

## THE RIOT AT EPHESUS.

– ACTS 19:29-40. – MARCH 15. –

"The Lord preserveth the faithful." – Psalm 31:23.

WHEN Paul had spent nearly three years at Ephesus he purposed going again to Jerusalem, but before doing so would visit the churches of Macedonia – Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica and Corinth. He sent two of his helpers, Erastus and Timothy, in advance. (2 Tim. 4:20; 1 Cor. 4:17-19.) It was this visit to Corinth that he evidently referred to in his epistle to them. (1 Cor. 16:1-4.) He proposed taking contributions from them to the poor in Jerusalem – not as seeking a gift, but as seeking evidence of their love for the Lord, in their desire to be helpful to the brethren at Jerusalem, who were chiefly poor, and greatly disadvantaged by their loyalty to the truth. Apparently also the Apostle was planning a later tour, which would include Rome – little suspecting that he would be sent to Rome as a prisoner.

About this time occurred the riot described in this lesson, which probably would have determined the Apostle to leave Ephesus, if he had not already purposed so doing. The Lord permitted persecutions to drive him out of every place – thus seemingly indicating the proper time for terminating his ministry at each point. The account says, "There arose no small stir about that way." Very evidently the "way" of the Lord's people differed decidedly from the ways of others, not as concerned their future hopes only, but also regarding their course in the present life. All things become new to those who receive the *new mind* of Christ; and although their "way" may seem to the unbelieving to be a narrow and troublesome one, to themselves it is the way of peace and joy and blessing and harmony with God, and, ultimately, the way of life eternal. And the way is the same to this day, as concerns those who are faithfully walking close to the Lord and to the teachings of his Word. The difficulty with many is that they have gotten out of the way – so that nominal church ways are, alas!

too much like the ways of the world, with very similar hopes, aspirations and endeavors.

In Ephesus there were trades-unions or guilds, and Demetrius, the leader of the riot, belonged to the guild of the silversmiths – probably its president, or chief. There is a stone now in the British Museum which was found at Ephesus, on which is engraved an inscription concerning a certain Demetrius. It is said to belong to about the date of this lesson, between A.D. 50 and 60. The name occurs again in 3 John 12, where the Apostle mentions the person as a Christian of good report. Quite possibly the reference is to the person who led this riot, and who may afterwards have become an active Christian, as he was at this time an active opposer of Christianity, and a supporter of Diana; – even as Paul, the zealous persecutor of the Church, became its zealous servant. The probability that this was the same Demetrius is strengthened by the tradition that the Apostle John with Mary the mother of Jesus afterward made Ephesus their home.

Demetrius called together not only the men of his own craft, but those also of allied crafts. The finest of the shrines, or miniature temples of Diana, were made in silver, but others were made of inferior metals and of marble, and the cheapest of terra cotta. These shrines were manufactured of various sizes and in great quantities; not only for the people of Ephesus, but for export to various other cities and provinces where Diana was worshiped. The business was a profitable one, as Demetrius acknowledged; and it was upon the selfish instincts of the workmen engaged in this business that he based his strongest appeal, – that this Paul was turning away much people from the worship of Diana, not only in Ephesus but in the surrounding cities and provinces. His reasoning was that if the people lost their respect for Diana and her temple, they would no longer purchase the shrines, and that the falling off in demand would mean loss for all engaged in the shrine business.

The argument of Demetrius inflamed the selfish sentiments of the allied crafts of shrine-makers – they became full of wrath, increasingly as the argument went on, and as they seemed to realize the ultimate discredit of Diana and ruin of their own business interests. They began to shout in a frenzied manner, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" doubtless inflaming themselves and others more and more with every shout, until a large mob collected, which they led toward the theater, or Coliseum, variously estimated to hold between twenty-five and fifty thousand people. As they went they seized two of Paul's companions, taking them along, as though intent upon bringing charges against them, and having them summarily [R3159 : page 76] dealt with. Paul, full of courage, would not have been willing to allow his companions to endure the brunt of this difficulty alone, but would have gone to them and endeavored to secure the attention of the mob and to reason with them; but leading men of the city, who were his friends, cautioned him, in the interests of peace, not to do this.

