newton, made known his intention to leave the Congregational Church. As already has been intimated, for a long time he had felt an increasing burden for the ignorant, uncared for, and perishing masses of the big cities. He sketched the possibilities of gathering together many from all these classes to hear the Gospel, and contemplated the formation of a church which might work night and day for the reclamation of the perishing. With this conviction confirmed in his soul, he severed forever his relation with the Congregational Church, and at the beginning of 1878, he began to make definite plans for his new work. Confident that God had led him in making this decision, he secured the auditorium of the Royal Theater in Sydney.

Dowie’s main immediate difficulty in getting a start in this new venture was the lack of capital. He had never been able to get ahead financially, and his relatives who were not enthusiastic about the proposed venture could not be expected to lend him help. The only alternative to giving up his plans altogether, seemed to be that he dispose of his furniture and move into less expensive quarters. This he finally decided to do. His wife, who was more willing than many a helpmate would have been under similar circumstances, resigned herself to whatever decision her husband should make. Years later in his Chicago pulpit, Dr. Dowie related a few sidelights on the poignancy of the decision that was made at the time:

“I remember one of the hardest things I ever had to do was back in my home in Australia. I had there a fine collection of pictures. I took great pleasure in going down to my drawing room and looking at the pictures one after another, and I remember one in particular that I delighted in more than the rest. It was a picture by a famous Australian artist called ‘The Lyre Bird’s Home.’ I used to go down and look at it for many minutes at a time, and fasten my eyes upon the wonderful things that God had wrought in the depths of the shady woods, in the blueness of the sky, in the song of the birds, and in the still coolness of the forest depths. Oh, it was a comfort to me to sit and look at that lovely picture. I had wanted to hold a series of meetings in Sydney, and had not the means to accomplish it; where to get the money for the purpose, I did not know.

“So I looked around and saw a good many things without which my wife and I could get along. We thought we could get along with a smaller house, and I could do without the pictures and a great many other things; so I just called an auction, and sold all my magnificent pictures and a lot of my costly furniture. We took a smaller house, went into it with cheaper furniture, and I was able to do the work of the Lord in that city. My beautiful furniture and pictures were gone, but there came in place of them men and women that were brought to the feet of Jesus by the sale of my earthly goods.”

Now began a painful period of his life in which he was to meet a series of discouragements and misfortunes that in all probability would have broken a man with less resolution and determination. God had called the young minister to a special mission, but it was only after he had suffered years of heartaches and disappointments that he was to understand clearly the Divine pattern for his life. Nevertheless, his resignation from the Congregational Church at the close of his pastoral ministry at Newton was a significant and important step in the course his life was to take.

With money that he had obtained by the painful process of selling his household goods, he rented the Theater Royal in Sydney, and in the early part of the year 1878, began preaching to a comparatively small congregation. The numbers that were attending rapidly grew, however, and within a month his audience increased to nearly a thousand—some coming over to help him from his old pastorate in Newton. If he could have remained in the theater, it is possible his hopes would have been more nearly fulfilled. Unfortunately, the cost of the auditorium which he rented was beyond the means of the congregation to pay. He was therefore forced to move to a less favorably located building called Protestant Hall.

Nevertheless the young minister refused to be discouraged with the obstacles he had met, and about the middle of April, he publicly expressed his intentions for the formation of what he called a Free Christian Church. He received

enough response to his proposal to encourage him, and shortly after, the services were moved to the Masonic Hall. But there were heavy financial obligations involved in the undertaking, and Dowie by this time was practically without funds. Having previously disposed of his furniture, to the undisguised indignation of his relatives, he had by now no other personal assets upon which he could draw. In fact, he had gone into debt to the sum of a hundred pounds when setting up housekeeping. As often happens in a new field, there occurred a number of unexpected reverses and difficulties which seriously hindered the progress of the work. It was now the month of June—the beginning of winter in Australia—and a series of severe storms and generally inclement weather sharply curtailed the attendance. Promises of financial aid that he had been depending on fell through at the most inopportune time. For a while, it was a battle to secure even the meagerest of the necessities of life, and the young minister dared not go further into debt. At one point when reverses and disappointments came almost to the crushing point, he was tempted to give up the struggle and return to secular employment. Yet, somehow God made a way for him, and as spring drew near, the weather began to moderate, and attendance to his services increased.

