

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

By

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CHAPTER THREE

"TO THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL"

THE next day was Sunday. It was also the first Sunday of the month. As he bathed and dressed, Ralph found himself wondering whether the churches and chapels would be filled, whether the awe and fear that had fallen upon so many Christian professors during the first hours after the "Rapture," would drive them to the churches.

"The first of the month," he mused. "The Lord's Supper has been the order of the day in most places. I wonder if it will be celebrated to-day?"

"**'Until He come!'** he mused on. "He has come, so that the Lord's Supper, as part of the worship of the churches is concerned, can have no further meaning. Will any attempt be made to celebrate it, to-day, I wonder?"

Every available moment of the fateful week that had just passed he had occupied in deep reading the prophetic scriptures referring to The Coming of the Lord, and the events which follow. He had also studied deeply every book on the subject which he could secure, that was likely to help him to understand the position of affairs. Again and again, he had said to himself: "How could I have been such a fool? a journalist, a bookman, a lover of research, professing to have the open mind which should be the condition of every man of my trade, and yet never to have studied my Bible, never to have sought to know what all the startling events of the past decade, pointed to. Surely, surely, Tom Carlyle was right about we British - mostly fools."

At breakfast he ate and drank only sufficient to satisfy the sense of need. Previous to "The Rapture" he had been a bit of an Epicure, now he scarcely noted what he ate or drank.

Almost directly his meal was finished, he left the house. The journalistic instinct was strong enough within him to make him desire to see what changes, if any, would be apparent in London on this first Sunday after the momentous event that had so recently come upon the world.

Turning out of the quiet square where his lodgings were, he was instantly struck by a new tone in the streets. There was an utter absence of the old-time "Sabbath" sense.

The gutter ways were already lined with fruit and other hawkers, their coarse voices, crying their wares, making hideous what should have been a Sunday quiet.

It was barely ten, yet already many of the Tea Rooms were open, and most of them seemed thronged, whole families, and pleasure-parties taking breakfast, evidently.

He passed a large and popular theatre, across the whole front of which was a huge, hand-painted announcement, "Matinee at 2, this afternoon. Performance to-night 7-45. New Topical song entitled "The Rapture," on the great event of the week. Living Pictures at both performances: "*The Flight of the Saints*."

Ralph, in his amaze, had paused to read the full contents of the announcement. He shuddered as he took in the full import of the blasphemy. Surveying the crowd that stood around the notice, he was struck by the composition of the little mob. It was anything but a low-class crowd. Many of them were evidently of the upper middle class, well-dressed, and often intellectual-looking people.

He was turning to leave the spot, when a horsey-looking young fellow close to him, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the whole crowd - he evidently meant that it should - cried:

"Well, if it's true that all the long-faced puritans have been carted off, vamoosed, kidnapped, "Rapturized," as they call it, and that now there's to be no Theatre Censor, and everyone can do as they like, well then, good riddance to the kill-joys, I say."

"And so say all of us," sang a voice, almost everyone present joining in the song.

When twenty yards off Ralph could hear the blasphemy ringing out "The Devil's a jolly good fellow, and so say all of us!"

"What will London be like in a month's time!" he mused.

He moved on quickly, but even as he went the thought thrust itself upon him, that half London, for some reason or the other, was abroad in the streets unusually early. His own objective was a great Nonconformist church, where one of London's most popular and remarkable preachers had ministered. He had been one of the comparatively few whose ministry had been characterized by a close adherence to the Word of GOD, and an occasional solemn word of expository warning and exhortation anent the "*Coming of the Lord*."

Ralph was within a stone's throw of the great building when the squeaking tones of Punchinello, reached his ears, while a deep roar of many laughing voices accompanied the squeakings. A moment more and he was abreast of a crowd of many hundreds of people gathered around the Punch and Judy show.

Sick in soul at all that told of open blasphemy everywhere around him, he hurried on, not so much as casting an eye at the show, though it was impossible for him to miss the question and answer that rang out from the show.

"Now, now Mr. Punch, where's your poor wife? Have you done away with her?"

"No," screamed the hook-nosed puppet, "Not me, I aint done away with her, she done away with herself, she's gone and got 'Rapturized.' "

Then, above the ribald laughter of the crowd, the squeaking puppet sang:

"Oh, p'raps she is, p'raps she aint,
An' p'raps she's gone to sea,
Or p'raps she's gone to Brigham Young
A Mormonite to be."

