# TALMAGE ON THE WING.

## THE PASTOR OF THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE IN ITALY.

**Sermon Preached Sunday, Nov. 17, 1889, at Brindisi—The Subject "A Mediterranean Journey"—Full Report of the Discourse at the Italian Port.**

BRINDISI, Nov. 17.—The Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D. D., preached in this Italian port today. His subject was "A Mediterranean Voyage," and he took for his text Acts xxvii, 44: "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." Dr. Talmage said:

Having visited your historical city, which we desired to see because it was the terminus of the most famous road of the ages, the Roman Appian Way, and for its mighty fortress overshadowing a city which even Hannibal's hosts could not thunder down, we must tomorrow morning leave your harbor, and after touching at Athens and Corinth, voyage about the Mediterranean to Alexandria, Egypt. I have been reading this morning in my New Testament of a Mediterranean voyage in an Alexandrian ship. It was this very month of November. The vessel was lying in a port not very far from here. On board that vessel were two distinguished passengers: one, Josephus, the historian, as we have strong reasons to believe; the other, a convict, one Paul by name, who was going to prison for upsetting things, or, as they termed it, "turning the world upside down." This convict had gained the confidence of the captain. Indeed, I think that Paul knew almost as much about the sea as did the captain. He had been shipwrecked three times already; he had dwelt much of his life amidst capstans, and yardarms, and cables, and storms; and he knew what he was talking about. Seeing the equinoctial storm was coming, and perhaps noticing something unseaworthy in the vessel, he advised the captain to stay in the harbor. But I hear the captain and the first mate talking together. They say: "We cannot afford to take the advice of this landsman, and he a minister. He may be able to preach very well, but I don't believe he knows a marlinespike from a luff tackle. All aboard! Cast off! Shift the helm for headway! Who fears the Mediterranean?" They had gone only a little way out when a whirlwind, called Euroclydon, made the torn sail its turban, shook the mast as you would brandish a spear, and tossed the hulk into the heavens. Overboard with the cargo! It is all washed with salt water, and worthless now; and there are no marine insurance companies. All hands ahoy, and out with the anchors!

### FRIGHT AT THE STORM.

Great consternation comes on crew and passengers. The sea monsters snort in the foam, and the billows clap their hands in glee of destruction. In a lull of the storm I hear a chain clank. It is the chain of the great apostle as he walks the deck, or holds fast to the rigging amidst the lurching of the ship—the spray dripping from his long beard as he cries out to the crew: "Now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

Fourteen days have passed, and there is no abatement of the storm. It is midnight. Standing on the lookout, the man peers into the darkness, and, by a flash of lightning, sees the long white line of the breakers, and knows they must be coming near to some country, and fears that in a few moments the vessel will be shivered on the rocks. The ship flies like chaff in the tornado. They drop the sounding line, and by the light of the lantern they see it is twenty fathoms. Speeding along a little farther, they drop the line again, and by the light of the lantern they see it is fifteen fathoms. Two hundred and seventy-six souls within a few feet of awful shipwreck! The managers of the vessel, pretending they want to look over the side of the ship and undergird it, get into the small boat, expecting in it to escape; but Paul sees through the sham, and he tells them that if they go off in the boat it will be the death of them. The vessel strikes! The planks spring! The timbers crack! The vessel parts in the thundering surge! Oh, what wild struggling for life! Here they leap from plank to plank. Here they go under as if they would never rise, but, catching hold of a timber, come floating and panting on it to the beach. Here, strong swimmers spread their arms through the waves until their chins plow the sand, and they rise up and wring out their wet locks on the beach. When the roll of the ship is called, two hundred and seventy-six people answer to their names. "And so," says my text, "it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land."

### LESSONS TO BE DRAWN.

I learn from this subject:

First, that those who get us into trouble will not stay to help us out. These shipmen got Paul out of Fair Havens into the storm; but as soon as the tempest dropped upon them, they wanted to go off in the small boat, caring nothing for what became of Paul and the passengers. Ah me! human nature is the same in all ages. They who get us into trouble never stop to help us out. They who tempt that young man into a life of dissipation will be the first to laugh at his imbecility, and to drop him out of decent society. Gamblers always make fun of the losses of gamblers. They who tempt you into the contest with fists, saying, "I will back you," will be the first to run. Look over all the predicaments of your life, and count the names of those who have got you into those predicaments, and tell me the name of one who ever helped you out. They were glad enough to get you out from Fair Havens, but when, with damaged rigging, you tried to get into harbor, did they hold for you a plank or throw you a rope? Not one. Satan has got thousands of men into trouble, but he never got one out. He led them into theft, but he would not hide the goods or bail out the defendant. The spider shows the fly the way over the gossamer bridge into the cobweb; but it never shows the fly the way out of the cobweb over the gossamer bridge. I think that there were plenty of fast young men to help the prodigal spend his money; but when he had wasted his substance in riotous living, they let him go to the swine pastures, while they betook themselves to some other new comer. They who took Paul out of Fair Havens will be of no help to him when he gets into the breakers of Melita.