At last light was shining once more. The work in Sydney gathered strength, and aid was providentially provided through new conversions. Those who now rallied around him were not moneyed men but were faithful and believed in his ministry. At this time, Dowie was led to consider the story of Gideon and his army of 32,000 men, which successively was reduced in number until there were only three hundred left. He was struck by the applicability of it to his own circumstances. He felt encouraged, and did not regret the step that he had taken, but declared that “he would rather learn tent-making like Paul than fill the pastorate of the fattest, sleepest, and most complacent church of the ‘Laodiceans’, whom I see thriving in their own eyes, though I believe in God’s sight are ‘wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked’”.

Dowie’s evaluation of the spiritual condition of the churches in Sydney and the vicinity was not out of reason. In five years time, the Congregational Church had added only 535 persons to the whole membership of 43 churches—less than three persons per church annually, and at least one hundred of them were the direct results of Dowie’s own ministry. The fact that the Newton church had a 70 per cent increase during the period of his stay, proved to him that revival was possible if the churches could be awakened. As he considered the lethargic character of the ministry and viewed, at the same time, the awful spiritual condition of thousands of perishing souls, he was brought to the conclusion that he must find God’s way of reaching the vast number of the unchurched for Christ.

In an undertaking of the nature that Dowie had contemplated and now entered into, it was to be expected that strong opposition would rise, especially since his method of fighting the popular sins of the day, and his characteristically vigorous protest in the pulpit against superficial religion, was well calculated to arouse the indignation of those who were hit. His innovations included the distribution of large quantities of literature over the city, which, of course, reached the homes of members of various churches. Some pastors protested vehemently against such circulation. His answer to one such minister is interesting

Dear Sir:

In reply to your rude note of yesterday I have to say— I do not recognize your right to request any information from me concerning any of my actions, or as to what instructions I give to those who are kind enough to cooperate with me in Christian service... Whilst I leave my people entirely to their own discretion as to where and to whom they distribute my weekly tract, I gave them no instructions to distribute them in P- and was entirely ignorant that they were distributed there until I received your note.

Had I any respect for your judgment of anything I might say or do or write, I would feel that your assertion that my tract of last Sabbath “was calculated very seriously to unsettle the minds of the young and injure their moral tone”, to be a statement demanding instant explanation but, as I consider your judgment to be as feeble and incapable as your ministry, I do not reckon it to be of the slightest value, and it would be foolish to be angry or vexed about it much less to be “filled with indignation,” as you say you were with my “obnoxious paper”.

It may interest you to know that no fewer than 14,000 of these very “obnoxious papers” have been circulated, and that the liquor dealers and modern Pharisees generally agree with your opinion, but that there are many thousands of

persons who hold a different opinion and have actually said they did good, which is, of course, quite a mistake in your profound judgment. Also that 100,000 similar tracts written by me have been recently circulated in Sydney.

I wish I knew who distributed these “obnoxious tracts” among your flock; I would certainly commend his choice of a field, and will certainly do nothing to hinder “perpetuating so gross an impertinence”, notwithstanding your threat to “take very vigorous steps to put a stop to it”.

I am truly yours,

John Alexander Dowie

CHAPTER VIII

DOWIE TRIES FOR A SEAT IN THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

FOUR years had passed since John Alexander Dowie had his first success in praying for the sick at the time the great plague swept over Eastern Australia. God’s voice had been speaking to him, showing him the path that he should take. Yet, he hesitated. The ministry of Divine healing had disappeared so completely from the Church, that to enter out in a conspicuous way in such a ministry would be considered by almost all, a most radical and dangerous move. He was not yet fully prepared to take such a step. Yet, the passionate urge of a crusader and a reformer made him restless, and he was as one who knew that he had a mission to perform, but was at a loss as to how to fulfill it.

Dowie was an impressive speaker, and his talents in the pulpit were immediately recognizable to those who heard him. Nevertheless his preaching did not secure the results for which he hoped. His writings also were brilliant masterpieces of logic, and no doubt caused many people to think seriously on the reforms that he advocated. Still he did not see the progress which he desired, and the moral wickedness of the great City of Sydney seemed unaffected. Though he violently denounced the iniquities of the liquor business, and influenced many to sign the pledge, yet he could not honestly say that the tempo of the liquor traffic had noticeably diminished. All this depressed him exceedingly.

