

"THERE WAS A SOUND OF REVELRY
BY NIGHT"

Thus wrote Lord Byron in the opening lines of his great poem, "Waterloo," in which he so graphically describes the brilliant ball given in Brussels, on the eve of the battle. Varying emotions filled our hearts as we read that thrilling poem when a boy at school. It was awful to think of men tearing themselves from the arms of sensuous pleasure to rush into the field of battle and to die. But Waterloo, with all its loss of life was no disaster. It was a glorious victory for freedom, and the men who died there made their names immortal, and made all succeeding generations their debtors. They crushed forever the power of the mighty Napoleon who for decades had been disturbing the peace of the world.

Happenings that involve great loss of life are terrible, not according to the number of lives sacrificed but according to the attendant circumstances. We were terribly grieved when we read of the awful raid on Coventry; but that was no disaster but only an expected accompaniment of an air blitzkrieg. We were thrilled by those who rose up from the ruins shouting, "There'll always be an England and England shall be free." We were shocked when the word flashed that the mighty "Hood" had gone down with more than twelve hundred brave men, when her magazine was exploded by a German shell. But that was no disaster but an accompaniment of war, which was balanced by the sinking of the Bismarck a few hours after.

We call that a disaster when terrible loss of life takes place in the midst of circumstances that seem to speak not of danger but of security—of joy and merriment. Such a disaster visited Boston a few nights since, and all New England has been stunned and the entire nation and Canada appalled by the terrible calamity.

At the close of Thanksgiving week, Saturday evening, the 28th ult., more than a thousand people were assembled in one of the popular night clubs in Boston. It was especially a celebration of a great football victory won by Holy Cross College over Boston College (both Roman Catholic institutions) on that very afternoon. Many football fans from all over New England and from afar were there; more than two hundred officers and service men were there. Entire families were present, and a bridal party just from the marriage altar. It was a gay, jovial crowd bent on pleasure and with everything in sight apparently to gratify that desire—actors, splendid orchestra, finely polished dancing floors, plenty of wines and liquors. The cry seemed to be, "On with the dance, let joy be unconfined."

But something suddenly happened to change that drinking hilarious crowd into a maelstrom of screaming, fighting, cursing and praying men and women struggling for their lives. In a corner of one of the lounge rooms a patron had unscrewed a light bulb (some say as a prank, others because it offended his eyes). One of the officials ordered a lad of sixteen (an illegal employee at any place where liquor is sold) to put in another bulb. He got up to do this and lit a match to find the socket when an overhanging palm tree with its decorations was ignited and soon pandemonium reigned. The place was licensed to accommodate five hundred; we can imagine the congested conditions when more than one thousand

and were present. Had the people kept their heads all might have escaped, but instead they all rushed for the revolving doors that speedily became jammed, and there the struggling mass of humanity fought and writhed. When the fire had been extinguished it was found that some four hundred and fifty had perished and about two hundred had been more or less injured; many of them will probably die. Entire families were annihilated; more than fifty officers and service men perished; the bridal party mentioned before with their attendants died, every one in the fire. A gentleman had gone out to get bus tickets and left his wife; when he came back the place was an inferno. His wife perished. Four brothers of one family died in that holocaust. Words cannot picture so terrible a disaster, so unnecessary, and all because Coconut Grove Lounge was a fire trap even though it had been pronounced safe by city fire officials.

The crowd was overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, and soon scores of priests were present to give the last rites of the church to the dying. On the Sunday night that followed, many of the city preachers dealt with the tragedy. Dr. Ockenga, of Park St. Church, preached from the text, "It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment." He referred to those priests who came to touch the dying with a little oil, as though that would make them ready for death and judgment; he emphasized the need of a change of nature by faith in the blood of Christ to make us ready for another world.

