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Poetry.

The Valley of Silence.

But far on the deep there are billows,
That never shall break on the beach:
And I have heard songs in the silence
That never shall float into speech;
And I have had dreams in the Valley
Too lofty for language to reach.

And I have seen thoughts in the Valley—
Ah, me! how my spirit was stirred!—
They wear holy veils on their faces,
Their footsteps can scarcely be heard;
They pass down the valley like virgins
Too pure for the touch of a word.

Do you ask me the place of this valley,
To hearts that are harrowed with care?
It lieth afar between mountains,
And God and His angels are there;
And one is the dark mount of sorrow,
And one the bright mountain of prayer.
—Father, Ryan.

A Story of Cyprus.

BY REV. T. E. STEVENSON.

"And from thence they sailed to Cyprus."—Acts xiii:4.

Thus sailed the first missionary ship. Mark its illustrious passengers. It contained Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark. These were "men that make history." In them there were "diversities of operation but the same spirit." Paul was a courageous, rousing preacher; he could make Felix tremble and even the polished Athenians say, "We will hear thee again of this matter." How outspoken he was! He called Elymas a "child of the devil." Bar-jesus means a son of Jesus, but the hallowed associations connected with the name led Paul to shrink from profaning it by using it of the sorcerer. In effect, he cries, "Thou art no son or child of Jesus, but a child of the devil." We too often tone down and extenuate doubtful or evil acts by fair and smooth phraseology. When an army plunders, it is "requisitioning;" when a strong military power overcomes a weaker one, it is "rectification of frontier." Is a man untruthful? He is said to be "wanting in candour." Is he drunk? You are expected to speak of him as "slightly inebriated." But Paul never flinched from calling things by their right names. In addition to him the missionary band comprised Barnabas, "the son of consolation." Paul was the Luther, Barnabas the Melancthon of the expedition; one resembled Isaiah, the other Jeremiah. When the apostle of the Gentiles had let fly the arrow of conviction, Barnabas could apply the healing salve of mercy. There was also a younger man named John Mark. It is said of him, "They had John to their minister." Some suppose he officiated in the ordinance of baptism. A fine trio, this!

Observe the fresh breeze. The east wind filled the white sails, wafted the barque to its destination, and the influences of that Spirit, which, like the wind, "bloweth where it listeth," filled the hearts of the missionaries. They were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost." No authority will be

equal to that. Their sphere was not appointed by a godless monarch who styles himself the "head of the church," nor by a worldly-minded premier who has the power of appointing episcopal rulers, nor by an aristocratic patron who, as in a late notorious case, holds "livings" and spends his "substance in riotous living," patronizing the Gospel, yet figuring in a Divorce Court. On the contrary, a Divine inspiration urged them to the course which they were now adopting. Little wonder that their enterprise proved as victorious as it did; a beginning so auspicious may well have a successful close.

Notice the favorable anchorage. The spot was wisely chosen; there were good reasons for going to Cyprus. For one thing, they were near it. Antioch was but a day's journey from the sea-coast, and the latter was often within sight of the island whither they were bound. Why spend much time in travelling when so fine a field of labour lay close at hand? Cyprus, moreover, was the native place of Barnabas, and who does not see that the inhabitants would be more likely to attend to the message when one of the messengers was an old friend, even the gentle and genial Barnabas. As Dean Howson says: "Since the time when Andrew found his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus, and the Saviour was beloved in the house of Martha and her sister and Lazarus, the ties of family relationship had not been without effect on the progress of the Gospel. It could not be unnatural to suppose that the truth would be welcome in Cyprus, when it was brought by Barnabas and his kinsman Mark to their own connexions or friends." Again: there were many Jews in the colony; hence we find that, although frequently a single synagogue sufficed for a town, there were in Salamis "synagogues" (verse 5). Here they would find opportunities for preaching, inasmuch as they were allowed to utilize the Hebrew places of worship. More than that: there were already Christians in Cyprus, and these would, of course, co-operate with the evangelists and form the nucleus of a vigorous church. Thus the grand undertaking would be facilitated.