I remark again, as a lesson learned from the text, that it is dangerous to refuse the counsel of competent advisers. Paul told them not to go out with that ship. They thought he knew nothing about it. They said: "He is only a minister!" They went, and the ship was destroyed. There are a great many people who now say of ministers: "They know nothing about the world. They cannot talk to us!" Ah, my friends, it is not necessary to have the Asiatic cholera before you can give it medical treatment in others. It is not necessary to have your own arm broken before you can know how to splinter a fracture. And we who stand in the pulpit, and in the office of a Christian teacher, know that there are certain styles of belief and certain kinds of behavior that will lead to destruction as certainly as Paul knew that if that ship went out of Fair Havens it would go to destruction. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." We may not know much, but we know that.

Young people refuse the advice of parents. They say: "Father is oversuspicious, and mother is getting old." But these parents have been on the sea of life. They know where the storms sleep, and during their voyage have seen a thousand battered hulks marking the place where beauty burned, and intellect foundered, and morality sank. They are old sailors, having answered many a signal of distress, and endured great stress of weather, and gone scudding under bare poles; and the old folks know what they are talking about. Look at that man—in his cheek the glow of infernal fires. His eye flashes not as once with thought, but with low passion. His brain is a sewer through which impurity floats, and his heart the trough in which lust wallows and drinks. Men shudder as the leper passes, and parents cry, "Wolf! wolf!" Yet he once said the Lord's Prayer at his mother's knee, and against that iniquitous brow once pressed a pure mother's lip. But he refused her counsel. He went where euroclydons have their lair. He foundered on the sea, while all hell echoed at the roar of the wreck: Lost Pacifics! Lost Pacifics!

### CHRISTIANS ALWAYS SAFE.

Another lesson from the subject is that Christians are always safe.

There did not seem to be much chance for Paul getting out of that shipwreck, did there? They had not, in those days, rockets with which to throw ropes over foundering vessels. Their lifeboats were of but little worth. And yet, notwithstanding all the danger, my text says that Paul escaped safe to land. And so it will always be with God's children. They may be plunged into darkness and trouble, but by the throne of the eternal God, I assert it, "they shall all escape safe to land."

Sometimes there comes a storm of commercial disaster. The cables break. The masts fall. The cargoes are scattered over the sea. Oh! what struggling and leaping on kegs and hogsheads and cornbins and store shelves! And yet, though they may have it so very hard in commercial circles, the good, trusting in God, all come safe to land.

Wreckers go out on the ocean's beach and find the shattered hulks of vessels; and on the streets of our great cities there is many a wreck. Mainsail slit with banker's pen. Hulks abeam's end on insurance counters. Vast credits sinking, having suddenly sprung a leak. Yet all of them who are God's children shall at last, through his goodness and mercy, escape safe to land. The Scandinavian warriors used to drink wine out of the skulls of the enemies they had slain. Even so God will help us, out of the conquered ills and disasters of life, to drink sweetness and strength for our souls.