The uproar and excitement were intense, the majority not knowing certainly why they were there, but being in full sympathy with the cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" they surmised that some insult or opposition to their religion had occurred. It was for this reason that when Alexander, motioning to them for silence, endeavored to make a defense, the people, though they recognized him merely as a Jew, and not as a Christian, clamored so as to make it impossible for him to speak, realizing that all Jews were opposed to their goddess and her worship. The senselessness of their proceeding is clearly manifest in the fact that they kept up a meaningless shout for two hours! It is worthy of note here, that in proportion as people approach the proper conceptions of the divine character and plan and receive of the spirit of the Lord, in that same proportion they have greater soundness of mind. Consequently, we see that amongst Christians some who have made little growth in grace and knowledge are content to spend hours in shouting or talking about that which has comparatively little meaning; but in proportion as any grow in grace

and knowledge they become partakers of the spirit of a sound mind, and correspondingly unwilling to waste either consecrated time or energy senselessly, unreasoningly. In other words, rejecting the wisdom of this world, and accepting the wisdom from above, they are as a result the more reasonable. **[R3160 : page 76]**

By this time the town clerk (or recorder or mayor, as we might term him) arrived, and quieted the people, and made them an address consisting of four arguments. First, he appealed to their patriotic sentiments; that they were citizens of a great city, and that people far and near recognized Ephesus as temple-keeper for Diana, and suggested that since this was so well established as a fact they ought to do nothing rashly, for there could be no necessity for haste. Whatever might happen to Diana and Ephesus there certainly was no immediate danger. That temple of Diana was indeed a wonderful structure. Respecting its history says: "The crowning glory of Ephesus was the great temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world. It glittered in brilliant beauty at the head of the harbor, and it was said that the sun saw nothing in his course more magnificent than Diana's temple. Made of the purest marble, it was 425 feet long, 220 broad. Its columns of Parian marble were 60 feet high, and 36 of them were magnificently carved. The hall was adorned with the most wonderful statuary and paintings."

The town clerk's second argument was that the men whom they had brought with them by violence, and against whom they seemed incensed, were not bad men – they had not been trying to rob Diana's temple, nor had they blasphemed the goddess herself. Very evidently the prominent men of the city, without accepting the gospel preached by the Apostle, had received favorable impressions of it, and realized that their teachings did not develop bad citizens, but that they were, on the contrary, amongst the most honorable, peaceable, law-abiding, of the city. His words give us another thought; viz., that the Apostle, in his preaching, did not specially attack the errors of heathendom – idolatry, etc., but that merely denying all other gods, he preached the

one true God and his message of mercy, the gospel – the better "way." There is a lesson in this for the Lord's people to this day – "Go thou, and preach the gospel." Let others, if they will, smash the images and attack the various vices in and out of the nominal church systems. In preaching the gospel we shall have quite a sufficiency to do, so long as this present age continues.

The town clerk's third argument was that this was a quarrel of Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen, and not a quarrel of the public in general; and that if any injustice had been perpetrated there was a proper channel of redress – the courts of law, attorneys, etc.

The fourth argument was that if this were not a dispute merely between Demetrius and his class and the propagators of Christianity – if the assembly had any other matter on which to charge them, they should bring them at the proper time, and in the lawful manner, when regular assemblages were had for the trying of cases. (Dr. Hovy remarks, "An inscription found in this very theater in which the words were uttered, illustrated their technical sense of the word 'lawful'. It provides that a certain silver image of Athene shall be brought and set at every (regular) assemblage, above the bench.") The town clerk pursued this last argument, pointing out that the meeting was nothing short of a riot, and that if it were reported to the Roman authorities and an inquiry made of him, it would reflect to the discredit of the city that such a turmoil had occurred without reason. His intimation was that there might be danger of the city losing a privilege which it had long enjoyed – of being a "free city." His speech shows clearly that even amongst the unbelievers of that time there were men of reasonably sound judgment.

Alas, that there are even today so many of the same disposition as Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen! **[R3160 : page 77]** The principal opponents of present truth are professed ministers of the gospel; and so far as we are able to discern, their opposition is inspired by the same selfish spirit which incited Demetrius and his associates

– their craft is in danger – their salaries are endangered – respect for them and their teachings on the part of the people is endangered. It will not at all surprise us if ultimately their opposition to the truth shall lead to something analogous to this riot at Ephesus. Then we shall expect that they, like Demetrius, will not set forth the real secret of their opposition, but base it on the broader grounds of hostility of the truth to the great system of errors, misnamed "Orthodoxy," chiefly built by Antichrist, and known in the Scriptures as "Babylon."