"Grand" indeed it proved itself, for see the great prizes of the missionary ship. The sinful sorcerer was speedily silenced in shame, and Sergius Paulus was converted. All souls are precious, but some souls are more influential than others. Who would not rejoice over the accession to a church of a powerful ruler and cultured scholar? Such was the case here. The pro-consul or "deputy of the country" became a Christian, and an event like this must have told mightily on the population under his authority. He was also "a prudent man" which according to the original, signifies "educated" or "open-minded." It is remarkable that two physicians, one a pagan, the other a Christian, have left on record a description of Sergius Paulus, and they are strikingly alike. Galen speaks of him as "well-versed in philosophy," and Luke as "open-minded." We all know that, literally, a philosopher is a lover of wisdom, and what can be a clearer mark of wisdom than to be "open-minded," or, as we in modern mode should say, open to conviction?

Of late, Cyprus has been the observed of all observers, affording very acceptable studies for artists and a welcome theme to politicians and journalists. Let us recall its spiritual history. We have heard of the island in connection with Lord Beaconsfield: we shall do well to think of it in connection with Barnabas. Saul as well as Salisbury may fitly occupy our attention. Cyprus has a celebrity which some of us may have permitted to fade from our memories, and we shall find instruction in recalling it. For example: the men of Cyprus were among the very first of those brave, benevolent innovators who, to the horrors of the orthodox, offered the Gospel to the Gentiles. (See Acts xi: 20, 21.) Nor should it be forgotten that in all probability the illustrious apostle of the Gentiles derived his familiar name "Paul" or "Paulus" from the proconsul of this island. Sergius Paulus was the first fruit of Saul's ministry; no visible sign of success had been accorded unto him until then. Do we err in supposing, with some ancient

and modern authorities (as Jerome and Bengel), that the name was assumed in honour of the event? Distinguished conquerors often take their titles from the scene of their triumphs: Scipio Africanus; Lord Napier, of Magdala, to wit. Perhaps this grand spiritual hero did the same.

Four things are worthy of reflection in the story of Cyprus, namely, truth taught, opposed, vindicated, and victorious.

Truth taught.—"They preached the Word of God." The world is governed on the principle of mediation; man is the medium of blessing. How impressively is this brought out in the various chapters of the book of the Acts. Take two consecutive chapters as specimens. In the ninth we are told of Christ's appearance to Saul of Tarsus, but mark, the Saviour manifests Himself to Saul not to teach him, but to direct him to a fellow-creature who is to do it. The miraculous light and voice are given in order to prepare the way for Ananias the preacher! In the tenth chapter we read of a vision granted to Cornelius, wherein an angel was seen; but for what is the angel sent? To bid Cornelius send for Simon Peter, who will tell him what he is "to do." Only think of it; an inhabitant of the other world comes simply to lead a man to his brother-man as a spiritual instructor. Why, God seems, if we may be allowed such an expression, to have gone out of His way to show the honour He sets upon human agency! Behold here the high mission of the Church: it is to communicate the Gospel which it has received. Be it ours, brethren, to accomplish the great work thus given us. Not long ago a thrill of horror ran through all English society on account of a murder which had been committed; several persons were sentenced to death. What was "the Penge Tragedy?" How did the poor victim come to her death? Not by poisoning, drowning, stabbing, or shooting, but by the withholding of food. Beware of spiritual starvation! Keep not back the Bread of Life. Cry earnestly to a perishing race, "Come ye, buy and eat."