Ralph shivered as with chill, as he went up the steps of the great church to which he had been aiming. It was filling fast. Five minutes after he entered, the doors had to be closed, there was not even standing room.

He swept the huge densely-packed building with his keen eyes. Many present were evidently accustomed to gather there, though the bulk were curious strangers. A strange hush was upon the people, a half-frightened look upon many faces, and a general air of suspense.

Once, someone in the gallery cracked a nut. The sound was almost as startling as a pistol shot, and hundreds of faces were turned in the direction of the sound.

Ralph noticed that the Communion table, on the lower platform under the rostrum was covered with white, and evidently arranged as for the Lord's Supper.

Exactly at eleven, someone emerged from a vestry and passed up the rostrum stairs. A moment later the man was standing at the desk. Many instantly recognized him. It was the Secretary of the Church.

A dead hush fell upon the people.

The face of the man was deathly pale, his eyes were dull and sunken. Twice his lips parted and he essayed to speak, but no sound escaped him. The hush deepened.

Then, at last, low and husky came the words "My dear friends - for I recognize some who have been wont to gather here on the Sundays, though the majority are strangers, I think."

His eyes slowly swept the great congregation. "We have, I believe, many of us, gathered here this morning more by a new, strange, common instinct, than by mere force of Sunday habit. Yet, I cannot but think that many of us, solemnized by the events that have transpired since last Sunday, have met more in the Spirit of real seeking after GOD than ever we have done before."

A few voices joined in a murmur of assent, but something like a ripple of mocking laughter came from others. And one voice in the gallery laughed outright - it was the man who had cracked the nut.

Momentarily unnerved by that laughter the speaker paused. Then recovering himself he went on:

"Our pastor has gone; the Puritans (as we were wont to call them) are gone; and we know now - now that it is too late for those of us who are 'left' - that they have been '**caught up**' into the air, to be with their Lord forever."

He glanced down at the white-draped communion table, as he continued:

"Our church officer has performed his usual monthly office, and has spread the Table for the Lord's Supper, but it dawns upon us, friends, how useless, how empty is the symbol since it was only ordained until He should come. He has come, and we, the unready, have been left behind."

"Tommy Rot!"

The expression came angrily, sneeringly from the man in the gallery, the man who cracked that nut, and who had laughed so boisterously a moment ago.

Many eyes were turned up to the man, but no voice of reprimand came, no cry of "shame!" or of "Turn him out," was raised.

All that had happened during the days of the past week, had served to fill many of the people gathered there that morning, with a curious mingling of doubt, hesitancy, fearsomeness, and uncertainty, as well as an unconscious growth of a new strange skepticism, and a carelessness that almost amounted to recklessness.

"As it is with many more here, this morning," the Secretary went on, "some members of my family have gone, been caught up-"

"Aviated!" laughed a ribald voice, and this time it came from another part of the building.

Disregarding the interruption, the secretary went on: "My wife has gone - "His voice shook with the deep emotion that stirred him, and for a moment he was too moved to speak. Then recovering himself with an effort he continued:

"My daughter, too, who against my wish had offered herself as a Foreign Missionary, has gone. Both wife and daughter lived in the spirit of expectancy of the Coming of CHRIST into the air. Now they are with Him, to be with Him forever."

The ribald voice that had last interrupted, again broke into the Secretary's touching words.

This time the interrupter roared out a stanza or two of a wretched song:

"Will no one tell me where they're gone,
My bursting heart with grief is torn,
I wish I never had been born,
I've lost, I've lost my wife."

A hundred or more voices roared with laughter. The devil of blasphemy was growing bolder.

But in the silence that immediately followed the laughter, the Secretary went on again:

"I have been a deeply religious man, even as Nicodemus and Paul were, before their conversion. But now that it is too late to share in the bliss of the glorious Translation, I have discovered that Religion, without CHRIST, without the Regeneration of the New Birth, is evidently useless, otherwise, I, with scores of others in this church, this morning, who have, for years, listened to a full-orbed gospel from our God-filled translated pastor, would be now with those of our loved ones who have ascended up on high."

He paused for the briefest fraction of a second, a look of keenest anguish filled his face, his eyes grew moist with unshed tears, and were full of appeal, of enquiry, as he swept the great assembly, crying:

"There must be thousands upon thousands left in our land, who, like myself, deceived themselves, and thus unwittingly deceived others, and in whose souls there rises the cry: 'How can we find GOD? Who will show us the way?'