You have, my friends, had illustrations, in your own life, of how God delivers his people. I have had illustrations in my own life of the same truth. I was once in what on your Mediterranean you call a Euroclydon, but what on the Atlantic we call a cyclone, but the same storm. The steamer Greece of the National line, swung out into the river Mersey at Liverpool, bound for New York. We had on board seven hundred, crew and passengers. We came together strangers—Italians, Irishmen, Englishmen, Swedes, Norwegians, Americans. Two flags floated from the masts—British and American ensigns. We had a new vessel, or one so thoroughly remodeled that the voyage had around it all the uncertainties of a trial trip. The great steamer felt its way cautiously out into the sea. The pilot was discharged; and, committing ourselves to the care of him who holdeth the winds in his fist, we were fairly started on our voyage of three thousand miles. It was rough nearly all the way—the sea with strong buffeting disputing our path. But one night, at eleven o'clock, after the lights had been put out, a cyclone—a wind just made to tear ships to pieces—caught us in its clutches. It came down so suddenly that we had not time to take in the sails or to fasten the hatches. You may know that the bottom of the Atlantic is strewn with the ghastly work of cyclones. Oh! they are cruel winds. They have hot breath, as though they came up from infernal furnaces. Their merriment is the cry of affrighted passengers. Their play is the foundering of steamers. And, when a ship goes down, they laugh until both continents hear them. They go in circles, or, as I describe them with my hand—rolling on! rolling on! with finger of terror writing on the white sheet of the wave this sentence of doom: "Let all that come within this circle perish! Brigantines, go down! Clippers, go down! Steamships, go down!" And the vessel, hearing the terrible voice, crouches in the surf, and as the waters gurgle through the hatches and port holes, it lowers away, thousands of feet down, farther and farther, until at last it strikes the bottom; and all is peace, for they have landed. Helmsman, dead at the wheel! Engineer, dead amidst the extinguished furnaces! Captain, dead in the gangway! Passengers, dead in the cabin! Buried in the great cemetery of dead steamers, beside the City of Boston, the Lexington, the President, the Cambria—waiting for the archangel's trumpet to split up the decks, and wrench open the cabin doors, and unfasten the hatches.

### A NIGHT TO TURN ONE'S HAIR WHITE.

I thought that I had seen storms on the sea before; but all of them together might have come under one wing of that cyclone. We were only eight or nine hundred miles from home, and in high expectation of soon seeing our friends, for there was no one on board so poor as not to have a friend. But it seemed as if we were to be disappointed. The most of us expected then and there to die. There were none who made light of the peril, save two. One was an Englishman, and he was drunk, and the other was an American, and he was a fool! Oh! what a time it was! A night to make one's hair turn white. We came out of the berths, and stood in the gangway, and looked into the steerage, and sat in the cabin. While seated there, we heard overhead something like minute guns. It was the bursting of the sails. We held on with both hands to keep our places. Those who attempted to cross the floor came back bruised and gashed. Cups and glasses were dashed to fragments; pieces of the table getting loose, swung across the saloon. It seemed as if the hurricane took that great ship of thousands of tons and stood it on end, and said: "Shall I sink it, or let it go this once?" And then it came down with such force that the billows trampled over it, each mounted of a fury. We felt that everything depended on the propelling screw. If that stopped for an instant we knew the vessel would fall off into the trough of the sea and sink, and so we prayed that the screw, which three times since leaving Liverpool had already stopped, might not stop now. Oh! how anxiously we listened for the regular thump of the machinery, upon which our lives seemed to depend. After a while some one said: "The screw is stopped!" No; its sound had only been overpowered by the uproar of the tempest, and we breathed easier again when we heard the regular pulsations of the overtasked machinery going thump, thump, thump. At 3 o'clock in the morning the water covered the ship from prow to stern, and the skylights gave way! The deluge rushed in, and we felt that one or two more waves like that must swamp us forever. As the water rolled back and forward in the cabins, and dashed against the wall, it sprang half way up to the ceiling. Rushing through the skylights as it came in with such terrific roar, there went up from the cabin a shriek of horror which I pray God I may never hear again. I have dreamed the whole scene over again, but God has mercifully kept me from hearing that one cry. Into it seemed to be compressed the agony of expected shipwreck. It seemed to say: "I shall never get home again! My children shall be orphaned, and my wife shall be widowed! I am launching now into eternity! In two minutes I shall meet my God!"

There were about five hundred and fifty passengers in the steerage, and as the water rushed in and touched the furnaces, and began violently to hiss, the poor creatures in the steerage imagined that the boilers were giving way. Those passengers writhed in the water and in the mud, some praying, some crying, all terrified. They made a rush for the deck. An officer stood on deck and beat them back with blow after blow. It was necessary. They would not have stood an instant on the deck. Oh! how they begged to get out of the hold of the ship! One woman, with a child in her arms, rushed up and caught hold of one of the officers and cried: "Do let me out! I will help you! Do let me out! I cannot die here!" Some got down and prayed to the Virgin Mary, saying: "O blessed mother! keep us! Have mercy on us!" Some stood with white lips and fixed gaze, silent in their terror. Some wrung their hands and cried out: "O God! what shall I do? What shall I do?" The time came when the crew could no longer stay on the deck, and the cry of the officers was: "Below! all hands below!" Our brave and sympathetic Capt. Andrews—whose praise I shall not cease to speak while I live—had been swept by the hurricane from his bridge, and had escaped very narrowly with his life. The cyclone seemed to stand on the deck, waving its wing, crying: "This ship is mine! I have captured it! Ha! ha! I will command it! If God will permit, I will sink it here and now! By a thousand shipwrecks, I swear the doom of this vessel!" There was a lull in the storm; but only that it might gain additional fury. Crash! went the lifeboat on one side. Crash! went the lifeboat on the other side. The great booms got loose, and, as with the heft of a thunderbolt, pounded the deck and beat the mast—the jib boom, studding sail boom, and square sail boom, with their strong arms, beating time to the awful march and music of the hurricane.

