

religion, so that he all the while is pressing its importance upon others, and men immediately say, "Oh, he is crazy on the subject of religion." (M. C. Hazard).

Earnest christians are often called fanatics and monomaniacs. But the real madmen, victims of the hallucinations of the devil, are those who will not "flee from the wrath to come." "The tenants of a madhouse often think all others deranged but themselves; but there is no madness so great, no delirium so awful, as to neglect the eternal interests of the soul for the sake of the poor pleasures and honors which this life can give."—(Barnes)

The sneer of the Roman procurator was more than answered. He must have felt that his remark was unseemly and ill-timed. The fact that he could appeal to Agrippa himself for confirmation, who was well versed in all matters pertaining to the Jews, showed Festus that he had made a mistake. No, Paul was not mad. His epistles show that he had a most wonderfully logical train. He was not mad, but it may well be questioned whether Festus was not. The one who proclaims salvation is not mad, but what shall be said of him who rejects it? (M. C. Hazard).

In whichever sense we understand Agrippa's words they are full of instructive warning. If they breathe the spirit of scoffing unbelief, they suit the character of the man; if we understand them as expressing half conviction, they suit the tone of Paul's reply, and the whole narrative. Those who sneer at religious earnestness have either hardened themselves in sin, or will not honestly consider the claims of Christ. Yet a flippant spirit is practically as great an obstacle to real conviction as one of positive antagonism. More souls have been lost by the dispelling of serious impressions at the church door, than through the blasphemous orations of the infidel.

"The commonest, and yet most responsible of all positions, is that which, like Agrippa's, is near persuasion, yet distinctly waving off the appeal. It is an awful spiritual danger to turn away from an open door. The obstacle to full persuasion should be sought within."—(Redford)

When by themselves the two rulers decided that Paul had done nothing worthy of either death or bonds, they judged his case fairly. Agrippa added that he might have been set at

liberty but for his appeal unto Cæsar. Evidently he regretted that the case had been taken out of Festus' jurisdiction, for he would have liked to have set the apostle free. But that would have been the worst thing that could have been done, for the Jews would have immediately sought to take his life, and probably would have succeeded. But now he was safe in the custody of the Roman soldiers whose own lives were held in forfeit for his own. It was not in the divine arranging that Agrippa's visit should occur until after it was all fixed that Paul should appear before Cæsar's judgment seat. Had he come sooner Festus in all probability would have released his prisoner, but now there was no other way than to send him to Rome. "Be of good cheer," the Lord had said to Paul: "for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." (M. C. Hazard).

LESSON AFTERTHOUGHTS.

1. Never be disobedient to any heavenly vision. When your duty is made apparent, do it immediately, cheerfully, whole-heartedly.
2. The place to begin testifying for Christ is just where one is converted. There without delay tell of the grace of God.
3. One should never cease testifying for Christ; the more one does it the more zealous he will be.
4. The more one testifies for Christ the larger will be the opportunities of bearing witness for him.
5. True repentance is shown by doing works worthy of repentance. A graft in a tree which succeeds in producing only a few half good apples amounts to nothing.
6. When one obtains help from God he is able to stand, for he is equal to all the demands which can be made upon him.
7. That preacher is most effective who is best acquainted with the word of God.
8. The Old Testament and the New are as inseparable as a two-ply carpet, out of which if you take either ply there is no carpet.
9. The atonement and the resurrection are the two chief doctrines of the gospel.
10. When one is not ready to obey the truths preached, it is easy to call the preacher mad.
11. The real madman is he who will not accept the salvation through Christ which is offered to him.