

into a crown, every burden becomes a blessing, every sacrifice becomes sacred and sublime, the moment that our Lord and Redeemer writes on it "For my sake."—*N. Y. Independent.*

### The Cities of Refuge.<sup>1</sup>

BY LYMAN ABBOTT.

"Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."—Hebrews 6: 18.

It was a common practice among ancient nations that the nearest of kin should avenge the death of a murdered relative. Among the Bedouins and other Arab tribes compensation was allowed. Whoever killed the murderer after the blood-money had been paid was liable to a grievous punishment. The provision of the six cities of refuge required by Moses to be set apart when the children of Israel should come into their promised land was the first step toward providing a better way of punishing murder: it took the right of trial and the condemnation out of the hands of the avenger of blood and put it into the hands of a court of impartial officers, who were to determine whether there were murder or accidental homicide.<sup>2</sup> Of these cities three were on the eastern side of Jordan, three on the western; they were so selected and arranged that the manslayer could never be more than six miles from the nearest. To any of these cities a person who had unintentionally slain one might flee, and if he reached it before he was overtaken by the avenger of blood he was safe within its shelter, provided he did not remove more than a thousand yards from its circuit, nor quit the refuge till the decease of the high priest under whom the homicide had taken place. If, however, he transgressed these provisions, the avenger might lawfully put him to death. In order to give the fugitive all possible advantage in his flight, it was according to the the Rabbins, the business of the Sanhedrim to make the roads that led to the cities of refuge convenient, by enlarging them and removing every obstruction that might hurt the fugitive's foot or hinder his speed. No hillock was left, no river was allowed over which there was not a bridge, and the road at least two-and-thirty cubits broad. At every turning there were posts erected bearing the word "Refuge," to guide the unhappy man in his flight, and two students in the law were appointed to accompany him,

that if the avenger should overtake him before he reached the city they might attempt to pacify him till legal investigation could take place. Before, however, the fugitive could be secured from the avenger by the shelter conceded by the laws, he was to undergo a solemn trial, and make it appear to the satisfaction of the magistrates of the place where the homicide was committed that it was purely accidental. Should he be found to have been guilty of murder, he was delivered into the hands of the avenger of blood, that he might die. When once settled in the city of refuge the manslayer had a convenient habitation assigned him gratuitously, and the citizens were to teach him some trade whereby he might support himself. To render his confinement more easy, the mothers of the high priests used to feed and clothe these unfortunate fugitives, that they might not be impatient, and pray for the death of their sons, on whose decease they were restored to their liberty and their property. If the slayer died while in the city of refuge, his bones were delivered to his relations after the death of the high priest, to be buried in the sepulcher of his fathers. The privilege of asylum was also extended by Moses to the "horns of the altar,"<sup>1</sup> where a man might remain unharmed until, if proved innocent, he could be conducted to a city of refuge. And from very early times, both among the chosen people and the nations of the world, there has prevailed the custom of fleeing to the altar in case of personal danger. Twice in the history of Judah notorious criminals sought for impunity by "catching hold of the horns of the altar."

The right of asylum thus provided in the Old Testament statutes to protect the innocent from the unrighteous vengeance of the next kin was adopted, modified, and extended in the Christian Church during the Middle Ages by the papal authorities to the monasteries and the Christian Churches, which, especially the chancel, were regarded as sacred spots within which the fugitive was safe not only from private vengeance but from civil authorities. Once in this refuge, the Church took him under its care, investigating the case and determining the guilt or innocence; in very many cases it dismissed him with no other penalty than a fine which he paid to the monks or

priests. This interference with the civil and criminal law by the Church of Rome was one of the grounds of complaint which led to the Reformation, and was one of the immediate causes of the death of the famous Thomas à Becket.

The spirit of the Mosaic code now prevades all jurisprudence; the punishment of crime is no longer left to the injured individual; the whole community is the city of refuge, and no man is to be put to death until he has been tried by an impartial tribunal. The city of refuge is the Old Testament bud; avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, is the New Testament blossom. The Mosaic law is sometimes denounced as harsh and cruel; but it was in fact marvelous in its provisions of mercy. I know nothing equal, and scarcely anything analogous, to this law of the cities of refuge at that age of the world in any other nation, while parallel to the provision for the protection of the accidental manslayer are other provisions of the Mosaic code equally remarkable. In England as late as A. D. 1600 the death penalty was visited upon two hundred and sixty-three crimes, while the Mosaic law provided capital punishment for but twelve, and this, too, in an age when prisons were unknown and imprisonment impossible. Its punishments were swift, sure, certain; but they were not severe, certainly not unusual, except in being tempered with a mercy absolutely unknown in any other land at that epoch in the world's history. In all ages of the Christian church the city of refuge has been regarded by Christian scholars as a fitting type of that God who is manifested in Christ as the refuge of his people—a refuge alike from sorrow and from sin. Every man is pursued by a Nemesis which dogs his footsteps whithersoever he goes, and sooner or later comes upon him with the wrath of an avenging conscience. Before every man Christ is set as a city upon a hill which cannot be hid, easy of access, where he may find, not indeed a relief from his transgressions, but peace with God and with his own conscience; where, even though he be guilty, he may find rest to his soul.<sup>2</sup>

Two of Arabi Bey's children are in the American Mission School at Cairo, and Arabi himself took with him an assortment of Christian books to Ceylon.

### Why Not?

Hamlet's sword, reaching the heart of Polonius through the hangings of his mother's chamber, transfixed that prudence which is only another name for cowardice; the prudence which distrusts principles and trusts to policies. It is only the true man who can be really brave; only the righteous man who can walk through the darkness and face the mystery of life with a serene soul. Mean men, unrighteous men, small men like Polonius see what is right and know that it ought to be done, but are too cowardly to do it. They distrust the eternal power of truth and of the God whose life it is; they hug the shore and are wrecked on reefs and shoals where the bold man, strong in faith and resolute in purpose, sets his prow to the farthest horizon and, with God's sea under keel and God's heaven overhead, leaves the perils and dangers of the treacherous coast far behind. If Columbus had listened to the prudent counsels of the wise men of his generation, his sails would never have filled with the breezes of the new continent; he dared greatly, and he wears worthily the splendid crown of fame which the world has set upon his brow.

Half the anxieties and perplexities of life would disappear if we only believed enough in God to take him at his word and trust him with our earthly hopes and fortunes. If we cast prudence to the winds wherever principle was involved, and held to the thing that was right in the face of all manner of possible calamities, we should find ourselves involved in no mesh of compromise, weakened and paralyzed by no consciousness of unfaithfulness to great trusts and high opportunities. The bold way is almost always the safe way. At the battle of the Nile, when Nelson ran his fleet between the French squadron and the shore, his apparent rashness was a grand intuition of leadership; it is the great soul which looks over the whole field of conflict and divines by instinct the daring movement which snatches victory at the point of greatest peril. Abraham was a rash and imprudent man when he forsook the pleasant land where his flocks had multiplied and his goods increased, to trust, through long and homeless wanderings, the guidance of an unseen Power; Moses sacrificed a fortune and the