

WORD OF THE LORD

Great Crowds Gather to Hear Dr. Talmage.

YESTERDAY'S GREAT SERMON

The Witnesses to St. Paul's Combat at Ephesus and the Witnesses to Every Man's Combat With Sin.

LONDON, Sept. 4.—The great outpouring to hear Dr. Talmage preach comes. Probably the greatest demonstration during the past month was that at the town hall, Birmingham, where he delivered three addresses the same evening to audiences aggregating 30,000 persons. At Sheffield, Derby, Leicester, Exeter and Bristol also phenomenal audiences assembled, the most cordial welcome being everywhere accorded him. The sermon selected for publication this week is entitled "Celestial Sympathies," the text being taken from I Corinthians xv, 23, "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, etc."

On the first elevation of the ancient amphitheater, on the day of a celebration, sat Tiberias or Augustus, or the reigning king. So, in the arena of spectators that watch our struggles, and the first divine gallery, as I shall call it, sits our King, one Jesus. On his head are many crowns: The Roman emperor got his place by cold blooded conquest; but our King hath come to his place by the broken hearts healed, and the tears wiped away, and the souls redeemed. The Roman emperor sat with folded arms indifferent as to whether the swordman or the lion beat; but our King's sympathies are all with us. Nay, unheard of condescension! I see him come down from the gallery into the arena to help us in the fight, shouting until all up and down his voice is heard: "Fear not! I will help thee; I will strengthen thee by the right hand of my power!"

They gave the men in the arena in the olden time food to thicken their blood, so that it would flow slowly, and that for a longer time the people might gaze over the scene. But our King has no pleasure in our wounds, for we are here of his blood, flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood. In the anguish of our heart The man of sorrows bore a part. Once, in the ancient amphitheater, a lion with one paw caught the combatant's sword and with his other paw caught his shield. The man took his knife from his girdle and slew the beast. The king, sitting in the gallery, said, "That was not fair; the lion must be slain by a sword." Other lions were turned out and the poor victim fell. You cry, "Shame! Shame!" at such meanness. But the king in this case is our brother, and he will see that we have fair play. He will forbid the rushing out of more lions than we can meet. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. Thank God! The King is in the gallery! His eyes are on us. His heart is with us. His hand will deliver us. "Blessed are all they who put their trust in him."

THE CELESTIAL GUARDIANS. I look again and I see the angelic gallery. There they are; the angel that swung the sword at the gate of Eden, the same that Enoch saw upholding the throne of God, and from which I look away, for the splendor is insufferable. Here are the guardian angels. That one watched a patriarch; this one protected a child. That one has been pulling a soul out of temptation! All these are messengers of light! Those drove the Spanish Armada on the rocks. This turned Sennacherib's living hosts into a heap of one hundred and eighty-five thousand corpses. Those under chanted the Christmas carol over Bethlehem until the chant awoke the shepherds. These, at creation, stood in the balcony of heaven and serenaded the newborn world wrapped in swaddling clothes of light. And there, holier and mightier than all, is Michael, the archangel. To command an earthly host gives dignity, but this one is leader of the twenty thousand chariots of God, and of the ten thousand times ten thousand angels. I think God gives command to the archangel, and the archangel to the seraphim, and the seraphim to the cherubim, until all the lower orders of heaven hear the command and go forth on the high quest.

Now, bring on your lions! Who can fear? All the spectators in the angelic gallery are our friends. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot."

Though the arena be crowded with temptations we shall, with the angelic help, strike them down in the name of our God and leap on their fallen carcasses! O bending throne of bright angelic faces and swift wings and lightning feet! I had you today from the dust and struggle of the arena!

I look again and see the gallery of the prophets and apostles. Who are those mighty ones yonder? Moses and Jeremiah and Daniel and Isaiah and Paul and Peter and John and James. There sits Noah, waiting for all the world to come into the ark; and Moses, waiting till the last Red sea shall divide; and Jeremiah, waiting for the Jews to return; and John, of the Apocalypse, waiting for the swearing of the angel that Time shall be no longer. Glorious spirits! Ye were howled at, ye were stoned, ye were put upon the wheel, ye were in this fight themselves, and they are all with us. Daniel knows all about Beas. Paul fought with beasts at Ephesus.

THE INTERESTED WITNESSES. In the ancient amphitheater the people got so excited that they would shout from the galleries to the men in the arena: "Aid! Aid!" "Forward!" "One more stroke!" "Look out!" "Fall back!" "Huzak! Huzak!" So in that gallery, prophetic and apostolic, they cannot keep their peace. Daniel cries out, "The God will deliver thee from the mouth of the lion." David exclaims, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved." Isaiah calls out, "Fear not! I am with thee. Be not dismayed." Paul exclaims, "Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." That throng of prophets and apostles cannot keep still. They make the walking ring with cheering and hallooing.

