

THE MARBLE LIONS ;

or, Fast Asleep and Wide Awake.



WHILE on a visit to Pretoria, in the early part of 1904, I was staying at the house which was once the residence of Mr. Kruger.

An unpretentious, one-storey building, with a narrow verandah, or stoep, skirting it in the front, there is little to distinguish it from the other dwellings in the same street.

It may easily be recognised, however, by the two famous lions, sculptured in marble, the gift of the late Barney Barnato to the ex-president. There they stand, like sentries at the gate, though their late owner no longer sits on the stoep behind them.

It is said that the two lions were meant to be symbolical of two statesmen. The one, with its eyes fast closed, and its whole attitude suggestive of deep sleep, was intended to represent a dull, heavy, unobservant character ; the other, the very picture of

alertness, aptly represented the keen, quick-witted, up-to-date man who saw things with a clearness of vision denied to his less wide-awake rival.

But there are others, besides the two statesmen, whose condition is strikingly illustrated by the attitude of the marble lions.

There are those who, with regard to eternal things,
are
wide awake.

They realise that their life on earth is, after all, but a very small portion of their existence, and they live in view of the great hereafter. Their eyes have been opened to see that their sins had exposed them to terrible danger, and that unless they were cleansed and forgiven, heaven's gates would be for ever closed against them. They have fled to Christ for refuge, and have been justified from their guilt by His blood. Happy people! Wide awake to all that makes life worth living, and eternity worth looking forward to!

But countless thousands are still

fast asleep

in their sins. They know not their peril. They dream not of danger. They glide gaily down the stream of life, never asking themselves on what shore they will land at last.

Reader, are you one of these? Wide awake you may be to all that concerns your earthly interests; sharp and shrewd in business matters; keen in the enjoyment of life's pleasures; but, I ask you, with reference to the higher interests of your never-dying soul, *Are you awake or asleep?*

Not long ago we were having some special Gospel services at Wynberg, Cape Colony. Amongst those who attended the meetings was a young man who had been a soldier in one of the Colonial regiments. I became much interested in him, and took an early opportunity of asking him as to his outlook for eternity. Was he prepared to meet God? Had he obtained the forgiveness of his sins by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

"*Well,*" said he, in answer to my questions, "*I can't say much about it, but I am doing the best I can, and I hope I shall come out all right in the end.*"

His reply showed clearly enough that he was fast asleep as to the important issues at stake. He had never been aroused to his lost condition. He had been lulled to sleep by the great enemy of souls singing his well-worn song of "Do the best you can," and was leaving it to chance as to how he came out in the end!

I spoke to him seriously about his danger, and pointed out the madness of being satisfied with a mere "hope" for the future—a hope, too, based upon such an utterly worthless foundation as "doing the best that he could."

He seemed impressed. Begging him to look the matter fairly and squarely in the face, I bade him good-night.

At the next meeting I noticed him again. His face seemed to wear an expression of anxiety that I had not seen before. At the close he did not wait for me to speak to him, but came straight up to me, saying,

"I want to get this matter put straight to-night."

What a change of attitude! He was now as *wide awake* as he had previously been *fast asleep*. He was awake to his danger; awake to the folly of leaving the safety of his soul to chance; awake to the need of having a better and surer foundation to rest upon than that of "doing his best." Thank God! he was awake at last.

It was an easy and a happy task to show him the way of salvation. I pointed out to him that if *he* had been indifferent to his sin and his peril, *God* had not been indifferent to it, but had, at infinite cost

to Himself, provided a Saviour ; and that salvation lies in trusting that God-given Saviour.

Reader, are *you* awake to the seriousness of the things of which I speak ? Then let me tell you of this Saviour. God is too holy and too righteous to pass over your sins without *atonement* being made for them. The punishment that they deserve must fall upon *someone*—either upon yourself or Another. In order that the stroke of judgment might not fall upon *you*, God, in His great goodness, gave His Son to be the sin-bearer. At Calvary the stroke fell upon Him. It need, therefore, never fall upon *you*.

If you put your trust in Him Who died for you God will forgive you and save you. For Jesus has not only died, but has risen again, and through Him God offers pardon and peace to “ all that believe.”

Even as you read these lines you may look up and say, “ Lord, I believe ! ” If your *heart* says the words, it is enough. For the Word of Truth declares that : “ *By Him, all that believe are justified from all things.* ” (Acts xiii. 39.)

It is possible to be fast asleep without being worldly or utterly careless.

Said a young woman, in a certain town in South Africa, on her way home from a gospel meeting :

"It never occurred to me before that I needed to be converted."

Yet she had been very religious. For three years she had been a zealous Bible-seller. She was known and respected by the Christian workers of her church, none of whom would have called in question the sincerity of her religion.

That night, however, questions had arisen in her mind that had never previously occurred to her: "What does God think of me? Am I converted?" She had to own that though she had plenty of religion, she was not saved. She was travelling as fast as time could carry her to a lost eternity, and all the while she had been *fast asleep*.

Thank God that her eyes were opened at last.

But it may be that *you*, reader, are not yet awakened! You are still sleeping the sleep of indifference! It is surprising how completely the devil can get men under the influence of his deadly opiates!

We were driving in a wagonette from the Howick Falls to the railway station in company with a young man of very fragile and delicate appearance. He was evidently ill, and his frequent cough confirmed the suspicion that he was far gone in consumption. A

friend with whom I was travelling spoke to him, and soon found that our surmise was well-founded. Consumption had wrought its ravages upon him. He was a dying man.

My friend asked him as to his soul. Had he thought of what came after death? Had he fled to Christ for shelter from the storm of judgment?

To these questions the young man replied, in the most indifferent way, that he never gave such matters a thought, that he did not consider himself a sinner, that there was a lot in the Bible he didn't believe, and that, in short, he didn't care to trouble his head about such things.

Can words describe the folly of such an attitude? A man upon the brink of the grave, upon the very threshold of eternity, yet utterly careless and thoughtless! There indeed was a pitiful instance of Satan's success in keeping a sinner fast asleep in his sins.

Reader, you may not be so near the grave, and the great hereafter, as that young man; *but who knows?* The bloom of youth may be yet upon your cheeks; but who can tell how soon the dread King of Terrors will claim you as his victim? One thing is certain. Go you must, sooner or later.

Permit me, then, to ring in your ears the question

that startled Jonah from his slumbers : “ *What meanest thou, O sleeper ? Arise, call upon thy God.* ”

Call upon Him for that which He has promised to give. You will find that He is far more ready to bestow His blessing than even the most earnest amongst us is to receive it ! He is “ *great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked ;* ” but because of the merits of the blood of Jesus, “ *the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* ” (Nahum i. 3 ; Rom. x. 12, 13.)

