

The Days that are no More, or Glimpses at the Past with Lessons for the Future.

BY VERNON LAMBDIN.
IV. ROUGH MUSIC.

One evening my aunt and I were sitting quietly at tea, when we heard a strange din apparently on the road some distance away. As we listened it grew louder and seemed to be coming nearer. There was a great clatter, mingled with shouts and derisive laughter: the sounds being rather noisy than melodious. "That's the rough music," said my aunt, "they're going to rough music old Grimley, and serve him right, too." Though only a child I had heard Grimley's name mentioned with abhorrence by our neighbors. He was notorious for his meanness, and recently he had increased the general dislike for his character and afresh incensed the villagers against himself by marrying a young wife three months after burying his first wife, whom he was rumored to have ill-used.

The youthful members of the community were therefore bent on giving loud and public expression to the feelings of aversion and disapprobation which were entertained for him. They had for that purpose armed themselves with old pots, and pans, bells, horns, whistles, and other contrivances for producing hideous and discordant effects. They were first, according to their custom on such occasions, walking round the village to attract attention and beat up recruits, afterwards they would spend some time in serenading the object of their disfavor.

It will be seen that such a demonstration bears a resemblance to a Canadian charivari. There is, however, this essential difference that in the old country it always implied disgrace. It was reserved solely for those who had in some way offended the public sense of rectitude and decency. And, in speaking of it, we used the strong and expressive English phrase "rough music" rather than the more euphonious French term charivari. It is an ancient custom, and was "used originally to annoy widows who had married a second time at an advanced age." Later it was employed as a mark of contempt towards either men or women who had in any way disgraced themselves.

So much was my aunt in sympathy with this display of righteous indignation against Grimley that she permitted me to join the "rough music" band, and even provided me with some instrument of torture.

I found myself among a company of nearly fifty boys and young men, most of whom were considerably my seniors. I was sensible of the honour done in admitting me to their ranks, and comported myself with becoming dignity, endeavoring to contribute my share to the judicial bullaballoo, being aware that it had its serious as well as sportful aspect. We marched the entire length of the village: as we went, both our numbers and noise augmenting. Finally we reached Mr. Grimley's residence, which we compassed somewhat in the manner of the Israelites when besieging Jericho. But the walls did not fall, nor was any response made to our persistent overtures. The blinds were all drawn and the place in total darkness. Neither withered bride-groom nor blushing bride ventured "to face the music." They must have passed an uncomfortable half hour, and been obliged to listen to several uncomplimentary remarks concerning themselves. Many opprobrious epithets were heaped upon Mr. Grimley, not a few questions of a very personal nature addressed to him, and some salutary advice offered for his benefit. He evidently thought discretion the better part of valour, and did not show any open resentment. It is to be hoped that though he could not undo his shameful past, he sought to walk more circumspectly in future, and that his young wife may have been better treated in consequence of the severe lesson administered to him. After we had given full vent to our feelings we separated and took our several ways homewards.

I have thus described that instance of the application of "rough music," because it has a religious significance. It indicated the presence in our village of a healthy public conscience. It showed that the people were not deficient in a sense of right and wrong, and that they would not tolerate without protest, any outrageous breaches of morality. One of the greatest blessings any country or community can possess is a sound conscience, and the capability of holy anger. It is to be feared that these are not as common as formerly. We tamely acquiesce to day in a state of affairs that would have aroused our fathers to the highest pitch of righteous ire. We allow moral lepers to pass freely about in society without question; we wink at corrupt practices in politics on both sides; we do not recoil from trickery in trade; and in many of our churches we hardly make the slightest attempt to maintain wholesome discipline. These things ought not so to be. A love of righteousness implies a hatred of wickedness. We are exhorted to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them. That admonition is found in the New Testament, and is in accord with the spirit and practice of God's servants in the early days of the church. We remember who it was that cleansed the temple; we cannot forget the doom that befell the perfidious Ananias and Sapphira; we are aware how sharply Peter reprimanded the necessary Simon in Samaria; we know what solemn

