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OIL AND MEAL.

BROTHER BODENHAMER:—I have felt for months past that I was occupying too much space in your little paper, for the small amount of edification I presume my scribbling has contributed to its readers; and were it not that you are still soliciting contributions from your readers to supply the columns of the "Landmarks," I should not so often intrude upon you and your readers. But here I am again with another Fragment, and if you approve it, and any of the Lord's little ones shall receive a crumb of comfort and consolation from it, I shall be gratified.

How often does the Lord work out of the sight of mortals in the accomplishment of his purposes? How high are his ways and thoughts above that of blinded human reason? How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! He destroys the wisdom of the wise, baffles the best laid plots of wicked men, and checkmates the hellish designs of the wicked one when they are opposed to His gracious purposes in behalf of his children.

During the great famine in the days of Elijah, while the wicked Ahab was hunting him in order to destroy him, and searching all the surrounding kingdoms for the object of his vengeance, how little did he and his emissaries imagine that Elijah's God was feeding the old prophet within twenty miles of Jerusalem? And how contrary to the laws of nature, to reason, and out of the sight of mortals that God should send him his daily supplies of bread and flesh in his lonely retreat by the fowls of heaven! But the Lord will provide for the wants of his children, though it may be by a miracle. The pro-

phet may have wondered where these winged messengers got their food, and how they could find him in his hiding place. Will they come again, and again, morning and evening, and supply my daily returning wants? If not, I must inevitably perish. How often he was reminded of his absolute dependence on this miraculous provision for his very existence? But he called to mind that the Lord whom he served had declared "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." 1 Kings 17:4. But after a while the brook that supplied him with water dried up. What now shall he do? He must have water as well as food. The prospect is gloomy; doubts are ready to rise, and distrust is creeping into his heart. "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Ps. 77:7-9.

"Since so many mercies past,
Will he let me sink at last?"

No; in the last extremity, when all was dark before him, and he at his wit's end, the Lord informed him of another means of support, equally as unexpected as the other. There was a Gentile city some two hundred miles north called Zarephath, (Sarepta). To it the prophet was directed to go, by the word of the Lord, "Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." Reader, how do you think the prophet ever got through the country such a distance without being captured by the King's subjects who were under oath to report if they found him? Ch. 18:10.

But the "way of man is not in himself; it is not in him that walketh to direct his steps;" and hence the prophet reached the gate of the city in safety. But, poor old man, how weary, and hungry and thirsty! Had he been long in finding this widow he might have sunk under his fatigue and want; but, blessed be God, the very wo-

man upon whom his life depended was there. The thirsty man, recognizing her as "the widow" whom God had appointed to sustain him, begged her to bring him a "little water," and as she was going to wait on him he added another request for a "morsel of bread." Did you ever ask yourself, reader, why the prophet was sent to this poor widow for sustenance instead of some honorable and wealthy man? Had he been sent to and sustained by the opulent, the hand of the Lord had not been seen in it; but as God has ever chosen the poor, the weak and the despised things of this world, through whom to glorify his name, and accomplish his purposes, so in this case a destitute widow is chosen to feed the prophet during the mighty famine. This widow was not the only one that ever gave a disciple a cup of cold water, or cast a mite into the treasury of the Lord, as many of the Lord's way-worn ministers can testify.

At the second request of the prophet, the destitute woman was compelled to divulge the mortifying fact of her poverty, declaring to the hungry man that she had but a "handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse." But the wants of the man of God were urgent and must be supplied.—Herself and little son had consumed all but a handful during the great dearth, and now she was about to prepare the last morsel and eat it, and then she and her son looked for nothing but a certain and awful death. But the prophet tells her to fear not, but make him a little cake and then make for herself and son; "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." And she did as she was told, and fed the prophet and her household for many days, even until the earth

was blessed with rain, and the meal wasted not. The widow goes daily to her barrel, and finds each day a little still there, just enough for one meal for the family.—"Will it do," says she to herself, "for me to take all there is in the barrel this time? What will we do for meal to morrow? Yet it will take all there is to supply the household a respectable repast."—How often she raked the bottom, and scraped up the last handful of meal she could find? How often was she reminded of her dependence on the word of the Lord, and on him to miraculously supply the absolute necessities of their existence? Had He filled her barrel to the brim at any one time, she might have become forgetful of her dependence, and might have become gluttonous, but she must daily see the bottom, and be reminded every morning of her dependence for fresh supplies of meal and oil. She had drained the cruse the day before, and now she finds just enough again to answer in making the next cake.

If she doubts the word of the Lord any morning when she rises, she goes into her pantry and looks into her barrel again, even to the very bottom, and there she sheds tears of joy, and feels to weep over her unbelief in the promise of God. And the meal wasted not, neither the oil till the time of plenty. So it was with Israel in the desert; they had to gather a little manna every day, except on the Sabbath, and was reminded of the Lord's mercies being fresh every morning. "Give us this day our daily bread." Though the outward man perishes, the inward man is "renewed day by day." "As thy days so shall thy strength be." "My grace is sufficient for thee." "I never will leave thee nor forsake thee." I must quit this in the middle.—Brother Bodenhamer, may you and your readers get a daily handful each.

I. N. VANMETER.