

The Home Mission Journal

A record of Missionary, Sunday School and Temperance work, and a reporter of church and ministerial activities, and general religious literature. Published semi-monthly.

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Cruising for the Cross.

By Rev. C. A. S. Dwight.

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CHAPTER VIII.

It was not difficult for Henton to obtain permission to hold gospel meetings on board the transport. This was made the more easy from the fact the Colonel in command, an officer of the old type, was a man of strong religious convictions, just as much a centurion of the Cross as he was a soldier of the United States Army. Rousing indeed were the choruses in which the soldier boys joined at these gospel meetings. The songs seemed to echo back almost from the old Rock of Gibraltar itself—for among the troops were many members of the Army Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association, and among the sailors attached to the crew were not a few Floating Endeavorers. And when the beautiful church pennant floated from the main masthead of the yacht, as many of the soldiers as could obtain liberty were brought aboard the *Glad Tidings* in its capacious launch. That they enjoyed those gatherings for prayer and praise and exhortation was evidenced by the tears that ran down the faces of the bronzed infantrymen, as one hymn after another, familiar from childhood days, touched their sensibilities to the quick.

Henton soon discovered that there were some sick soldiers on board the transport, and asked permission to visit them. The poor fellows were glad indeed to have a man so kindly as was John Henton visit them, and to hear him tell them in simple, earnest accents of the grace and power of the Great Physician who can heal the infirmities of men today as well as he could in Galilee of old. More than one fervent prayer did John Henton offer there in that sick-bay, and when he rose from his knees, the tears rolled down the faces of men who had always been regarded by their comrades as hard and brutal. It was the union of the gospel of divine grace and the gospel of human sympathy that softened those rough natures. More than one "God bless you, sir!" followed Henton as he left the sick-bay. Grace Henton also visited the sick soldiers. She wrote letters home for some and read to others, seeming to the home-sick sufferers like an angel of light and messenger of mercy sent directly from heaven itself.

Finally the troop-ship steamed away and the yacht followed in its wake for a half day or so, until their courses diverged. Adieus were waved from the after-decks of the transport and from the bridge of the yacht, as the two vessels parted company.

Not many days after, the *Glad Tidings* dropped anchor in the picturesque roadstead of Malta, the ancient Melita, the island upon which the brave apostle Paul while being transported in chains to Rome was wrecked—the Roman corn ship on which the centurion and his prisoners were embarked having been shattered on an outlying ledge. Henton's soul thrilled as he thought of the history that since Paul's times centered in that rocky isle—of the Knights of St. John and wonderful deeds of that heroic and danger-daring Order.

It happened to be the Easter season when the *Glad Tidings* arrived, and it was interesting to the Americans to observe how the Maltese and the Greeks, who were so numerous in the port, observed the day. A Russian man-of-war was anchored near them, and at earliest dawn on Easter Sabbath they could hear the sailors and officers saluting one another with a formula

which they were told meant, "The Lord is risen!" the answer in each instance being, "The Lord is risen indeed!" The night before, over the waters from the city, floated the solemn strains of the "Song of the Resurrection"—the hymn sung by the pilgrims on Good Friday at Jerusalem—followed on Easter morn by the triumphant notes of "Christ is Risen!" It seemed strange to Americans to observe how the crowds in the streets, composed in many cases of rough-looking people, seemed to feel that Easter somehow had a meaning for them and joined heartily in the festivities, if not in the more religious parts, of the celebration.

John and Grace took many rambles and drives about Malta and the suburbs, visiting St. Paul's Bay, the traditional scene of the shipwreck of the apostle, the account of which John, opening his New Testament, read aloud with a fresh interest.

So a week passed pleasantly away, affording a few incidental opportunities to do good among the mixed population of Malta, in spite of the difficulties presented by the many languages spoken.

One evening as Henton came down to the quay, Grace having gone back earlier to the yacht, he noticed a squally look in the air, and found some difficulty in getting safely into his launch, which was beating against the sides of the quay. It was hard work getting back to the yacht, for the sea, in accordance with its treacherous character, was rising steadily all the while. At last gaining the deck of the yacht, Captain Henton at once took council with the first officer, who shook his head ominously.

"I don't like the looks of the sky—this Levantine weather is tricky," he said. "You can't tell what it's going to do next!"

"We must make things shipshape for the night," replied Henton.

