

*By the author of THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO, a tale of one hundred men who marched into imprisonment in a long, green valley. The imprisonment was not a usual one . . . neither was its effect. . . .*

## THE CAPTIVITY

*by Charles G. Finney*

YES, SAID ROPS, I KNOW IT sounds like the Abyssinia of Rasselas, but there it was, and it was real. One hundred of us were there; it dawned on us later that we had been selected. *They* held about six thousand of us as captives, you know. So *they* picked this Hundred, and all the rest were allowed to escape. It wasn't much they could escape to. Everything—nearly everything—was in ruins. But the escapees and the ones who were still alive in the cities and the villages they escaped to managed to rebuild, to survive. Probably that was the purpose in letting them escape.

Of course, why we Hundred were kept in captivity is something I'll never know. That was forty years ago, but things haven't changed a bit. We're all ready to go at it again—bang, bang, bang! The winners of the one forty years ago have become weakened,

and the losers have become strong. There seems to be some sort of law which governs these things, but I don't know what it is.

But the winners that time had been plenty strong, strong enough, I suppose, to have imposed their will on the whole world. A sort of compromise ended the fighting, but there was no question about who the victors were. There does seem to be a question now about who will win this next one; all sides are prepared about equally; the only way to settle it is to fight it out.

This Hundred I was in was captured in the Far North Region; *they* flew us out the next day—after *they* had culled us over—to the place which was to be our prison camp for the next three years. You have seen the green-covered hills rising in Hawaii and the green-covered chasms in Mindanae. It was a place like

There were many flare-ups over many things: scoring on the playing field, minor pilferings, suspected insults; and there were many, many fights over the girls, some of whom were prettier than the others. But none of the fights ever ended in murder. There seemed to be some agreement among us that One Hundred had marched into imprisonment and One Hundred would some day march out. So we beat and clawed and cursed each other, and sometimes we cut each other with flint knives, but never did we kill each other. I think that was our only pride.

For we could take no pride in anything else. When we had marched in we were civilized; at least we had the veneer of civilization. There were certain things we would do and certain things

we would not do. We obediently wore the loin cloths *they* had given us. We obediently said our prayers at night. But with no discipline over us, with no restrictions upon us, with no necessity for doing anything, with no animal desire left unfulfilled, we became as animals. We threw away our loin cloths and stopped saying our prayers.

You might say there was a price attached to all this. And there was. Our captivity ended exactly on the hour when the three years were up. One hundred men had marched into it; one hundred men marched out. We had marched in as one group, but we marched out as two. The first fifty of us to march out were those who had somehow survived. The second fifty were those who had gone mad.