Truth opposed.—"Elymas the sorcerer withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." No unusual occurrence. Where the Gospel is proclaimed there is seldom lacking an Elymas. After the good seed had been sown, "an enemy went and sowed tares." "A great and effectual door is opened unto us," says Paul, but he immediately adds, "and there are many adversaries." Great was his vexation and grief that not a few of his Corinthian and Galatian converts and friends were seduced into grave errors by false teachers. Alas! so it often happens, Earnest Christian love does its work, "then cometh the wicked one" trying to undo it. Let a number of devoted missionaries take to the heathen "the truth as in Jesus," winning the faith of some, lo! by-and-by a clique of priests follow their track with a shameful parody on the Lord's Supper, prayers to the Virgin, confessionals, images, and other Pagan follies. Does a clergyman or a minister find acceptance with the people of his charge, and draw also to the House of God some that have hitherto seldom darkened its doors? Ten to one there will arise "troublers in Israel," who will fling an apple of discord into the midst of the congregation, by some miserable quibble about a question of church etiquette or even church furniture! "Mark them that cause division among you." "Live peaceably with all men." "Suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."

Truth vindicated. How? By a very awful miracle; the judicial blinding of Elymas. Thus the authority of Paul and his fellow workers was attested. Remark however, in passing, that only two such miracles were worked by the apostles. The death of Ananias and Sapphira and the blinding of Bar-jesus were the sole display of supernatural power in the form of destruction; all the other miracles were humane. Even Elymas was blinded but for a season. Herein the servants followed in the steps of their master, for the banning of the fig tree and the drowning of the herd of swine were the solitary exceptions to the rule of mercy.

But the point upon which we shall do well to fasten our attention for a few min-

utes is the congruity between the sin of the magician and its penalty. He who had blinded men's minds by his sorcery, was himself blinded; he who had most likely carried on his trade by consulting the sun, (as most ancient soothsayers did,) is in the condition of "not seeing the sun;" he who misled others "went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand."

"And herein is that saying true:"—"With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again." Pharaoh drowns the children of the Jews and he is destroyed in the waters of the Red Sea. Samson consorts guiltily with Delilah, and she robs him of the hair wherein his strength resided. David numbers the people and is deprived of thousands whom he so vainly counted. Ahab gets the vineyard of Naboth by violence, and on the spot upon which the dogs licked up the poor victim's blood, his blood was licked up. Alexander VI. died by poison which he had prepared for another. The Bishop of Verdun persuaded his monarch to order a cage in which it was impossible to stand or lie at full length, and he was the first put in it. Napoleon concentrated his hatred and envy upon the island of Britain, and he was banished to one isle and died a misanthropic captive on another. If revelation is to be believed, the other world will not lack kindred instances of retribution corresponding to the nature of the evil done on earth. Now the Saviour says, "I am the door," but if we refuse to enter, the hour will come in which it shall be said, "and the door was shut." He is "the light of men," but if they prefer darkness, they will hereafter experience "outer darkness."

Truth Victorious. To use the words of the late Wm. Arnot. "At this stage we should be apt to say, what a pity that Elymas was on the spot to interfere with the good word when the Christian missionaries obtained an opportunity of preaching to the ruling classes at the capital! Nay, He doeth all things well. As Christ said when Lazarus died, 'I am glad for your sakes that I was not there,' so might he say, in the case of Sergius Paulus: 'I am glad for his sake that Elymas was there with his sorceries, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith,' for the efforts of the sorcerer to turn him away were overruled as the means of bringing him near. If Elymas with his wicked arts had not been there, it is probable that the governor would not have been converted." Who shall tell whether the sermon would not have fallen flat on the sleepy ears, and whether the governor would not have yawned the preacher away to make room for some new excitement, if the opposition of Elymas had not arrested his attention, and the judgement on Elymas had not struck him with astonishment? If there had not been a fierce wind blowing against the kite, it would not have been able to rise.