"Friends, I have searched my New Testament from end to end. I have been up two whole nights, and I have read the New Testament through from Matthew to Revelation, twice. But I can find no provision for the position I find myself in. I can find no guidance as to how to be saved. The whole situation is too solemn, too awful for any fooling. Does anyone here know? Can anyone here tell us how we may find GOD, now that the salt of the earth - the real Christians are gone, and now, too, that the Holy Spirit who, of old time - not yet a full week, but it seems an eternity - led souls to GOD through CHRIST."

There was something so solemn, so pathetic in the man's manner and utterance, that even the ribald fools who had previously interrupted, were silent.

The hush was intense. The ticking of the clock could be heard distinctly.

Impelled by a power which he could not have defined or described, Ralph Bastin rose to his feet. The hush deepened. Then a voice broke the silence, crying:

"Bastin, editor of *'The Courier'*!"

He was very pale, but the light of a rare courage flashed in his eyes. He acknowledged the recognition of himself by an inclination of the head. Then amid a strange hush he began to speak, his voice husky, at first, rapidly clearing as he went on:

"Friends, I take it that this is the most momentous Sunday that has ever been, since the first one - the day of the resurrection of the CHRIST. Our friend who has just spoken has surely voiced the question of many hearts here this morning, and many other troubled hearts the wide world over.

"Let me say, right here, that my friend and colleague, Mr. Tom Hammond, the originator and late editor of *'The Courier,'* was in the very act of explaining the wonderful, expected return of CHRIST (expected by him though scoffed at by myself) when he was '**caught up**' from my very presence, and then I knew what a fool I had been to neglect GOD and His salvation."

The nut-cracking interrupter in the gallery, with a burst of laughter, began mockingly to sing the old revival chorus, "Come to JESUS, come to JESUS, come to JESUS, just now, just - "

"Silence! you blasphemous, ribald fool!"

The words leaped from the lips of Ralph Bastin, in a tone of command that literally awed the interrupter. The effect, too, upon the hesitating, vacillating mass of people was, for the moment at least, to arouse their sympathy with Ralph, and a little murmur of applause followed.

At the same time a soldier in uniform, a man of giant proportions, who was sitting almost immediately behind the disturber, rose in his seat, and addressing the man in front of him, cried, in a stentorian voice:

"See here, mouthy, we're about fed up with your gas, so if you give us so much as one wag of that cursed red rag of yours, I'll pick you up and snap you in half across my knee, as I would snap a stick."

This time the applause broke out all over the crowded church. When it ceased, Ralph standing straight as a larch, and looking up at the soldier, gave a military salute, as he said:

"Thank you, brave soldier."

Coming back to his audience, he went on, as if there had been no interruption:

"I, too, like the gentleman who addressed us just now, have read the whole of the Bible through, and the New Testament twice, and I can find no definite provision or Revelation for those who are left behind - that is as to the how, I mean, of salvation. Yet that there are to be many saved during the next seven years, is evident, since there is to be a great multitude come out of The Great Tribulation, and thousands of these will be martyrs for GOD, refusing to wear the Mark of the Beast.

"In one of the pamphlets I have been studying on *'The second coming of the Lord,'* I have found this statement, that CHRIST, during His ministry, preached the *Gospel of the Kingdom*, which is explained as referring to the fact that, as a Jew, as the Messiah, He came to His own people the Jews, the chosen earthly people of GOD, and that if they would have accepted Him as their Messiah, His Kingdom - with Himself reigning as King - might have been set up there and then.

“But they rejected Him, yes, even when Peter, at Pentecost, after the Ascension of CHRIST, made the final offer in those wonderful words of his.

"As a nation, they rejected Him, rejected their Lord and King, and henceforth, until He should come again. (He came last week, as we know, now that it is too late for us to share in the glory of that coming). Until that coming, as I said, the Gospel to be preached was to be the '**Gospel of the Grace of God,**' and not the '**Gospel of the Kingdom.**' '**The Gospel of the Grace of God,**' included all peoples, Gentile as well as Jew, while '**the Gospel of the Kingdom,**' in its first preaching, was especially a message to the Jew.