His ministry, however, was not without growing influence, and at length, certain of the temperance groups recognizing his talents, approached him as to the possibility of his campaigning for a seat in the Parliament. At first, he opposed the idea. He was not certain that such was God’s will for him. Then, too, it was taking a chance, for if he failed, the result of losing the election would undoubtedly have an adverse effect upon his efforts to found a Free Christian Church in Sydney, especially since the work at that time was in a most crucial stage. Nevertheless, the thought of such an opportunity to voice his convictions in Parliament, was a strong temptation to him. Friends continued to urge him, and finally, convincing him that his chances of election were good, they prevailed upon him to run.

He was further encouraged to enter the race, believing that it would be possible for him to continue his religious work, while he discharged his duties in Parliament. Then, too, he reasoned that a seat in that august assembly would enhance his influence and prestige with the people, and thus give him opportunity in bringing about reforms in the social evils that his soul urgently desired to see accomplished.

But his decision was one that he was soon to regret. In the first place, his entry into the campaign came too late. Many who would have gladly supported him had already committed themselves to another candidate. Dowie was in no sense a politician, who by tradition and practice, compromises one issue in order to gain another. There never was the slightest suspicion of compromise in the rugged spirit of Dowie. Friends of another candidate approached him,

offering money if he would withdraw from the race, and promised to support him at the next election. He unceremoniously spurned all such offers as bribes, and furthermore indignantly expressed his refusal in strong words.

The youthful candidate, unused to the devious ways of politics, soon found an effective opposition rising against him. Every kind of rumor was circulated, some to the effect that he had retired from the race. Newspapers, whose evils had been attacked by him in the pulpit, eagerly spread the rumors, and in general expressed their disapproval of him as candidate for parliament. Dowie was learning that he could expect little sympathy from the world in his attempts to reform it from its sins and vices. When the results of the election were in, he was far behind in the race.

Dowie's disappointment over the outcome was deep and painful. The reaction caused by his defeat, as had been anticipated, seriously affected the work of his struggling church. His fair weather friends left him. He had spent money he could ill-afford in his campaigning for election, and now he was deeply mired in debt. Finances dropped at the mission, and in great discouragement he wrote to his parents that he was forced to close the work in Sydney, and in a few days would preach his last message.

Yet, truly it was the Providence of God that caused the young minister to lose the election. Had he gone to Parliament, his brilliance perhaps might have caused him to reach the top of the political ladder, but there is reason to believe that his ministry would have suffered, and it is doubtful that he would ever have launched out into the ministry of healing which was later to have such effect upon his generation.

God was guiding His servant, and had he fully learned the lessons that were being taught him during those days, he might have been spared some heartbreaking sorrows that were to come later.... The man of God really has no place in the politics of this world. While reformation in government is sadly needed and to be prayed for and encouraged, yet, the man who has a true calling from God has a higher work to do. His is a calling to a ministry which strikes at a more vital spot in the lives of men—that is, their hearts. Not reformation, which is good as far as it goes, but transformation by the grace of God. Never will politics succeed in regenerating the world. Only the grace of God can do this work, and then only for those who will permit such to take place within their hearts.

The Christian Colonist Adelaide, Australia

January 8, 1880

My Dear Mr. Editor:

I read today in your issue of January 2, the spiteful misrepresentations of some correspondent who signs himself, "Spectator". Now, although no cynic, and by no means regardless of the opinion of my fellowmen, I always treat anonymous attacks as I do anonymous letters, both of which I have for years been largely favoured, with utmost contempt; and seldom do I now bestow a second thought upon them. During more than six years' residence and public life in this city, and for the last three years, bitterly opposed by all sections of the Philistine press which curses this city and defends the grossest iniquities of our social and political life, I have only once appeared in print in self-defense.... In this city, I do not leave my daily life and work to answer these cowardly anonymous persons, but it is a different matter when they cross to your city, where my work is less known, and endeavour to needlessly blacken me to a people among whom I lived without reproach for nearly a fourth of my life, and where slanders against me are cruel words to the hearts of my nearest kindred who have lived in your city for twenty years.