I look again and see the gallery of the martyrs. Who is that? That man, who was not a soldier, but a fisherman, and who died the night before swinging from the bedpost in perfect glee at the thought of emancipation. Who are that army of six thousand six hundred and sixty-two? They are the Theban legion who died for the faith. Here is a larger host in magnificent array—eight hundred and eighty-four thousand—who perished for Christ in the persecutions of Diocletian. Yonder is a family group, Felicitas, of Rome, and her children. While they were dying for the faith, she was whipping death by thorns, another was flung from a rock, another was beheaded. At last the mother became a martyr. There they are together—a family group in heaven. Yonder is John Bradford, who said in the fire, "We shall have a merry supper with the Lord tonight." Yonder is Henry Vos, who exclaimed as he died, "If I had ten heads they should all fall off for Christ!"

The great throng of the martyrs! They had not lead poured down their throats; horses were fastened to their hands, and other horses to their feet, and thus they were pulled apart; they had their tongues pulled out by red hot pinners; they were sewed up in the skins of animals and then thrown into the dogs; they were dangled with combatsives and then set on fire! If all the martyrs that have been kindled could be set at proper distances they would make the midnight all the world over bright as noonday!

And now they sit yonder in the martyrs' gallery. For them the fires of persecution have gone out. The swords are sheathed and the mob hushed. Now they watch us with an all overbearing sympathy. They know all the pain, all the hardship, all the anguish, all the injustice, all the privation. They cannot keep still. They cry: "Courage! The fire will not consume. The floods cannot drown. The lions cannot devour. Courage! down there in the arena!"

What are they all looking? They give, and cry, "Hail sons and daughters of the fire!" ALL BROTHERS IN CHRIST. I look again and see another gallery, that of eminent Christians. What strikes me strangely is the mixing in companionship of those who on earth could not agree. There is Albert Barnes, and around him the presbytery who tried him for heresy; Yonder is Lyman Beecher and the church court that denounced him! Stranger than all, there is John Calvin and James Arminius! Who would have thought that they would sit so lovingly together? There is George Whitefield and the ministers who would not let him come into their pulpits because they thought him a fanatic. There are the sweet singers: Lydia, Montgomery, Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts and Mrs. Sigourney. If heaven had had no music before they went up, they would have started the singing.

And there the band of missionaries—David Abel, talking of China redeemed; and John Scudder, of India saved; and David Brainerd, of the aborigines evangelized; and Mrs. Adoniram Judson, whose prayers for Burmah took heaven by violence! All these Christians are looking into the arena. Our struggle is nothing to theirs! Do we, in Christ's cause, suffer from the cold? They walked Greenland's icy mountains. Do we suffer from the heat? They sweated in the tropics. Do we get fatigued? They fainted, with none to care for them but cannibals. Are we persecuted? They were crucified. Are we as they look from their gallery and see us falter in the presence of the lions, I seem to hear Isaac Watts addressing us in his old hymn, only a little changed: Meet ye to be carried to the skies On flowery beds of ease, While others fought to win the prize Or sailed through bloody seas? Toplay shouts in his old hymn: Your harp, ye trembling saints, Drown from the willows' shade, Lend to the praise of love divine, But every string awake. While Charles Wesley, the Methodist, breaks forth in his favorite words, a little varied: A charge to keep you have, A God to glorify, A never dying soul to save, And it is for the sky! OUR DEPARTED FRIENDS. I look again and I see the gallery of our departed. Many of those in the other galleries we have heard of, but these we know. Oh, how familiar their faces! They sat at our tables, and we walked to the house of God in company. Have they forgotten us? Those fathers and mothers started us on the road of life. Are they careless as to what becomes of us? And those children—do they look on with stolid indifference as to whether we win or lose this battle for eternity? Nay! I see that child running its hand over your brow and saying, "Father, do not fret." "Mother, do not worry." They remember the day they left us. They remember the agony of the last farewell. Though years in heaven they know our faces. They remember our sorrows. They speak our names. They watch this fight for heaven. Nay, I see them rise up and lean over and wave before us their recognition and encouragement. That gallery is not full. They are keeping places for us. After we have slain the lion they expect the King to call us, saying, "Come up higher." Between the last struggles in the arena I wipe the sweat from my brow and stand on tiptoe, reaching up my right hand to clasp theirs in rapturous handshaking, while their voices come ringing down from the gallery, crying, "Be thou faithful unto death, and thou shalt have a crown!"

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