Meanwhile the ocean became phosphorescent. The whole scene looked like fire. The water dripping from the rigging, there were ropes of fire; and there were masts of fire; and there was a deck of fire. A ship of fire, sailing on a sea of fire, through a night of fire. May I never see anything like it again!

Everybody prayed. A lad of 12 years of age got down and prayed for his mother. "If I should give up," he said, "I do not know what would become of mother." There were men who, I think, had not prayed for thirty years, who then got down on their knees. When a man who has neglected God all his life feels that he has come to his last time, it makes a very busy night. All of our sins and shortcomings passed through our minds. My own life seemed utterly unsatisfactory. I could only say, "Here, Lord, take me as I am. I cannot mend matters now. Lord Jesus, thou didst die for the chief of sinners. That's me! It seems, Lord, as if my work is done, and poorly done, and upon thy infinite mercy I cast myself, and in this hour of shipwreck and darkness commit myself and her whom I hold by the hand to thee, O Lord Jesus! praying that it may be a short struggle in the water, and that at the same instant we may both arrive in glory!" Oh! I tell you a man prays straight to the mark when he has a cyclone above him, an ocean beneath him, and eternity so close to him that he can feel its breath on his cheek.

The night was long. At last we saw the dawn looking through the port holes. As in the olden time, in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came walking on the sea, from wave cliff to wave cliff; and when he puts his foot upon a billow, though it may be tossed up with might it goes down. He cried to the winds, Hush! They knew his voice. The waves knew his foot. They died away. And in the shining track of his feet I read these letters on scrolls of foam and fire, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea." The ocean calmed. The path of the steamer became more and more mild; until, on the last morning out, the sun threw round about us a glory such as I never witnessed before. God made a pavement of mosaic, reaching from horizon to horizon, for all the splendors of earth and heaven to walk upon—a pavement bright enough for the foot of a seraph—bright enough for the wheels of the archangel's chariot. As a parent embraces a child, and kisses away its grief, so over that sea, that had been writhing in agony in the tempest, the morning threw its arms of beauty and of benediction, and the lips of earth and heaven met.

As I came on deck—it was very early, and we were nearing the shore—I saw a few sails against the sky. They seemed like the spirits of the night walking the billows. I leaned over the taffrail of the vessel, and said, "Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters."

It grew lighter. The clouds were hung in purple clusters along the sky; and, as if those purple clusters were pressed into red wine and poured out upon the sea, every wave turned into crimson. Yonder, fire cleft stood opposite to fire cleft; and here, a cloud, rent and tinged with light, seemed like a palace, with flames bursting from the windows. The whole scene lighted up until it seemed as if the angels of God were ascending and descending upon stairs of fire, and the wave-crests, changed into jasper, and crystal, and amethyst, as they were flung toward the beach, made me think of the crowns of heaven cast before the throne of the great Jehovah. I leaned over the taffrail again, and said, with more emotion than before: "Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters!"

So, I thought, will be the going off of the storm and night of the Christian's life. The darkness will fold its tents and away! The golden feet of the rising morn will come skipping upon the mountains, and all the wrathful billows of the world's woe break into the splendor of eternal joy. And so we come into the harbor. The cyclone behind us. Our friends before us. God, who is always good, all around us. And if the roll of the crew and the passengers had been called, seven hundred souls would have answered to their names. "And so it came to pass that we all escaped safe to land." And may God grant that, when all our Sabbaths on earth are ended, we may find that, through the rich mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, we all have weathered the gale!

Into the harbor of heaven now we glide,
Home at last!
Softly we drift on the bright silver tide,
Home at last!
Glory to God! All our dangers are o'er;
We stand secure on the glorified shore.
Glory to God! we will shout evermore.
Home at last!
Home at last!


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