

Choice Literature.

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT.

"And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision."

Not only in our village, but for miles around the country, everybody knows the story of Lemuel Latimer's strange experience, but it is explained in very different ways. There are some who say the whole affair was but a series of coincidences; others who assert that any man, even such as Lemuel, started out in search of adventures, would be sure to find them; while still others laugh and say nothing. For my own part, I took the story as Lemuel gave it me; and as he looks at it, so do I. Neither of us tries to explain it, and, in truth, where would be the use? That it is true, there are many people to testify; how it came to pass, there is no one to tell.

It happened in this way. Lemuel was asleep in his bed when he was suddenly awakened by a great light, which filled the room so he could see everything as though it was day, even the Golden Treasury, which was lying on his table, even the place where he had been reading before he went to bed. At first he was a little confused by the radiance, but then perceiving the moon was shining, and remembering it was the harvest-moon, and therefore brilliant, he smiled, and would have gone to sleep again. But this he could not do, and he was the more willing to stay awake because it had always appeared to him that it was almost a wickedness to be sluggish and refuse to watch the glory of God as it is revealed in the skies at night. And so, lying there, many thoughts came into his mind, and it seemed to him that perhaps one of the reasons why God has so withdrawn Himself from us, and why we no longer understand His dispensations, is because we now live in the day only, when the bustle of the affairs of the world pushes away all revelations of the Divine will. In the olden time, when both the shepherd and the traveller slept out under the stars, and gave their attention to the sights and the sounds which belong to God, such as the shooting of the stars, or their tranquil passage in the darkness, or the moan of the dove and the rustle of the leaves—which is different from their rustle in the daytime—they came nearer to the heart of the Creator of all things, and comprehended much that is now unknown to us. There is nothing truer, as Lemuel often says, than this, "that the thing we hear is the thing we listen for;" and, as I once heard a minister say, upon the one night of the world there must have been, as now, wise people studying by the light of lamps, and great people awake feasting in their palaces, but it was not to them the message came, but to the watchers of the works of God. Often as I am awake at midnight I feel there is a great holiness visiting the earth, and I wonder if the angels are not at the moment singing, and if, although we cannot hear them, we do not feel there is a difference. Hard indeed must be the heart that does not understand this, and which in the night does not have thoughts strange and solemn. For my own part at such times I remember with great peace that when my dear aunt Eunice died, it was in the night, and when we found her in the early morning—having no thought that she was to go so soon—she was lying with the sweetest smile on her face, and her eyes open and clear, looking up to the skies through her ivied windows as if she had watched the messengers coming for her through the air, and had gone away with them as a child takes the hand of its mother and passes into the garden with her. And if I may stop to speak of some of the fancies we have, Lemuel and I, one of them is that God is still creating worlds, and that when the astronomers find one they have never seen before, it is not always one that has simply been invisible, but may be one just placed in the universe. And so also they disappear, God saying to them, "Go in peace, the work appointed to you has been fulfilled." We never speak of such fancies to the neighbours, as they would laugh at them, but we talk of them when we are alone.

But I must now come to the story. As Lemuel was lying quietly thinking about such things, he heard a voice which said, "Go to the house of Simon the Tanner." Now it is not reasonable that any man who reads his Bible as Lemuel does should pay any attention to such a saying as this. It was no more to him than one of the texts that come to us when we are going about our duties, with our mind strayed, and he planned some of the work for the next day a little differently from what he had intended, and, for one thing, decided that he would not go to the mill, but stay and keep the men closely at their tasks. Then he went to sleep again, and when it began to be day he was awakened with the impression that his dead wife had laid her hand on his shoulder, just as she did in life when he overslept himself, and again he heard the voice saying, "Go to the house of Simon the Tanner." As this man had lived in Joppa ages ago, he laughed at the idea, and getting up, began to prepare for the day, but for some reason he made a mistake, and thinking it was Wednesday, instead of Tuesday, he put on his clean linen. Well, he had his breakfast and went into the field, but for some reason he could not settle to the labour, and finally he determined that he would go to the mill, and try if a ride would not rid him of what in a woman would have been called nervousness. But when he got out into the road from the lane which leads to the house, the horse deliberately started briskly in the opposite direction from which Lemuel meant to go, and when his master tried to turn him, he stood still. After several attempts to make him go towards the mill, Lemuel gave him the rein.

"Go, then, where you choose," said he; "In the Lord's name, choose your own road. If it is a day's journey, or if it is intended that I shall travel preaching over the land as my father and my grandfather did before me, it is well."

Having spoken in this way, and really meaning what he said, he let the horse go as it would, and soon they were on the road that leads to Scrub Hill, going at a very good pace. Many a time have I since gone over this road with Lemuel, and he has pointed out to me every spot connected with the story.

