

WATER JOURNEY CHEER

REV. DR. TALMAGE ELOQUENTLY RECALLS PAUL'S VOYAGE

CONFIDENCE VS. COWARDICE

Influence of Personal Feelings Upon Those About Us—How Mental States Beget Similar Mental States in Others—Faith As Well As Cowardice Infectious—What Makes Men Heroes.

Watered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1904, by William Bailly, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., May 15.—A timely gospel for the great multitude who cross the ocean at this season or who journey on any waters, whether for pleasure or business, is today the theme of the preacher. The text is Acts xxviii, 36. "Then they were all of good cheer."

Have you ever followed the sea? In these days of multiplied facilities for ocean travel, when mammoth liners, equipped like floating palaces, carry tens and hundreds of thousands of passengers to and from across the seas, with a sense of security added to the minimum of discomfort, we little think of the discomfort attendant upon the ocean voyages of half a century ago. But though the conditions of sea travel have so vastly improved in recent years that a journey across the Atlantic or up the Mediterranean is no longer an undertaking to be dreaded there are still many traditions of the sea which time has not materially changed. If you have traveled much upon the ocean, you must know that there are superstitious sailors who dislike to carry ministers, or, as they call them, "sky pilots," in their ships. Ever since the receding of the sea, because he would persist in going to Tarshish when God told him to go to Nineveh, there have been sailors who believe the presence of a minister upon their ship means head winds and storms and disasters and misfortunes. This prejudice against carrying a minister, like the prejudice against carrying a corpse or the starting of a voyage on a Friday, has been gradually getting less and less as sailors have become better educated.

Rev. Dr. James McGregor Alexander, the honored missionary of India, told me that when he and his wife and five other missionaries in 1865 set sail for India the sailors were in almost open mutiny at the idea of carrying such a dangerous cargo of human freight, but when they arrived in Calcutta, after a long four months' voyage of unprecedented clear weather, those sailors were so surprised that instead of considering their ministerial passengers "Jonahs" they looked upon them as "fair weather" angels. So completely had their opinion changed that they told their captain, who knew of their former foreboding, that they wished the missionaries were going back with them on their return voyage.

Superstition, however, is not easily eradicated. This prejudice against ministerial passengers has survived for centuries. Yet in the scene of my text we have an instance of its being overcome. Here is Paul, a landsman, a prisoner and a missionary, so winning the confidence of the crew that they heed his warnings and follow his suggestions. It was, too, in a crisis when nautical skill was needed that they listened to him. There was a storm raging of unusual violence. The dreaded hurricane they called euroclydon was lashing the Mediterranean into fury. There was darkness even at midday; all reckoning lost, all hope given up. Then the 275 persons on board turned to this little Jewish missionary for guidance and encouragement. They had begun the voyage against his advice. They might be prejudiced against him as a preacher and a prisoner, but they listened to him when he addressed them, bidding them be of good cheer. "And when he had thus spoken he took bread and gave thanks to God in presence of them all, and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat."

Why were the crew and the pas-

sengers of this Alexandrian corn ship happy of heart? First, because faith always begets faith, and confidence confidence, and good cheer good cheer. The belief which Paul felt that "there should be no loss of any man's life, but of the ship," was, by his personal example, instilled into the hearts and minds of those by whom he was surrounded. We know that cowardice is infectious. We know that when a ship is sinking at sea there is liable to be such a rush for the boats that a panic may ensue. Then the captain, knowing well that only by order and equanimity is there hope for the safety of any, will draw his pistol, and, with determined mind, declare that he will shoot the first man who disobeys orders in forcing his way into the life-boats. We know that when a regiment is resisting the charge of an enemy the colonel will take his position in the rear of the line and shoot down any cowardly soldier who would turn and flee. If one soldier were allowed to run to the rear, the whole regiment, like a herd of terror-stricken cattle, might be stampeded with fear. If cowardice be infectious, why may not hope also be infectious?

In the storms and trials of life how often have courage and fortitude been inspired by the example of some man strong in faith and undaunted in his confidence in God! Men will believe in Christ's power to save when they see a man whose reliance on him keeps them calm in the presence of death. When Hugh Latimer, the dying martyr, turned to the trembling Ridley, who was being tied to the stake at the same time that he was being tied, and said, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out," at once Nicholas Ridley became a man. His nerves ceased their quivering, and he was able to die as a Christian hero.

Yes, yes. We all know what the power of a personal example means in life. We know that when men are brave about us they make us brave. We know that when men are true they make us true. We know that when men are noble examples of Christian faith they inspire us with like Christian faith. So when Paul, amid the shriekings and groanings and heavings and bombardments of the Mediterranean whirlwind, calmly and deliberately stepped forth and said, "Men, I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life, but of the ship," then the sailors and passengers stopped and said to themselves: "Why, that is strange talk. We cannot understand it, but Paul must have had a supernatural vision, or else he could not have spoken thus. You speak so positively, O preacher, that we believe you. What a God yours must be to inspire such confidence! Would that we had your faith and your religion." Men and women of the Christian life, are your actions and words living witnesses of your faith in the saving grace of Jesus Christ?