"Now, friends, since there appears to be no special Revelation left as to how men and women are to be saved, I have been forced to the conclusion that we must go back to the Old Testament word: '**Seek ye the Lord**' - '**Call upon the Name of the Lord**' - '**Trust ye in the Lord**' - '**Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.**' '**The Lord is nigh unto them who are of broken heart, and saveth such as be of a Contrite spirit.**'

"I have taken my own stand upon this, that GOD, the GOD of the Old Testament, is the same GOD, who pities like a father, and that if we confess our sin, and witness a true confession, He will forgive us our sin, and though we can never be part of that wondrous Bride of CHRIST, whom, last week He caught up to Himself into the Heavens, yet we may be eternally saved. And, friends, whether I am right or wrong, I am daily pleading the Name of JESUS CHRIST in all my approaches to GOD. I plead the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, and the power of that Blood, to save me; for, as far as I understand myself, in this matter, my belief, my trust is the same as that which inspired the saints who were translated at the 'Rapture' - as that event has come to be called.

"In my studies during the past week - would GOD I had been wise, and given myself to all this a month ago, I should then have shared in the glory of that Rapturous event of which all our minds are so full.

"But, as I was saying, in my studies during the past week, I have seen that in Revelation Seven, in the account of those who are to be saved during the seven years of the present dispensation, (and which has just begun) that they '**have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**'

“So that though I am not able to reduce my standing to an actual theological position-statement - yet I pin my soul, my faith on the Eternal character of GOD, and on the efficacy of the Blood of JESUS, as shown in Revelation Seven, fourteen.”

He paused for an instant, and his eyes swept the great assembly sorrowfully, sadly, as he went on:

"But it is forced upon me that what is done by us, in this matter of seeking GOD, must be done by us now, at once.

“Every hour increases the danger of delay because the powers of evil, of the Antichrist, are already growing more and more rampant, more and more pronounced. Presently, friends, we know not but that any hour or even moment now, the awful delusion of the Antichrist lie, may be actually formulated into speech and print, and it will be so almost universally absorbed by mankind, and its influence be so pervading, so saturating, in every class, of society, that it will every hour become harder, more difficult for the individual soul to turn to GOD.”

He paused again for one instant. Then startlingly, suddenly, the words "Great GOD!" leaped from his lips. They sounded like a mighty sob.

"Great GOD!" he repeated with an anguish that awed the people. "The great mass of people in London, are already mocking GOD. They laugh at the notion of there being a GOD, of there being any Retribution. The great mass of the people are ripe for anything, even for a public, official denial of the very existence of GOD. Deluded, they will believe any lie, THE FOUL LIE.

"How long is it since, in France, in the Revolution, the leading men, the 'flower' of that capricious nation, carried in triumph in grand procession the most beautiful harlot of Paris, to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and, unveiling and kissing her before the high altar, proclaimed her as the 'Goddess of Reason,' exhorting the multitude of people to forget all the childish things that they had been taught as to the thunders of the wrath of GOD, for GOD was not, and had never been.

"And all that happened while the '**salt of the earth**,' was abroad, and while that great, divine restrainer of evil, the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, was still upon the earth exercising His restraint.

"And, in a week from to-day, I believe it will be absolutely impossible to get a gathering like this. The world, the Flesh, the Devil, the Antichrist, will have almost absolute sway, and if any of us will live to GOD, we must be prepared to suffer the direst persecution, and all the horrors of the Great Tribulation, with its thousands of martyrs, will be the portion of those who will cleave to GOD, and flout Antichrist."

A deep, sullen growl, like that of some huge savage beast, rose here and there from a number of dissenters to these predictions.

Ralph lifted his head proudly, and fearlessly for his GOD, as he cried:

"There rises the first growl of the slumbering demon of Antichrist, which, only too soon, shall possess almost the whole world. Soon, a year, or two, less than that, doubtless, Antichrist will dominate the earth's peoples. None will be able to trade, to buy or sell, unless they bear on their forehead or their right hand, the Mark of the Beast. What will that mark be? I cannot tell. I do not know, no one save Antichrist, and the Devil who has incarnated him, can as yet know, I think."

Again that growl rose from the throats of some of the listeners. This time it was deeper, fuller, - more voices joined in it, and the savage note was more pronounced.

Suddenly, a mighty roar of thousands of voices, mingled with the blare of brass instruments penetrated into the building from the street. There followed, instantly, a general rising to their feet, and a rush of the people to the exits. The crush at the exits was terrible. Screams of women mingled with the hoarse cursings of men - men who had never uttered an oath before, found their mouth filled with hideous, blasphemous oaths. It was as if the very devil himself had suddenly possessed the crowd.

Ralph found himself alongside the Secretary of the church, the man who had preceded him in speaking. The pair watched and listened for a moment while noisily, slowly, painfully the people passed out of the building.