words were addressed by Paul to the Corinthians, and how he says he will not spare those who have sinned; and we have read the stern warnings of the beloved John concerning anti-christ, and how he enjoins believers not to receive into their houses any that are untrue to the faith, neither greet them—informing us that those who greet them are partakers of their evil deeds. These instances show us that evil and error are not to be countenanced, and that there is a place even under the gospel dispensation for righteous indignation. It seems to me that a little "rough music" now and then would clear the moral atmosphere and have a good effect. How would it be to try its influence upon some reprobate professors of religion? We know that in earthly armies those who disgrace the colors are drummed out of the regiment. Would it not be well if some who are grossly and persistently inconsistent were expelled from churches, and their conduct branded as unworthy the King whose name they bear and whom they profess to serve? Of course care must be exercised so that a distinction may be made between incorrigible apostates, and erring saints. If some have compassion, making a difference and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Coming to the outside world we find an urgent need for the employment of "rough music." Why not treat those who give and receive bribes to such a serenade? The only difficulty in some districts, would be to find enough honest electors to take part in such punitive proceedings. May the time come when the giving or receiving of money for that which should be zealously guarded and conscientiously discharged as a sacred trust, shall be held up both to ridicule and reprehension!

Would it not be advisable to "rough music" those who sell liquor contrary to law? If people are, with good reason, suspected of such illegal traffic and a clear case cannot be made out against them from lack of direct evidence, a demonstration of injured public feeling might sometimes be as effective as a fine. Mrs. Carrie Nation made such telling "rough music" with her hatchet that even the hardened rum-sellers had to pay heed to it. For my part I would be sorry to have such a useful and musical hatchet buried forever; for I cannot see what right law-breakers have to legal protection. Even licensed saloons might be given a turn of "rough music" once in a while. There is plenty of it inside made by the frenzied victims of strong drink. Why not occasionally have a little outside rendered by sober but indignant citizens as an expression of their opinion of such places?

Among those who really merit such noisy and mocking attentions are the divorcees who abound in the neighboring republic. When such people re-marry instead of the pealing of wedding bells they should be saluted with the clash of rusty metal and shouts of derision. We are thankful that some churches are taking a resolute stand against this monstrous evil, and are refusing to countenance the marriage of those who have lightly broken the solemn ties of a previous union. Happily, in this country we are untroubled at present by this menace to society. May our people ever remain true to mother, home, and heaven!

Men who rise upon the ruins of their fellows, who become rich through grinding the faces of the poor, or who build up wealthy monopolies at the cost of wreckage to smaller concerns, these should be greeted with "rough music" rather than the homage which their millions too often now command. The apostle James, speaks of some "rough music" which will one day startle the ears of certain rich men "Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped your fields which is, of you, kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of those who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabbath."

What terrible "rough music" awaits the finally impotent! What a day that will be "when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." How the sinner's heart will be confounded when the last trumpet sounds the summons to judgment. And how unspeakably dreadful the banishment to outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. I pray that the reader may never hear or participate in those sounds of hopeless woe. Let us listen now to the sweet music of the voice of Jesus as he bids us come to Him for rest. Then shall we pass with singing to Zion, we shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Our Church Covenant.

What do we mean by our church covenant? We mean that solemn compact into which we have entered with God and with one another. I say solemn compact, because it is a most solemn compact.

We understand that when the ancients entered into a covenant they slew a beast, and when they had cut it in pieces, they so placed the pieces that all the members of the compact might pass in and out among the pieces of the bleeding carcass. Thus sealing the covenant, into which they were entering, with very life and very death. At the same time meaning that before they would break that covenant they themselves would suffer to be cut in pieces. There is no doubt that the ancient practice of sealing the covenant with blood was from the beginning of the race

and of divine origin, for when God entered into covenant with his people it was by blood. So that from the blood of Able's offering to the blood of Calvary there is one long stream of covenant blood. So solemn, so sacred, is the covenant between us and God.

