

the barbarians. "After they had looked a great while and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god." Two things are to be noted in the conduct of the people: (1) The idea that the gods visited crime with present inflictions of punishment. They were right in that instinct which taught them that the gods abhor and punish crime. They were wrong in arrogating to themselves the right to say when any calamity was a mark of the divine displeasure. The guiding passage on this point is found in Luke 13: 1-5. The second point to note is the rapidity with which they changed their minds from thinking him to be a murderer to thinking him to be a god.

Such sudden change of view is the mark of ignorance. It shows that they were not governed by reason, but by prejudice, tradition, and popular superstitions.

We should be on our guard, not only against clinging to error—that is needed—but much more there is needed to-day, a guarding against the hasty adopting of loudly pronounced opinions. Let every such opinion, every proposal, be subjected to the light of reason, and of the word of God.

Let us be on our guard against jumping at conclusions. Specially we need to be careful when this has reference to the character of anyone. "He is a murderer!—He is a god!" What a difference between these conclusions. Both wrong; both groundless. We may imitate the barbarians in that noble feature of kindness which they exhibited to the distressed, but we must not imitate them, as is not infrequently done, in their hasty judgments and rash conclusions concerning the character and conduct of men. There is a tendency at present both in our religious and social world to the adoption of measures and taking up the opinions of men with undue haste. One side of the subject only is considered. The result is that harm is done; we are led into error. This conduct of the barbarians is a valuable lesson upon this important point, not to judge hastily.

"*The chief man of the island*"—Publius was of the same hospitable character as the people. "He received us and lodged us three days courteously."

It is said (chap. 27: 3) that Julius, the centurion, "courteously" entreated Paul. It is well to emphasize the apostle's injunction,

"Be courteous" (Pet. 3: 8). Christians should always act courteously. Cultured people, though not christians, generally do. The higher one's position and character is the more we expect to find, and generally do find, a courteous spirit. Our young people should be trained to be courteous; taught that this which we find in these heathen men should much more always be found in those who are the followers of Jesus Christ. Rude manners are inconsistent with christian character. Specially we should show courtesy to God's servants. The apostle was able in a very gratifying way to repay the kindness of Publius by healing his father, the effect of which was that "others also which had diseases in the island came and were healed." God takes note of kindness shown to His servants and repays it. How much blessing, temporal and spiritual, the landing of Christ's servant upon the island brought to its inhabitants! How many homes were blessed by his healing power, given him of God! How many lives gladdened with the knowledge of Christ! Such are the blessings which the gospel brings to every land to which it comes. The grateful people "honored us with many honors." When we departed they "laded us with such things as were necessary." So that the apostle, who was cast ashore in a destitute, shipwrecked condition, left the island with his wants fully supplied, and conscious of having done much for the service of the Master.

So God encourages his servants by using them. The three months spent in Melita were an encouragement and refreshment to the apostle, much needed on his way to Rome. The remainder of the journey by sea was from the Island to Puteoli, on the coast of Italy, then the "Liverpool" of the empire, the harbor at which the larger shipping centred, Ostia, the port of the city, being only used by smaller vessels. The journey from Puteoli to Rome was by land, along the famous Appian Way. He stayed at Puteoli 7 days, finding brethren there, and cheered by their society. Word of his arrival was sent forward to Rome. From Puteoli they went along the Appian Way to a place called Appii Forum. There he met with a deputation of brethren from Rome, who had come to meet and welcome him. "On that day in the motley and vulgar crowd, some of the few christians who were then in the world, suddenly recognized one