

Messenger and Visitor

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"By Evil Report and Good Report."

The Bible lesson for next Sunday exhibits some extremes of the varied experience through which Paul and Barnabas passed in the course of their missionary labors. Here we find them regarded by the simple and superstitious people of Lystra as beings of celestial birth—the gods come down in likeness of men—to whom divine honors are due; and here again, at the hands of these same people, incited by malicious Jews, the apostles are treated as men unworthy to live, and Paul, probably because he was the most outspoken and boldest in proclamation of the truth, is stoned with murderous intent and cast out of the city as dead.

It had been the custom of the missionaries, as they journeyed from place to place and preached the gospel, to enter the synagogues on the Sabbaths and declare, to the assembled Jews and proselytes, Jesus as the Christ of God, through whom the hope of Israel was to be realized and the salvation of the world accomplished. There were always some who gladly received the word, but there was always a class of Jews who opposed; and at Antioch (in Pisidia) their opposition became so fierce and bitter that the missionaries felt that it was no longer possible to preach to the Jews there, and had openly and with declared purpose turned to the Gentiles. This opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles, whereby they immediately might enter into the kingdom of the Messiah on a full equality of privilege with the children of Abraham, was of course to the unbelieving Jews a supreme offence, rousing them to a still more bitter hatred and a more active persecution of the apostles. As a result we find them driven away from Antioch, and later also from Iconium, whither they fled and where for a time they labored with much encouragement, until Jewish malice succeeded in so inflaming popular feeling against them that to save their lives they are again obliged to flee. This time they find a place of refuge and a field of labor in the Lycaonian country, in which the cities of Lystra and Derbe were situated. Here the people appear to have been more purely Gentile and heathen. We read nothing of synagogues here, and the apostles it would seem preached directly to the Gentiles and won their converts not from among Jews or proselytes, but from the heathen. In Lystra the miraculous healing of a lame man through the word of Paul led the superstitious people to regard the Christian preachers as gods, and to set about offering to them sacrifices, from which act they were with difficulty restrained by the horrified apostles. Then came malicious Jews, employing artful influence with the fickle and ignorant Lycaonians, so that they who had been eager to render divine honors to Paul and Barnabas are now equally ready to take their lives.

Christian preachers nowadays are not, we suppose, in any great danger of being mistaken for Jupiter and Mercury, and they have no occasion to rend their clothes at the sight of garlanded bullocks led forth to be offered as sacrifices in their honor. On the other hand, it is a very unusual occurrence, in this part of the world at any rate, for the minister to be stoned and cast out of the city for dead. Still it may be there is enough in common between the experience of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, and that of some modern preachers of the gospel in Christian communities to give room for a certain suggestive relation between the one and the other. The modern apostle is not always free from the peril of being worshipped, and in ways so subtle and insinuating that neither he nor the worshippers are very well aware of what is being done. There are in many a

congregation a class of people disposed to make a little god of the minister, especially if he is a new minister. With flattery that is half sincere and half unconscious, they express their veneration for his person and their profoundest admiration for all he does and says. They give him to understand that, in their estimation, he is one of the great lights of the age, and that none but the names of the greatest preachers are worthy to be associated with his. And the heart of the modern minister is not always wholly impregnable to assaults of this character. For the young man who would be ready to rend his garments at being taken for Jupiter or Mercury may be ready to fondle gratefully in his breast the suggestion that he is a "second Spurgeon" with excellent prospects of outstripping the first. It is doubtless much more wholesome to be stoned, though that is worse treatment than, generally speaking, a minister deserves. It is to be feared, however, that not infrequently the same persons who are so ready to worship the new minister, a little later on are equally ready, figuratively speaking, to join in the stoning. It is a very wholesome thing to remember, as Paul has intimated, that the Christian minister is a man of like passions with other men. He deserves neither to be worshipped nor to be stoned. He should be honored as a servant and an ambassador of Christ, and should be treated with honest, kindly sympathy as a brother man. Those who do not begin by worshipping him, will perhaps be the less likely to end by stoning him.

One thing which cannot fail to arrest the mind and elicit the admiration of the student of these lessons is the brave and faithful ministry of Paul and Barnabas. Encountering bitter opposition everywhere, they were never discouraged or turned back. While they did not needlessly imperil their lives by continuing in places where persecution had become too hot to permit them to labor, they were not dismayed by all the malice and violence of their enemies. Constant in their one grand purpose and faithful in their mission, they went from city to city, braving whatever dangers might await them, that they might declare Christ and His salvation. If we are looking for evidences of the truth of Christianity we certainly have a strong one in the lives and labors of these apostles of the faith. How can we account for such ministry as theirs under the conditions they had to face, except on the supposition that these men were most profoundly convinced of the truth of the doctrines which they proclaimed, especially the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Editorial Notes.

—Mr. Parson's statements in a communication on another page, in reference to Acadia Alumni matters are important, and we trust they will receive from those interested, and those who should be interested, the consideration they deserve.