But our church covenant is in no way different from that covenant that our Saviour sealed with his blood. We are not asked to do anything in our "Church Covenant" that we are not asked to do in the New Testament. That very covenant upon which rests the forgiveness of our sins and the salvation of our souls. Our church covenant and the requirements of the New Testament are identical. It is that covenant of which God says "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission."

And we are told that our Lord in the same sad night in which he was betrayed, "took the cup when he had supped, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood which is given to you." It is that same covenant that we most solemnly renew every month when we partake of the Supper of our Lord; and the broken bread, representing the broken body of our Lord, and the cup of wine representing his precious blood are passed in and out among us. Thus we seal again amid the bleeding wounds of our Lord that covenant of our redemption in which we solemnly renounced the devil and all his work and earnestly promised to live to the interest of Christ's church and kingdom and to do those things that are pleasing in the sight of God. And our church covenant only asks the same thing of us.

There are at least some among us who are averse to signing a pledge or subscribing in any way to anything that is binding. What! Have these people made up their minds to do nothing? No, but they feel that their oath, their hand and seal, is something more than the mere word of their mouth. Now we know our Saviour said "Swear not at all, but let your word be yes, yes, and nay, nay, for what is more than this cometh of evil." Why did our Lord say this, because he was averse to swearing in itself? No, No. But because the oath weakens the mere word of mouth and Jesus would have us to hold that our mere word of mouth needed no oath to strengthen it, but that our word was as binding as our oath, our hand and seal. And let us know that every time we take the cup of our Lord in our hand we say in the most solemn presence of God and angels and men "Witness ye my hand and seal to the covenant I have made with God concerning my life and my soul."

With these few words of introduction let us turn to our covenant for a little. And I notice first the holy and august body of witnesses in whose presence we entered into this contract or covenant.

"We do now, in the presence of the great all-seeing and most glorious God, and before angels and men, solemnly enter into covenant with the great head of the church, and with one another."

Surely no one among us is so void of the power of imagination that he cannot see and feel the awe inspiring influence of this holy and august assembly. Then how can one stand in the presence of God and angels and men and take such a solemn oath of allegiance, only to turn away and think no more about it? Are there such among us? Alas we fear too many. But rather than censure let us pray for such, that God may be doing them back.

The rest of the paragraph reads—"Promising in humble reliance upon Divine help to walk together in Christian love, to watch for one another's welfare, to remember one another in prayer, to comfort one another in sickness or distress, to be ever slow to take offense, ready to forgive, and eager for reconciliation."

"To walk together in Christian love." All this we may find in the 13th chapter of 1st Cor. Where we are told that without love we are nothing.

"To watch for one another's welfare, to remember one another in prayer." "Love envieth not" "Love seeketh not its own" "To comfort one another in sickness or distress" "Love suffereth long and is kind" "To be ever slow to take offense" "Love is not provoked" "Ready to forgive" "Taketeth not account of evil" "Eager for reconciliation." "Love beareth all things, endureth all things, Love never faileth."

I think it would be difficult for us to find a sweeter chapter in the whole Bible than the 13th chap. of 1st Cor. And I think we would be better Christians if we read it more.

If we were living up to our covenant we would be living in this 13th chapter of 1st Cor. and I am sure a life lived there would be a most sweet and Godly, Christlike life.

The next paragraph of our Covenant refers to the executive life of the church member. And reads—

"We also promise to labor and pray for the temporal and spiritual prosperity of this church, to attend regularly its services, sustain its doctrines, ordinances and discipline, to contribute freely of our means for the payment of its expenses for the relief of the poor, and for the spread of the gospel at home and abroad." All this we may find in the Acts of the Apostles and chap. verses 41-47.

"Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayer. And all that believed were together and had all things common and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need, and they continued day by day with one accord in the temple."