Involuntarily there sprang to Ralph's lips, and, before he realized it, he was uttering the words:

"The whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and was perished."

The two men were strangers, yet as they turned and faced each other, by some common impulse they clasped hands. For one instant it looked as though each would have spoken. Then, as though some strange power had tied their tongues, they moved on silently, side by side, down the wide aisle of the church, and passed out through the entrance doors of the now empty building.

The streets were filled with surging masses of people, and there was a glare of ruddy flames, while dense volumes of smoke poured into the upper air from the first of two huge cars drawn by hundreds of excited men, boys, and even women and girls.

In the center of the platform of the first car was a huge, altar-like construction in polished iron or steel. The center of the altar was evidently a deep hollow cauldron, into which a score of men, costumed as satyrs, were pitch forking Bibles. The four sides of the Altar-cauldron had open bars, so that, fanned on every side by the double draught of the car's motion, and the fairly stiff breeze that was blowing, the furnace roared fiercely, fed, as it incessantly was by the copies of GOD's Word.

Hundreds of wildly-excited men and women - many seemed semi-drunken - attired in every conceivable grotesqueness of costume, and forming a kind of open-air fancy-dress ball, disported themselves shamelessly about the cauldron car, and the triumphal car that followed in its wake.

The latter was a gorgeous structure, finished in gold, purple, and imitation white marble. Its center was a kind of *tableaux vivant*. On one side was an effigy of a parsonic kind of man, crucified head downwards upon a cross. A second side showed a theatre front with a staring announcement "seven day performances." A third side showed a figure of "Bacchus" crowned with vine-leaves and grape-bunches. A fourth side showed an entrance to a Law Court, with an announcement: "Closed Eternally, for since there is no marriage, there is no divorce."

Above all this was a golden throne, and in a deep purple-plush-covered chair sat a florid, coarsely-beautiful woman, with long hair of golden hue hanging down upon her shoulders and blowing in the breeze. She was literally naked, save for a ruffle of pink muslin about her waist. Upon her head was a crown, in her right hand she held a gilded crosier.

The most wanton, hideous licentiousness was the order of the hour among the mob of fancy-costumed people.

Ralph Bastin and his companion followed in the wake of the foaming, raging sea of semi-mad people.

"The French Revolution business over again," said Ralph - he had to shout into his friend's ear to be heard.

His companion nodded an assent, then bawled back:

"Whither are they bound, I wonder?"

Ralph pointed to a banner bearing the inscription.

"To St. Paul's."

The procession swept on, and seven minutes later the cars were rounded up in front of the open space before the Cathedral.

A score of policemen had managed to muster on the upper step of the flight. But the rush of the mob was irresistible. They took entire possession of the steps and all the open space around even to the head of Ludgate Hill.

Ralph had got separated from his companion, and found himself swept close up to the great triumphal car. Above him seated smilingly on her purple throne, in all her shameless nakedness, was the beautiful form of the foul souled harlot. Her gilded crosier was upheld between her naked knees, and now, in her right hand she held a goblet of champagne, just passed up to her. A bugle sounded for silence. The hush was instantaneous. Then as she held the goblet high aloft, her clear, shrill voice rang out in the toast she gave:

"To the World, the Flesh, and the Devil!"

She drained the sparkling draught, and tossed the goblet down into the upraised hand of a handsome, but dissolute-looking man, who, attired in the theatrical idea of Mephistopheles, appeared to be a kind of Master of Ceremonies.

A mighty roar of applause, mingled with cries of "Dolly Durden! Dear little Dolly Durden!" accompanied the drinking of the toast.

Again the bugle rang out for silence, and amid a hush as before, Mephistopheles shouted:

"The Sunday of the Puritans is dead and damned! Their Bible is burned and a dead letter!"

He pointed, as he uttered the last sentence, to the Satyrs who were piling the last of their stock of Bibles into the fiery furnace of the cauldron-altar.

His blasphemies were greeted with a roar of applause.

Then, as he obtained a comparative silence by the raising of his hand, he yelled:

"To Hyde Park."

The band struck up "Good St. Anthony," and the monster procession, swept down Ludgate Hill, hundreds of throats belching out the words of the song, to the music of the band:

"St. Anthony sat on a lowly stool,
A large black book he held in his hand,
Never his eyes from the page he took,
With steadfast soul the page he scanned.
The Devil was in his best humor that day,
That ever his Highness was known to be in,-
That's why he sent out his imps to play
With sulfur, and tar, and pitch, and resin:
They came to the saint in a motley crew,
Twisted and twirl'd themselves about,-
Imps of every shape and hue,
A devilish, strange, and rum-looking rout.
Yet the good St. Anthony kept his eyes
So firmly fixed upon his book,
Shouts nor laughter, sighs nor cries.
Never could win away his look."

