

And when the people complained,**A.B. Simpson:**

There is a very remarkable phrase in the book of Numbers, in the account of the murmuring of the children of Israel in the wilderness. It reads like this: "When the people, as it were, murmured." Like most marginal readings, it is better than the text, and a great world of suggestive truth lies back of that little sentence. Many a vivid picture rises before our imagination of people who do not dare to sin openly and unequivocally but manage to do it "as it were" only. They do not lie overtly, but they evade, or equivocate or imply enough falsehood to escape a real conviction of conscience. They do not openly accuse God of unkindness or unfaithfulness, but they strike at Him through somebody else. They find fault with circumstances and people and things that God has permitted to come into their lives and, "as it were" murmur. Perhaps they do not go any farther than that. But they feel like doing so. if they dared they would "charge God foolishly." These things were written for our warning.