Left Behind

~Other Speakers M-R: George Matheson:

"Thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi...The Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony…"

(Num. 1:49,53).

Here was apparently a neglected set of men--a class overlooked in the enrolment of the people. They were to be uncounted, discounted. A spectator would have said they were a specimen of those unfit for survival. In all the work of the nation they had neither part nor lot. We read, in the parable, of the Levite passing by on the other side; but here the Levite seems to be passed by. He is left behind by the stream of the world's activities; and, with the prophet, the beholder is disposed to say that his way is hid from the Lord and his judgment overlooked by his God.

And yet the beholder would be wrong. These men have not been overlooked, have not been shunted from the race of life. If they are left behind by the stream it is because there is a special duty to do which can only be done by those who are left behind. That special duty is to wait and watch. The Levites are to "keep charge of the tabernacle"--to see that no harm comes to the ark and what it contains. It seems a poor service when contrasted with the work of the numbered. In reality it was the greatest service of all. If anything had befallen the tabernacle, Israel would have collapsed immediately. The loss of ten thousand of her soldiers would have been nothing to the putting-out of her altar fire; the one might have weakened her strength, but the other would have killed her hope.

Thou who art unnumbered among the people, thou to whom there has been assigned no active work, there is a message here for thee. There is a service f or the unnumbered--for those who only stand and wait. There are Levites as well as priests in the temple of thy Father. There are those who have been laid aside from active duty--who have no district to visit in, no church to preach in, no mission to serve in. Through sickness, through poverty, through the requirement to attend on others, they have been retained indoors--their names are not enrolled. Weep not that thou art among these! Lament not that thy life has been lived behind the scenes! It is behind the scenes that all great things are born.