Verse after verse belched forth from the now more or less raucous throats of the blasphemous mob, until, with unholy unctiousness, reaching the last verse but one, they screamed laughingly, vilely:

"A thing with horny eyes was there-
With horny eyes just like the dead,
While fish-bones grew instead of hair
Upon his bald and skinless head.
Last came an imp - how unlike the rest,-
A lovely-looking female form,
And while with a whisper his cheek she press'd,
Her lips felt downy, soft, and warm;
As over his shoulder she bent, the light
Of her brilliant eyes upon his page
Soon filled his soul with mild delight,
And the good old chap forgot his age.
And the good St. Anthony boggled his eyes
So quickly o'er his old black book,-
Ho! Ho! at the corners they 'gan to rise,
And he couldn't choose but have a look.

"There are many devils that walk this world,
Devils so meager and devils so stout,
Devils that go with their tails uncurl'd,
Devils with horns and devils without.
 Serious devils, laughing devils,
 Devils black and devils white,
 Devils uncouth, and devils polite.
Devils for churches, devils for revels,
Devils with feathers, devils with scales,
 Devils with blue and warty skins,
 Devils with claws like iron nails,
 Devils with fishes' gills and fins;
 Devils foolish, devils wise,
 Devils great, and devils small,-
But a laughing woman with two bright eyes
Proves to be the worst devil of them all."

It was all of Hell, Hellish, and should have proved conclusively, if proof had been desired, that with the translation of the Church, and the flight of the Holy Spirit, the last restraint upon man's natural love of lawlessness had been taken away.

Sweeping westwards, the hideous, blasphemous procession was continually augmented by crowds that swarmed up from side-streets, and fell-in in the rear of the marching throng.

Somewhere on the route, owing to a kind of backwash of the surging people, Ralph Bastin and the Secretary of the Church had become separated. At Piccadilly circus they came suddenly face to face again.

"What is this foul, blasphemous movement? What does it mean?" asked the Secretary. "Is this a beginning of organized lawlessness on the part of the Antichrist?"

"I think not," replied Ralph. "I should rather say that it was a bit of wanton outrage of all the decencies of ordinary life, and arranged by some of the rude fellows - male and female - of the baser sort. You noticed, of course, that most of those immediately connected with the two cars, looked like the drinking, smoking, sporting fellows who are the *habitués* of the music-halls and the promenades of the theatres."

An uproarious cheering of the mighty throng interrupted Ralph for a moment. Only those well to the front of the procession could know the cause of the cheering, but the whole mass of people joined in it. As the roar died away, Ralph Bastin took up the broken thread of his reply:

"Yet, for all I have just said, I feel it in my bones as Mrs. Beecher Stowe's old 'mammy' used to say, that this foul demonstration on this golden Sunday morning, is the unauthorized unofficial beginning of the Antichrist movement."

There was a couple of hundred yards between the tail of the actual procession, and Ralph and his companion. Hundreds of people thronged the sidewalks, but the road was fairly clear, and along the gutter-way there swept a gang of boys with coarse, raucous laughter, kicking - football fashion - two or three of the half-burned Bibles that had fallen from the cauldron-altar on the car.

The church Secretary visibly shuddered at the sacrilege. A pained look shot into Ralph Bastin's face, as he said:

"Such wanton, open sacrilege as that could only have become possible by the gradual decay of reverence for the word of GOD, brought about largely by the so-called 'Higher critics' of the last thirty years, the men who broke Spurgeon's heart, the Issachars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, those knowing ones who, like Issachar, thought that they knew better than GOD."

The two men walked on together in deep talk. Ralph learned that his companion was Robert J. Baring, principal of the great shipping firm, and of merchants and importers.

Baring was an educated man, and of considerable culture, and Ralph and he found that they had very much in common. But that which perhaps constituted the closest tie between them was the fact that both had lost their nearest and dearest, and were left to face the coming horrors of the Antichrist reign, and the hideousness of the great Tribulation.

"GOD grant," Ralph said once, as they talked, "that when the moment comes, as come it will, that we are called upon to stand for GOD, or die for Him, that we may witness a good confession."

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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