—"Let us have," says Dr. T. L. Cuyler, "a fresh education against the deadly evils of the drinking customs. Christ's churches are neglecting this; Sunday schools are neglecting this too much; parents are neglecting this; temperance societies have largely disbanded; moral efforts are dying out; and fearfully are we paying for this wretched policy."

—A Portland paper intimates that the Chicago Standard is considerably in advance of history in stating that a grand boulevard between Boston and Portland is approaching completion, that one hundred miles of the road are already finished and "the possibility of being able to journey soon between these cities in electric cars, enjoying charming ocean views and breathing the tonic salt air the entire distance is creating much interest." The "grand boulevard," it appears, has existence as yet chiefly in the minds of its projectors, but it is considered probable that within a few years it will become an accomplished fact.

—The excellent address of Rev. A. C. Chute, of Halifax, delivered at the Truro Missionary Conference, will be found on the second and third pages of our present issue. The address was very highly appreciated by those who heard it in Truro. Its length will no doubt make its reading seem a formidable task to many, but the great importance of the subject and the fine ability with which it is treated, are sufficient to repay abundantly those who will take time to give it a careful perusal. There are few more important subjects than the duty of Christians in respect to the use of the worldly possessions with which God has entrusted them.

—It was to be expected that the polite and genial Englishman, who had become so well known in America and so enviably distinguished as the author of "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," would receive very kind and courteous treatment at the hands of the people of the United States on the occasion of his visit to that country a few months ago. That such was the fact is evident from the character of the "American Impressions," which Ian Maclaren is now contributing to the New York Outlook. The ordinary, undistinguished visitor would not find, and of course would not expect to find, his pathway so sunny and so flower-strewn as a man whom the American people delighted to lionize. Ian Maclaren is doubtless far too bright not to understand this, yet he is quite too polite to suggest that the charming features which he observed in American society were in any considerable degree a response to his own personality, or that his own experience of Americans differed particularly from that which any well-bred Englishman might meet with. We do not at all mean to intimate that Englishmen as a rule do not meet with courteous treatment in the United States, but it is easy to see that many doors of hearts and homes would be flung wide open to Ian Maclaren which most other visitors from abroad would find closed.

—The following paragraph from the Boston Watchman touches an important subject opportunely and is to be commended to the consideration of thoughtful readers: "Baptists hold that the organizing principle of the Christian church is a common spiritual experience. In conformity with that view we make the credible evidence of a change of heart the essential condition of church membership, and all credal statements of subordinate importance when compared with the vital fact of a new life in Christ. Upon this basis, young and old, male and female, Greek and Jew, bond and free reach a deep spiritual fellowship. The tendency that has become so marked in the last decade to organize Christians within the church upon the basis of age or sex suggests some important reflections. We have the Boys' Brigade, the Young Men's League, the King's Daughters, the young people's societies, the women's societies, and almost the only people who are not organized about some classification of age or sex are the matured men of the congregation. But they are readily classified by the principle of exclusion. The organizations include everyone but them. Undoubtedly there are apparent advantages in getting those who have many common sympathies to cooperate, but the question must continually recur whether we are not in danger of forsaking a broad and deep principle of unity for a narrow and shallow one. Probably the present drift is too strong to be resisted, but by and by some spiritual genius will rediscover the church, as Luther rediscovered the forgotten Pauline doctrine. The Christian Endeavor Society for several years has adopted watchwords for the twelve months. The attention of the members has been fastened upon missions and citizenship and several other important matters; how would it do to adopt as a watchword for the next year, *The Local Church?*"

—In the "Impressions" referred to above Ian Maclaren records it as his honest opinion that the educated American is the most courteous person he has met on his travels. He finds in the American a cordiality which the English gentleman lacks, and a pleasing simplicity which is missing in "The decorated style of manners in which the Frenchman is past master." The American woman too excels all her sisters. In manners she is "charming, vivacious, sympathetic, fascinating," and in dress "she has added to the severe good taste of the Englishwoman; a certain grace, and redeemed the cleverness of the Parisian from the suspicion of trickery." Even the American editor is not altogether so bad-mannered as he might be, and, as it seems to be intimated, the species is on the other side of the Atlantic. He has been known to do things which prove him to be not wholly destitute of human kindness. As for college men, clergymen, club men, their manners were found irreproachable. Maclaren dilates upon the generosity of American hospitality. It seems to have been almost oppressively so in his case, but then as we have intimated it does not do to argue from Ian Maclaren to generalities in such a case. But after all that he has said in praise of Americans, Maclaren admits that Englishmen are not greatly admired or ardently beloved by them. This, he thinks, is not, except in small part, an inheritance from the revolutionary struggle or the war of 1812, but is due rather to the attitude of the individual Englishman, who is supposed, not without reason, to be unsympathetic and critical or fearfully condescending and patronizing, but whose principal fault is probably his failure to understand America and the people, and his blundering way of endeavoring to be agreeable. "It ought to be laid to heart by every visitor to the States that he is travelling among a bright, emotional, kind-hearted, sensitive people, and it might be useful for his clever hosts to remember that their guest belongs to the same stock, where it is quite honest and grateful, but proud and shy and where it has no nerves."

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* The Mind of the Toronto; Fleming H.