For their sakes principally, I feel it is my painful duty to make an example of "Spectator" and since I shall need to speak of myself and my affairs in doing so, let me ask you and my readers to do me the justice to keep in mind two facts; first, that I do not willingly write concerning myself, but of necessity imposed upon by my traducer; and second, that the facts which I shall mention I am so little in the habit of boasting about, that they have never been made public through the press before, even in Sydney, although I have had abundant opportunity of so publishing them.

This "Spectator" propounds his first false assertion that my "work has collapsed," when my work is going on, and in the opinion of some qualified to judge, is more likely to be firmly established than ever. We have actually arranged for

a twelve months lease of a new hall — the International — in a central situation in Pitt Street. Last Sunday I preached there to a large audience, and had what I fear “Spectator” cannot appreciate, the joy of being followed to my home by enquirers, who are asking with tears, “What must I do to be saved?” So far as man can judge, many received the blessing they acknowledged to have desired. I was delighted to find God thus signally blessing my offer of Christ’s salvation as a New Year’s gift and I take it as a loving token of His continued approval on the work of which I and the faithful band of Christian men and women associated with me have engaged in for nearly two years. Eternity alone will declare the results of these two years of unremitting and delightful work. Whilst I would not wish to overstate in so solemn a matter as the conversion of souls, yet I think I should be within the mark if I said that about 200 persons have given themselves to the Lord under my ministry during these two years.

And now what of “Spectator’s” statement, “It has been an utter failure pecuniarily.” Suppose it is true—what then? Who claimed that it has been a pecuniary success? Certainly I never did, for it has been a very great pecuniary loss to me. But Paul could say the same and much more; and I am afraid that “Spectator” would have been compelled to pronounce the Redeemer’s own ministry “an utter failure pecuniarily”, as did His treasurer, Judas Iscariot, who could only make money out of it by selling his Master for silver. That was the only pecuniary success I read of in that Mission. If I am poorer through my ministry, I am no more disposed to write “failure” upon it, and abandon it on that account, than I am to brand Paul, John Bunyan, or John Wesley as “failures” because they cared more for the souls of Christ’s sheep than for their golden fleeces. But it would be a shame to me were I to allow the Mission to be branded “an utter failure pecuniarily”. More money has been raised and spent upon it during the two years than was raised and spent in actual work, apart from ministerial salary, in any church of which I know in Sydney.

I have a shrewd suspicion that “Spectator” knows nothing about the matter, except for idle gossip, for which I am a fair target, and I think that it is very probable, that, notwithstanding even he admits we have done “some good”; he has been “no good” pecuniarily or otherwise to our Mission. This is a fair specimen of much of the pretended charity with which my work is regarded by many denominationalists, whose churches are doubtless pecuniary successes, but at the same time huge spiritual failures, offensive in their pride, laziness and worldliness, both to God and man.

Perhaps “Spectator” may turn out to be a partaker of or a trader in the poisons which the state has established by law as a traffic to destroy, and which has been called by Robert Hall “liquid fire and distilled damnation”, which is an apt description. Now all men know where I stand upon that question and that I have contracted with the Lord to spend my life doing what I can to crush that modern Moloch, the Liquor Traffic, which is perhaps a “pecuniary success” after “Spectator’s” own heart.

Here, my dear friend, I leave “Spectator” for the present. With my very earnest good wishes and prayers for you and the “Christian Colonist”, I am,

Yours in the Lord Jesus,

John Alexander Dowie

CHAPTER IX

DECEIVED BY A CONFIDENCE MAN

NOW comes an almost bizarre interlude in the life of Dowie, which reveals a peculiar phase of his character—a strange capacity at times to be deceived. God had called him to a ministry of deliverance, and whilst he felt the strong call of a mission to the world, he was yet blind to the method that God wanted him to use and which He had dramatically

shown the young minister was the Divine plan—the setting of men free from their sins and sicknesses and diseases by the power of God.