Why are the crew and the passengers of this Alexandrian corn ship happy of heart? Because Paul kept holding up before them the mistakes of their past life in order that they might the more easily be led to follow in his way. Paul was not a mere taunter, a sneerer, a ridiculer, a tantalizer. "Why," was not one of those mean, contemptible fellows who always stand around when anything goes wrong and say, "I told you so."

But Paul was like a good physician who comes to an overworked man and says: "My friend, I told you if you did not hold up you would have a nervous breakdown. Now this breakdown has come. Therefore I want you now to trust me and do what I tell you to do, and then we will make you well." Paul in the same gentle way as the good physician stand before those helpless voyagers and says: "Friends, I told you not to loose from Crete. I told you that if we tried to make Rome during this winter equinoctial you would regret it. But now that this harm has come to you I want you to obey my commands, and I promise, by the God whom I represent, that there shall be no loss of any man's life, but of the ship."

It is a contemptible characteristic to tell a man his faults and keep telling them, merely to glory in his misery, even as a fenshish cat might tease and tantalize a little mouse

and yet not kill it. It is a contemptible thing for a man to come around when your little child lies cold in death and say: "Well, So-and-So, I am sorry your baby is dead, but I knew she would die. I knew it when you called in Dr. Big-dose as your physician. He always kills more patients than he ever cures. I told you so. I told you so. If you had only followed my advice, your baby would be alive to-day." Can he being the child back to life again?

In order to erect a mansion it is often necessary to tear down and clear away the walls of an old family homestead. But no man has a right to tear down or destroy anything unless he can erect a better in its place. The most mischievous of all social reformers is the destructive iconoclast who has nothing to offer us in the place of the institutions he would tear down. It is easy enough to be a censorious critic. It is not so easy a matter to furnish a better for that which you deride. I remember many years ago, as an imaginative boy, I read that strange, horrible story called "Caesar's Column." In that story I followed its author step by step as he deftly tore the beautiful patterns of modern society into shreds. In horror I read on as he denounced the social status, not as the generation of a Noah was destroyed by this old earth as a water-logged craft, shipping tidal wave after tidal wave, but as a huge column of piled up corpses. But as the years have passed by and boyish imagination has given place to sober thought, the flames and the smoke arising from the funeral pyre of Caesar's column, embellished with dead bodies, have grown less and less. The great airships which circled about in the heavens as great flocks of destroying birds have collapsed. Why? Because I see as a man that, though Ignatius Donnelly might advocate the destruction of society by finding fault with it, yet with his brain he could not construct for us a better Utopia. Like Paul, never ridicule a man, never probe for his faults, unless at the same time you can show him how to correct those faults. Never refer to a man's malady or deformity unless you can tell him of a doctor who can apply a remedy for it.

Why were the crew and the passengers of the Alexandrian corn ship of good cheer? Because Paul was a man of Christian commonsense as well as of supernatural visions. He knew that the only religion that could really help a man must be a religion that could help him in the present life as well as fit him for a life beyond the grave. It was not only the promise of safety in the future that he gave those people, but the sound commonsense counsel of preparation, by keeping up their strength for insuring that safety.

"What are you driving at anyway?" says some one. "Is Paul a mere hygienic lecturer?" He is more than that, but he does not think it beneath his dignity, after seeing the vision of God, to tell the crew and the passengers of the Alexandrian corn ship to look after their physical necessities. He does not think it irreligious to gather the men and the women of the doomed ship together and say: "What you are going to be saved, but God will never do his part unless we are ready to do ours. Now, to-morrow we are going to all

get safely to land, but there is to be a big drain upon our physical resources. Some of us are now completely fagged out. We have not had a good meal for nearly two weeks. Let the cooks go and prepare the most nourishing dinner they can; then let us by turns gather in the cabins, old and young alike, and eat a good, hearty repast. We need faith for the soul; we also need meat for the body. Some people think the most dramatic episode of Paul's life was when he stood upon Mars hill and argued with the Greek philosophers; others when he pleaded for his life before Agrippa. I think the most impressively dramatic incident was when he was standing upon the rocking, heaving deck of a vessel whose hull was gradually filling with water and telling the passengers and the crew to eat and look after their bodies, as God would surely save them on the morrow.

Why were the crew and passengers of the Alexandrian corn ship of good cheer? Paul had not deceived them as to the manner of their coming to Rome. He had bluntly yet clearly told them what would happen, and, as events were turning out just as he had described, they were not in the least astonished when the ship came within sight of land and they knew that she was doomed. Though the vessel might be lost, they felt that their own lives were to be saved.

