

The Lamp That Kept on Burning

By Phyllis Somerville.

"Please come and preach to us," pleaded a man who lived on an island off the coast of Korea.

The colporteur looked down, shifted his feet uneasily, and finally stammered, "I've never spoken in public before. You might be disappointed. I'm sure you can find a better speaker."

"There might be other speakers," the man replied, "but it may be a long time before one of them can come to our island. I've heard some of your beliefs, and I want to learn more. I'll also invite some of my friends to attend. Surely, you will not disappoint me."

The colporteur finally agreed, thinking that the man would bring his wife and maybe a friend or two. But what if more people came to the meeting? He very well knew how eager the Koreans were to hear the Gospel, and he knew that this was his God-given opportunity to speak for his Master.

"We will be looking for you," the man said as they parted.

Wondering why he had agreed, the colporteur made his way home to tell his wife. Together they knelt in earnest prayer. After getting up from their knees, they discussed what would be a good message and decided to use Daniel 2. "Many of our ministers seem to use it first," the colporteur reasoned.

"You'd better make some notes," his wife suggested. "Notes!" he exclaimed. "I'd better write the entire sermon word for word. I'm sure to forget some of it."

Together they sorted out the texts they needed. Knowing that the Lord was helping him think of the right words to say, the colporteur began to feel more confident.

The evening for the meeting arrived quickly—too quickly! But the colporteur knew his message well.

"Let's pray before we leave for the hall," he suggested to his wife. So again they knelt to ask God's blessing upon the little service.

They started early, well armed with equipment—Bible, sermon, and hymnal. As they walked down the dusty road, the colporteur and his wife kept overtaking

small groups of people headed in the same direction. They paid little heed at first, thinking that there was some entertainment in the village.

However, as they got closer to the appointed place, the colporteur began to get cold sweat on his hands as it dawned on him that he was not going to speak to “one or two friends.” All these people were coming to town to the meeting to listen to him!

They entered the shabby hall and looked at the audience of 150 eager people, packed into all the available space. The colporteur felt like a schoolboy wanting to run and hide.

His wife noted his anxiety and whispered, “I’ll be praying for you, dear.”

Appreciating the encouragement, he added, “I’ll need it. But God be praised for bringing out the folks to hear this humble servant.”

The “publicity man” ambled up to them. “See, I brought my friends.”

“It’s wonderful that you have invited so many people, but I am not a public speaker,” the colporteur said. “Do you think they will listen?”

“Yes, yes. They are all eager to learn about Jesus.”

The colporteur quickly chose some hymns that he thought he could teach the crowd to sing, and prayerfully he went to the front to the hall. He noticed that there was only a little dish lamp on the table at the front of the room. The lamp was like those used in Bible times, a type still commonly used in some parts of the world.

The people did their best to learn the hymns he taught them, and after a heartwarming prayer he proceeded to read his message. There was rapt attention and much nodding of heads.

But as their interest rose, the lamp grew dim. Too dim, in fact, for the colporteur to read his notes. He stopped abruptly and asked the man who had arranged the meeting whether more oil could be provided.

The embarrassed man stood up and humbly apologized to the colporteur. “We tried to buy more oil, but we couldn’t. There won’t be any more until a boat comes in, and that may take several days. I’m sorry, but we had already made arrangements and invited the folks. What should we do?”

The colporteur suddenly thought of the miracles in the Bible. There were even a couple in there about oil that didn’t run out. “Let’s pray,” he announced.

It seems that all the heads were reverently bowed except one. The little fellow it belonged to was sitting on the front row. Maybe he was waiting to see what God would do, now that the man of God was asking for a miracle.

Suddenly he shouted, "Look at the lamp!"

The colporteur said a hasty amen and opened his eyes. "Praise God!" he shouted.

The lamp flared up and was burning brightly! The room was in a hubbub. No one had ever seen anything like this before! The lamp continued to burn brightly on just one drop of oil. The audience insisted that the man resume his talk. Surely the God this man talked about was a God to be worshipped!

The colporteur felt as if he were living in a cloud assured of God's presence, he forgot his bashfulness and finished his sermon with power. The folks clamored for the meetings to continue, and so the encouraged speaker willingly and thankfully accepted the invitation. He knew God would work mightily.

The colporteur spoke for three more nights. Prayer was offered each night that God would perform a miracle because it was true that no oil could be purchased in the town. And during the seven hours of meetings the lamp continued to shine.

The light of the Gospel banished the darkness from the hearts of many people who had known nothing but idol worship. At the end of the meetings 60 people asked to be baptized. When a church was organized, its members declared that it was "the church where the light of truth will never go out."