Many a man who has felt he had the call of the ministry upon him, has thought that if only the money were available, he would do mighty things. Yet more often than we would like to believe, money becomes a snare and a delusion to a minister. A windfall is apt to cause the inexperienced to squander it in a fashion as to do more harm than good. Money has power, but it can only be used successfully for God, by those who have learned to be the master of money, not money the master of them. Given a liberal sum, the inexperienced will generally set about a series of visionary schemes, that have no origin in the Divine Will. Time after time, men have made a shipwreck of their spiritual life, while engaged in such schemes. Yet, with men such as George Muller, whose life was fully consecrated to God, over seven million dollars flowed in to make possible an undertaking which stands out in the Christian world as a shining example of wise stewardship.

It is easy to understand that Dowie, harassed as he had been for years because of the lack of finances, and frequently embarrassed in not being able to meet the smallest of obligations, was now desirous after these years of toil and effort, to erect something permanent for his congregation, and incidentally prove to his relatives that he was more than a ne'er-do-well, whose fortunes were sometimes up but more times down; and, should desire and hope that a substantial sum of money would somehow come into his hands whereby he could proceed with the plans that he had dreamed of for so long.

Nor is it difficult to understand that when there appeared on the scene, a man by the name of George Holding, who professed to be wealthy, and who magnanimously gestured to give Dowie a magnificent sum of money for building a tabernacle, the young minister should immediately conclude that this man was at long last the answer to his prayer. This scoundrel, for so he was, a confidence man and a mountebank, under the guise of religion and friendship, soon secured his complete confidence. Believing that the man was honest and sincere, Dowie was so elated over the prospects before him that he never suspected that his friend was a confidence man of the deepest hue. In a letter dated September, 1880, he writes thus to Holding:

“I am glad to say that two days ago, I received your letter from Auckland, dated August 17, and was delighted to get it, and all the dear loving words that were in it. It was like ‘cold water to a thirsty soul’ for it was good news from a far country. I had almost given up all hope of getting it, and so it was the more welcome. I have read it over and over again, and carry it with me in my breast pocket to reread when I am quietly sitting somewhere outside. I thank you for the nice letter—no eye but mine has read it, as you desired; but I have read from it to Jeanie, and when G— comes tomorrow I will read part of it to her. Write freely all that is in your heart, so far as that is possible, and I will guarantee that your letters will but strengthen the ties which bind us to each other—ties which neither earth, nor time, nor distance, nor every evil power can weaken...

Dear brother, I do feel for you in your visit there; as you stand beside your dear one's grave I seem to be with you in spirit... I want to see your hands spread the first communion table in our new tabernacle, which the eyes of faith often see. Last night or rather this morning, I dreamed that I was passing a stranger in the city, through the streets, when I came to a large well-lighted, comfortable, even cheerful-looking building. The brilliant lights from the street lit up the whole front... I entered the door, thrilled to my heart by these words, and saw a sight which stirred my soul with deep emotion. The building was full — tier upon tier, the seats rose up on every side, from the platform to the farthest end of the building. Every eye was turned toward and every ear was listening to the speaker, who was saying, “O beloved, believe me, God is love!” And above the speaker's head, on a wide beautiful scroll on the arched recess behind the platform, there were these words in shining letters:

‘Christ is all.’ Whilst I looked, I found the speaker was myself... But it was no dream after all. It was only my waking thoughts in our ‘Free Christian Tabernacle.’

From the above letter, it may be seen that this man Holding had wormed his way into the deepest confidence of the young minister. In fact, the young pastor's hopes in this direction and his confidence in Holding were of such a nature that he left his work in Sydney, and went to Adelaide in preparation for a trip to England where he was to meet this man, with the purpose of securing the money that had been promised for the building of his proposed tabernacle.

Of course, the entire statement of Holding that he had wealth and that he was returning to England to settle up an estate, and would be able to give 20,000 pounds to Dowie was a hoax and a fraud, and merely a scheme to get money out of Dowie's relatives including his father. Complications and misunderstanding that arose over the money, almost caused an estrangement between the young minister and his parents. Meanwhile, others aware of the matter, their cupidity excited, and hoping to obtain some of the money, wrote letters to Holding vilifying Dowie. On the supposed basis of these, Holding cunningly wrote back that while he had not lost confidence in the young minister, the letters had perplexed him. They moreover gave the mountebank a handy excuse for stalling the fulfillment of his worthless promises.