Opposition has often been opportune; antagonism becomes an aid. "The things that happened unto me have fallen out rather into the furtherance of the Gospel." How well the Philippians, to whom Paul thus wrote, could understand that: they must, surely, have recollected that in their own city the imprisonment of the apostle was the emancipation of his very jailer. The prisoner's "bonds were loosened," and then the jailer was made "free from the law of sin and death." The Gospel triumphant over its foes? Yes; revivals show this. Who can estimate the amount of good done by out-door preaching, and yet it began, in modern times, by opposition. Whitfield was refused the pulpit of a church, and thus led to preach in streets and fields. Missions show this. What was the origin of Baptist Missions in Ceylon? Mr. Chather was not allowed to evangelize in Burmah, therefore he made his way to the land "where every prospect pleases." Christian men and women! have faith in God. He can "make the wrath of men to praise him." Labor wisely, devoutly, and He will take care that you shall not lament over fruitless toil.

One other thought: the awful, retributive phase of Christianity led Sergius Paulus to Christ. "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed." To woo by love is pleasanter than to startle by

threats: nevertheless, if the one fails, the other may haply be effectual. Thus was it with Nineveh when Jonah warned: thus may it be with any of us whom milder means have failed to win. "Flee from the wrath to come!" Future punishment is a vexed question in our day, various are the interpretations of it by equally holy and useful men. But, we pray you, mark this well, ye that are yet unsaved, that, however widely theologians differ about it, they all most solemnly believe that there is punishment, and it is unspeakably dreadful. Canons Farrar and Ryle, and Rev. Edward White, would all unite in exclaiming with the utmost fervour, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Why will ye die?" "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Items of Interest.

Thirteen of the wives of the late Brigham Young, the Mormon prophet, including his favorite Amelia, have married again.

A bill was recently introduced in the Vermont Legislature prohibiting gambling of all kinds—even the grab-bag at church fairs.

Dr. Livingston, the missionary explorer in Africa, is to have a memorial in Westminster Abbey.

English speculators have sold about fifteen tons of stone by the ounce, as specimens of Cleopatra's Needle, which still remains whole and unbroken.

A Liverpool merchant recently received a £1,000 bank note in an unsigned letter, which said that it was the amount of an old debt and accumulated interest, which the sender was sorry he had not been in a position sooner to remit.

A German publication whose character is vouched for by good authority says the fabrication of idols is a flourishing branch of English commerce. These idols, it says, are eagerly received by the heathen, who pay well for them, as they are more artistically formed than any which they can produce themselves.

The largest Sunday School in the world is probably at Stockport, Chester County, England, a town with a population of only 53,104. The school building cost \$100,000, and has between eighty and ninety teaching rooms. Since the institution was opened 5,085 teachers have been employed and 90,804 scholars registered.

A Welsh speaker at a recent meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society declared that there is not a single infidel book in the Welsh language. He said: "Wales is pre-eminently the land of one book. We owe it to the influence of the Bible that we have not a single infidel book in our language, and that popery has failed hitherto to make any progress among the pure Welsh, because they read and know their Bible too well."

"When I was a boy," said the white-haired old man, Dr. Winter, at a missionary meeting, "one day my mother had gone to the missionary prayer-meeting. That was in the early days of missions to the heathen, the days of Carey, and Ryland, and Andrew Fuller. Towards evening she came home very much excited, and bursting open the door as the family were just gathering around the supper table, she clapped her hands and exclaimed—'There's a convert! there's a convert!' Then she told the story of the conversion of *Krishnu Pal, the first Hindoo trophy of the cross*. It was a matter of great rejoicing in all the churches of the realm. God had owned and blessed the missionary enterprise."

The rare and costly library (\$70,000) of the "Bible Union," is for sale. Such men as Samson and Conant believe that Baptists should buy and make it the foundation of a great library for our people. A committee was appointed, Dr. Conan Chairman, to consider the matter. Last Monday they reported in favor of the purchase and of securing a proper building. It was urged that Boston Baptists have Tremont Temple, Philadelphia Baptists have the noble Publication Building, and are helped thereby, that New York needs headquarters and should have them.