We are told in Methodist history, that the seraphic John Fletcher, vicar of Madely, and a co-worker with John Wesley, sometimes would break in upon a company of dancing, drinking, riotous merry-makers in Madely and strongly yet kindly remind them of the certainty of death and the awfulness of the Judgment. They would scoff at him and at times pelt him with eggs. But he had to do his duty. We thought, had some one with Fletcher's spirit stood up before that Coconut Grove hilarious crowd, just two minutes before the fire broke out, and told them of the certainty of death and the coming Judgment, the crowd would have laughed and hooted him down. "Put him out! Put him out," would have been the cry. "Why think of death here. Here is life and that more abundantly! Death is a thousand leagues from such a gay place as this. On with the dance, let joy be unconfined." That was the spirit of the place.

Well, Boston has been aroused and so has the nation. All the night clubs in Boston have been closed pending investigation. Penalty will be visited upon some persons to blame. That boy was innocent of any intent to do mischief.

I have visited the place since the fire. It was located on a back street near the Statler Hotel. Crowds came to see where so many perished. Our heart is glad that the glitter and the glamour of such places have no charms for us under the most favorable conditions. But in such places many thousands in our lands find their chief joy. I do not say that the patrons of Coconut Grove were a bit worse than multiplied thousands that thronged similar places that same night. But we cannot think of the disaster apart from the judgments of the Lord, even as is war. We must estimate lives' true values not by the drinking hilarious throng before the fire, but in the light of that awful disaster that crushed out so many lives. "Let me live the life of

the righteous," is my cry and such places of amusement will have no charm for me.

W. EDMUND SMITH

PARDON AND PURITY

Rev. G. D. Watson, D.D.

Pardon and purity are the two hemispheres of evangelical religion. Pardon and purity are the two wheels to the chariot of New Testament salvation, while faith and love are the celestial steeds that draw this chariot along the King's highway to heaven. Pardon and purity are the two posts on which the gates of pearl swing back to admit us into the City of Light.

Pardon takes away the guilt of all sinful acts, words, and purposes; purity takes away the uncleanness of sinful tempers and desires which are often not shaped into acts.

Pardon will publish itself in the actions of a man; purity will publish itself in the keen inner feelings of the heart.

Pardon harmonizes me with the law of God; purity harmonizes me with the character of God.

Pardon introduces me to the kingdom of peace; purity introduces me to the kingdom of power.

Pardon places me in the kingdom of God; purity places the kingdom of God in me.

Pardon puts into my hand a title deed to heaven; purity puts me into my heart a moral fitness for heaven.

Pardon must precede purity, just as the birth of a child certainly must precede the curing of a hereditary disease.

Pardon and purity are both received by separate, specific acts of faith; they are both instantaneously wrought by acts of the divine will; are both attested by the Holy Ghost; are both retained by constant submission, unwavering trust, and obedience up to all our spiritual light; are both requisite to a happy, useful life! are both absolutely essential to admission to heaven.—Wesleyan Methodist.

BIBLE NOTES

From the latest annual report of the Scripture Gift Mission (London) we gather that their total distribution of Bibles, Testaments, and Portions for 1941 was 9,600,073 in 174 languages. Of the total 5,225,830 were in English, the next highest being 379,833 in French and 376,543 in Spanish. During the year the Mission has been privileged to issue two editions of the Scriptures in languages not previously published by it—John's Gospel in Kiyaka for a tribe in the Belgian Congo, and Mark's Gospel in Ekaw or Ahka for tribes in Burma and Indo-China.

Giving a message to his forces and peoples of the British Commonwealth of Nations, His Majesty King George the Sixth says: "I commend the reading of this Book. For centuries the Bible has been a wholesome and strengthening influence in our national life, and it behooves us in these momentous days to turn with renewed faith to this divine source of comfort and inspiration."

Just before that eminent scholar, Mr. Thomas Newberry (the editor of the Newberry Bible), departed to be with Christ he was asked by Mr. Henry Varley if he had ever been tormented with doubts as to the inspiration of the Scriptures. He grandly replied, "I have spent sixty-four years in the study of the Scriptures in the original tongues, marking carefully every tense and preposition, and the impression left on my mind is not the difficulty of believing but the impossibility of doubting the inspiration of the Scriptures."—The Treasury.

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