They had gone about ten miles, when the horse stopped in front of a little house where a woman sat sewing upon the porch, who, when she saw a man stopping as if he did not know what to do next, arose and came to the gate. For a moment the two looked at each other, and she has since told me that she was alarmed, thinking he had come with bad news of her

son, who was an engineer on a railroad; but when he asked if she could tell him where a man called "Simon the Tanner" lived, he seemed so confused that she laughed.

"I suppose," she said, "that you mean my husband, as he is so nicknamed, but he is not a tanner, and his name is not Simon."

"It seems to me rather strange, then, that he should so be called," Lemuel replied.

The woman, who was very good natured and comely, smiled again. "It came about in this way. When we lived over in Pennsylvania our post-office was Joppa, and my brother, who boarded with us, was named Peter, and when a man who lived near, and whose name was Cornelius, got into the way of coming to the house, nothing would do for some of the folks but that they must call my husband 'Simon the Tanner.' And, if you will believe it, after a while he was called that twice where he was by his own name once! In some way it seems to stick to him, perhaps because he thinks it a joke and tells it."

To this Lemuel made no reply, because, although he comprehended that thus far he had done right, he could see no intimation of what he was to do next, and was about to ask the woman where he would find her husband, when around the corner there came a funeral, and it was at once borne in upon him that he must follow it; and so, without a word, he turned his horse, and rode after the waggon that carried the body.

It was truly a sorrowful and forlorn little funeral. There was a waggon drawn by oxen, in which lay the corpse, and around it, on hay piled up, sat two little children and a man. In a light cart, such as people about here carry truck around the neighbourhood, was an old couple, and although there was not a tear shed, the whole party looked so miserable that Lemuel fancied they were grieving because they too were not dead. And thus they went a good many miles over a road that Lemuel hardly knew, creeping as the oxen choose to go, and no one taking the least notice of the stranger who had joined them. Presently one of the children went to sleep with her head on the coffin, and when I think of this, I cannot help the tears from coming into my eyes. It was late in the afternoon before they reached the graveyard, which lay upon the side of a hill, and where many people were waiting, standing in a bunch around the open grave. When the man saw them he began to tremble, and getting out of the waggon, he lifted the child who was asleep and held it in his arms, keeping it between himself and the people. The old couple took no notice of the crowd, but climbing down waited for the grave-diggers to lift the coffin out. After it was placed in position ready to be lowered into the grave, there was a pause and some of the men took off their hats as if they expected the service to begin. Then the old man looked up in a bewilderment.

"Where," he said, in a weak and trembling voice, that yet was sharp—"where is Charles Holman? When we sent word that we were coming with the body of my daughter, we expected not only the grave, but the minister. Where is Charles Holman? Is he no longer among you?"

Now Lemuel had noticed that the coffin was too short for a man and too broad for a child, so he had supposed it to hold the mother of the children and the wife of the man who rode with them; but he had thought the old people were the parents of the man. After he had said this there was an awful silence, until it became plain that someone must answer, and they looked at each other as if they each felt it to be the duty of someone else. At last a voice from the very centre of the groups said:—

"He could not come. She sent him no message of repentance."

The old people flushed at this; but the man answered sternly:—

"There was a message. The Lord sent for her! Surely this should be enough for Charles Holman."

And then, like a flash of great light, Lemuel comprehended, and knew that he had been sent to speak at the grave of this poor woman. What he should say did not trouble him, because when the Lord sends a messenger, He sends the message also. But getting down from his horse, he pushed his way through the little crowd, and standing by the grave, prayed that there might be peace upon the earth and rest in the life to come. After this he stood still, and for a moment harkened to his own heart. Then he spoke:—

"The thoughts of God are sometimes not clear, often seeming slow beyond our faith. How often in the fall of the year, when I have been ploughing the field, have my thoughts turned to the long and mysterious changes that were to take place before the seed which I should plant would become food! I have remembered how young and tender the blades would be; fit, it might seem, only for the sunshine and the dew; when the snow would come and heavily lie upon it, freezing as if it would kill; and then of the awakening spring and the ripening summer; of the mill that should crush it, of the yeast that would corrupt it, and the fire that would burn it, and of all the long and cruel processes that are needful before it is ready for us. And then it has seemed to me that if God was good to us, He would have given us food as He has given it to the birds, and we should have time for our heritage instead of labour and trouble. Why should we, who are told that eternity is to be won through time, be absorbed in the struggle to live the life that is so short and in itself useless? If it is because of our wickedness, why should we of all creatures be wicked? We know that what is wickedness to us is nature in the beast of the field and the birds of the air. They not only slay their enemies, but they are permitted to kill their very young."