Just read very carefully, if you will, the account of this prophecy. Paul did not stand forth in the midst of them and say: "Oh, men, the tornado will cease and the billows of the sea shall lie down, and the sun will again break forth from behind the clouds, and, in gala day attire, we shall sail into the harbor of our destination." He did not prophesy a pleasant voyage with all friends gathered on the shore to greet them as they disembarked. He did not say, "We shall only be detained a few days and then hurrah for the pleasures of life in the city!" Oh, no; that was not Paul's way. He told the truth. He said: "Men, we shall be saved; but, like Job, we shall only escape as by the skin of our teeth. We must become water-logged. We must beach our craft and it will be beaten and gnashed into kindlings. We must lose all our cargo and personal baggage. We shall be rescued alive, but that is all."

Then, when the sailors saw the fulfillment of the prophecy of Paul, their faith in their leader and in their leader's God not only continued, but increased day by day. I believe that in urging men to come to Christ we make a mistake when we do not frankly state the hardships and difficulties of the Christian life. There are, as every experienced Christian knows, sacrifices that must be made, privations that must be endured, struggles that must be fought. It is better that we acknowledge the fact, as Christ did

which men came to him offering themselves as his disciples. If we fail to tell them that they must expect trial and perhaps adversity in following Christ they will consider that they have been deceived and will be disappointed and discouraged when they encounter trouble. As Paul told these men that they would have to battle with the waves and be in danger of death on that rocky coast before they reached safety, so we should tell men that the way to heavenly joys is often hard and toilsome. Paul demanded of those passengers and sailors of the Alexandrian corn ship the same sacrifices for their physical salvation which Herodotus demanded of his followers for the conquest of Mexico. During one of his marches the Spanish soldiers became disaffected. Cortes assembled his men in line. "Men, some of you are grumbling," he said substantially. "Some of you want to know what rewards I have to offer you at this time. This is my answer." Then, drawing a line upon the ground with the edge of his sword, he pointed with his steel to that side of the line where ease and comfort and friends and a life of ease in fair Spain. "Then, pointing to the great west, he said: 'Yonder are sickness and privation and hunger and cold and death. But yonder is the beautiful capital of the Montezumas. Which shall be yours? Choose ye this day as ye will. Choose ye as brave Castilians!'

Christ to-day, like Paul, like Herodotus, promises his followers not peace, but struggle and privation; not ease and comfort, but storm and suffering and trials and misery. But in the end, like Paul, Christ assures you of salvation. Aye, Herodotus then Paul offered to the shipwrecked sailors and passengers of the Alexandrian corn ship, Christ offers to you spiritual redemption for time and for eternity. Men and women, are you ready to face suffering and sacrifice in the name of Jesus Christ? Are you willing to believe him and trust in him?

But why should not the passengers and crew of the Alexandrian corn ship be of good cheer? Did not the prophetic words of Paul literally come true? When the mighty ship struck the beach what happened? Paul turned to the brawny-armed men about him and said, "Leap into the surf and swim for your lives." And these stout-limbed men flung themselves into the seething waters and swam on until at last their feet touched the shore and they made ready to rescue their struggling friends. Some of the women, being in all probability strapped to spars, were lifted by the heaving billows and swept upon the rocks, where they were rescued. Some of the men may have come ashore clinging to boards and broken gunwales. At times it seemed as though they must be washed off, but somehow they are at last all landed. So in the end of time and in the beginning of eternity all Christians shall be safely brought to the heavenly shores, through stress and storm and peril, it may be, but still safe. Yes, we will be there. We shall all be there. Courage, Christian brother. Fear not the perils of the passage. "Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," the promise of Christ, like the words of Paul, shall come gloriously true.

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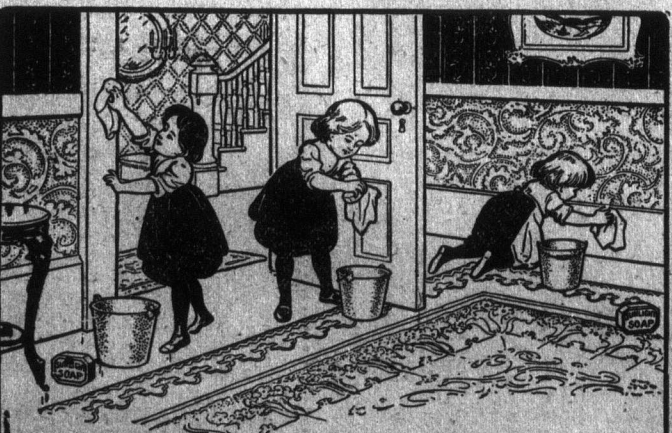
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