That night Captain Henton slept not a wink. The storm increased, and the vessels in the crowded harbor were constantly tossing and tugging at their anchors. Towards morning another anchor was let go, for a luckless lugger near them had gone ashore in the night, and presumably the whole crew had been drowned. The harbor of Malta—a fine one for most winds is utterly unprotected if the wind blows in from a certain quarter. Running below for a bit of food in the early morning, Henton found Grace already very anxious. Snatching a hasty breakfast, John said:

"Let us have morning prayers!"

"What, now?" said Grace.

"Why, yes," replied Henton. "Prayer and pro- vender hinder no man's journey!"

So out came Henton's well worn little New Testament, which, strangely, happened to open to the words, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."

A singular appropriateness seemed to attach to those words just then and there—how appropriate was soon to be proved.

Kneeling as best he could in the rocking cabin, Henton poured out a hasty but heartfelt prayer that the day might not bring disaster to any. Then he ran on deck.

The scene from the bridge of the yacht was thrilling, yet disconcerting. Even the big ships about them were tumbling and tugging impatiently at their anchors. Some were driving ashore, for when once a vessel began to drift, it seemed as though nothing could stop it. A few steamers anchored farther out, and able to maneuver better, put on all steam and managed to work their way out to sea, clear of the lee shore. Henton soon decided to give orders to do the same thing—or at least to start the engines to ease up the strain on the hawsers. But alas! hardly had the screw turned a dozen times when with a crash the engines came to a stop. The cause of the trouble was soon learned. The break was not a serious in itself, but it could not be repaired in the storm, and the *Glad Tidings* was in one instant degraded to the helpless condition of a sailing-vessel—and seemed hardly better fitted to battle with the storm than was the poor lugger that had been wrecked in the night.

The best men are the ones who have come out of the toughest struggles.

To our Readers.

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

Most earnestly do I ask you all who are getting the paper to read this statement and weigh well what is here said. I am now laid up again with this terrible asthma, that has gradually worn out my strength, so that I am unfit for any kind of work, and even writing is a burden to me now. I was in hopes all along that I should be able to attend the associations and meet with many of you there. But it is plain that I shall have to close up the paper soon, probably with the December issues of the present year. I have greatly enjoyed the work of publishing it, as it has kept me in touch with my brethren, but this I am no longer able to do. I feel that I am nearing the immortal shore, having passed my seventy-eighth year, and must now look upon my work and pilgrimage here as nearing its close.

As I can not go and see you, dear friends, I will have to employ some one to go in my stead to collect from each subscriber what will be due up to the close of this year. And dear friend, look at the date marked on your paper, and you will be able to tell how much you will have to pay the agent when he comes. I do hope that many who are in arrears will send in payments at once, and relieve me of the financial pressure that compels a halt, and makes it necessary for me to close up the paper. There would be no trouble if each subscriber would make his payment every year, but in many cases these are not made for two and even a three years. Some, after promising to send the amount in a few days, have allowed months, and even a year to pass before remitting.

Now dear friends I do not want this financial load upon me any longer. I am looking forward to the rest that remains for the children of God. All is bright over there, but down here there is much perplexity and anxiety. Yet in Him I have peace, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day. In Him I stand complete, perfect and pure. In myself I am guilty, sinful, condemned and lost, but He has gone to the end of the law for righteousness for me, and for all who will accept Him as Redeemer, Saviour and Sovereign. Why should doubts and fears prevail, since God hath made Christ unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption?

Sin will assert itself, and we cannot battle with it alone, but God giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beneath my hope of the future there are four massive foundations. If Satan accuses me of transgression, I answer, it is Christ that died; if death alarms me, I answer, yea rather, he is risen again, and because He lives I shall live also. He is even at the right hand of God, having all power in heaven and on earth, and as I need a special friend in heaven to care for me while I am in my pilgrim state, I know that He there maketh intercession for me. Then I exclaim, "Bless the Lord O, my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name."

IN CONCLUSION.

During the past six years in managing the HOME MISSION JOURNAL I have found the rank and file of our Baptist constituency in a large majority to be an upright, kindly and generous lot of people. With a few, however, there has been a different disposition. Some excuses concerning irregularity and other matters have been urged. Well, whose fault is it? We mail it as regularly as possible to every subscriber; possibly through some oversight in the post office delays have happened. But there is one thing all can do; they can let us know when it is not coming, giving full and correct addresses, and we can have it attended to at once. To one and all who have shared with us these burdens and labors we extend our heartfelt gratitude, trusting that in some measure the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ has been extended thereby, and that in the blissful future before us we may rejoice together over the harvest gathered in.

THE MANAGER.

The Bible was never so much in the minds of the people as today.—Dr. Alexander Blackburn.