At this there was a great agitation among the people, as if they wondered how he could say this, and for a moment it seemed as if they were going to bid him stop. But he continued:—

"With many such vain meditations have I wearied myself when I have been alone and given up to profitless musing; but I cannot count it sin because in my heart I have not questioned the wisdom of the Lord even while I wondered why He should have it so. It has been as if he said to me, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' It may be that in this life the earning of rest is even sweeter than the rest itself, and it may mean what we cannot at all comprehend. But it is upon the hidden lessons of the Lord that I wish to speak to you. Of this brother who is in grief, and of these children who, it is clear, are bereaved, and of the father and mother, I know nothing, nor am I acquaint-

ed with the circumstances of the death of the woman; but I was constrained to quit my work to search for them and then to follow them; whether it is meant that I can give comfort, I do not know. But as I came slowly over the roads to-day, with the dead in front of me, I thought much of our Lord, and not only of the griefs which He bore, but also of those He escaped. How great are the pains which He never personally knew, and how many the sorrows which He escaped! He never knew what it is to watch with the innocent eyes of a child the degradation of a parent, and to blush in after years at the mention of his name." (And here again was a little movement among the people, as if they wondered what he would next say.) "He never had a daughter dear to his heart snatched away by a swift and sudden death. He knew nothing of the wrong that can cut to the very soul because it is inflicted by one of our own blood, of the grief without remedy, of the sin that cannot be atoned for; of these great afflictions so common among the children of men He had no personal knowledge, and yet what is there in this sorrowful life that He does not comprehend, and help us to bear? It is not without reason that we go to Him with all that so heavily ladens us, nor without hope we throw upon Him the burdens which we can no longer carry. Which of us in the day of our affliction has not said, 'Surely He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?' And so it comes that one of the lessons given us to learn—one He came to teach—is this: that we shall comprehend the desolation that has passed us by, and the bitterness of the cup which other lips must drink. That as He understood the suffering of the world, so shall we. Pain must mean more to us than the empty offer of sympathy or even the support of real help. It must be something to us—to us! And the knowledge shall give to us a greater tenderness, a new patience, a stronger courage. From every prison cell, from every dying bed, there goes a message to the free and the living that there is another reason for carrying into the daily life the example of the Lord—the helpful and the comprehending bearing of the sorrows of the world. We are newly bound to look at sin with eyes enlightened, with a tenderness that hesitates to condemn without knowledge, and a charity that does more than forgive. This is what the coming into our midst meant to our Lord. In His heavenly life He saw our troubles, and as a father He pitied us, but He came to realize what it was. And this is what He did for us. He did not heal without understanding what the new health was to mean, nor did He raise the dead without feeling the grief and the joy of those who had mourned."

Thus far had he gone, and perhaps might have got into a talk that would have missed the mark, when suddenly he stopped and said, as if he was forced to it:—

"Who was this woman?"

(To be continued.)

THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

THE PEOPLE OF KOREA.

The Korean people occupy a peninsula which lies sandwiched in between Japan and China, being separated from the former by the Japan Sea, and from the latter by the Yellow Sea. It has a territorial area of about one hundred thousand square miles, and a climate very much like the southern part of the Middle Atlantic States. The population is variously estimated at from twelve millions to sixteen millions, and is divided into three great castes, which are each again subdivided into several classes. The three great divisions are (1) Patricians; (2) Middle Men; (3) Low Men.

The Government is a monarchy, patriarchal in form, but absolute in fact. The king ascended the throne twenty-nine years ago, and is a gentle, kind and progressive ruler. The customs of the land are managed by foreigners, the army has been partly reorganized under American officers, while the Government school is under the supervision of Rev. D. A. Bunker, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary.

Korea has an antiquity which carries us back to the time of Abraham, and a traditionary past which introduces us to the times of Noah. Its authentic history begins with the sage Kija, who came to Korea from China about B. C. 1122, and introduced Chinese civilization into the peninsula. Before King David sang the mad spirit of Saul to rest with the strains of his harp, Kija had built his city, the ruins of which still remain, and dug his famous well, the waters of which still flow clear and limpid, and have quenched the thirst of more than one missionary.

The Koreans average about five feet six inches high, have an open, frank cast of countenance, are very courteous in their bearing, and very kindly dispositioned and hospitable. They dress in silk, linen, cotton, and grass-cloth, their garments being long and flowing in style. Their costume is generally white, though colours in red, blue and green, with the delicate tints in pink, pale-blue and cream are often seen. A Korean gentleman in full costume has a most courtly and impressive appearance and, though a heathen, manners to coincide. In the winter their clothing is thickly padded with cotton.

Their houses are built with mud or tile laid in mortar, and have straw thatches or tile roofs. The rooms are usually eight feet square, with stone floors all nicely papered over with oiled paper; under the floor are flues for the fire, which is lit every day throughout the year, and as the Koreans sleep on the floor we may say they sleep with a fire under the bed. Whenever they see our bedsteads, their first remark usually is, "But isn't it very cold to sleep with no fire underneath you?" The furniture of a Korean house consists of cabinets to put things into, scrolls to ornament the walls, prettily embroidered mattresses about two inches thick to lounge or sleep upon, small tables only large enough for one, and in the Patrician houses the apartments are sometimes hung with heavily padded, quilted and embroidered hangings. They have no chairs, tables, carpets, pictures, stoves, bedsteads, bureaux,