In a letter to his wife, Dowie disclosed the state of his emotions and the awful discouragement and depression through which he was going.

My Darling Wife:

My whole nature seems torn asunder in this trial, and every nerve of body and soul seems to have been separately tortured by it—and these words but faintly express what I feel and have felt. Of course, the worry of thinking about you and the children — the rent—store — and other accounts — was very great; but you will remember that I was nearly 200 miles from town, and ill, and I am sure that to move about much, too soon: for my head has been “shaky” and dizzy with strong rushes of blood to my heart and brain, causing me to be very careful...

But the worst was yet to come. Suspicions at last began to form in the mind of Dowie concerning this W. G. Holding. Finally it came out. His supposed benefactor and friend was only a clever swindler and hypocrite. Instead of heir of a million dollars, he was a penniless adventurer and thief of widow's savings. This arch-liar and confidence man had not only deceived Dowie, but also astute business men of England of his alleged but mythical wealth. This swindler's career had been an extraordinary series of adventures and impostures.

The effect of Holding's heartless deception was felt by Dowie for a long time, not only for himself but for others that he knew who had been swindled by him and who could ill-afford to stand the loss. To a Mrs. M—~ he sent the following word of consolation:

“The effect of Holding's heartless deception will be felt by you for many a day, and my own suffering and loss through him, makes us feel all the more sympathetically for you and your sons.

“To them it is not merely a temporal loss but a spiritual danger for the hypocrisy of the villain was one of the most powerful helpers in his nefarious diabolical schemes. But I earnestly trust that they will look at this matter in the right light, and see in it, not a reason for keeping their hearts from God, but an awful reason for fleeing from sin and Satan, which, this wretched man proves, can tie a man's soul, hand, and foot, and cast him into a living hell even on earth.”

Much humbled by his experience, Dowie had not seen the last of this bold impersonator and rogue. Some years later, whom should he meet but this same W. G. Holding, dressed in a Salvation Army uniform, “selling all sorts of things, with radiant smiles and coaxing words, to admiring customers at the trade tent of the Salvation Army at their annual Demonstration on the South Melbourne Cricket Ground.” Dowie describes their meeting:

“What a change! Smiles vanished, and fear and guilt and shame chased each other over his ash-colored face. A few minutes served to make his real character so clear that he was at once removed from the trade tent, and dismissed from the ground. I advised him to get away by sea, as quickly as possible, failing which he would certainly be arrested; and I spoke earnestly to him in urging him to abandon his miserable course of deceit, and seek God's mercy. And so we parted on Friday — New Year's Day.”

The mountebank vanished, but evidently God was dealing with him. It is to John Alexander Dowie's credit, that he should have taken the time to have spoken about God and repentance, to one who had been the source of so much sorrow, heartache, and embarrassment. Strangely enough, the man did not leave the country but two or three days later, came to Dowie's house, looking the picture of misery and unhappiness. The words of the minister had indeed taken affect, and he said, “I can't go away—I want to make a full confession to you, and give myself to the police, or do whatever you tell me to do.”

There were some witnesses present and after some consideration, Dowie took down, with many cross-questionings a most extraordinary story of crimes beginning in 1877, a minute detail of a band of thirteen clever associates. These swindlers had offices in New York, Paris, and London and many other cities. By the means of forged documents and fraudulent correspondence they developed all sorts of skillful schemes for swindling. There were insurance swindles in which stones and packing took the place of the supposed corpse. Holding managed through impersonations and frauds to get on familiar terms of friendship with a large circle of persons of wealth and social position in various parts of England.

Holding returned to Dowie's house two days later, and by arrangement gave himself to police, and made a formal confession of his crimes. Strangely enough, because, at the time there was no Federation between the provinces, the courts in that part of Australia had no jurisdiction over the matter. It required a very complicated legal procedure to take him to the province where his crimes in Australia had been committed, and would have entailed considerable expense and time on Dowie's part. The latter, viewing these circumstances, and hoping that the man's penitence was genuine, declined to go to New South Wales and initiate proceedings afresh there. Poor Dowie! The word had gone around that he had actually received the \$100,000 from Holding to build a church, but had not done so nor accounted for the money!

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