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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

The Brooklyn Preacher Talks Upon the Eternal City.

The Colosseum, Its History and Its Religious Lessons — The Terrible Slaughter in Its Vast Amphitheater.

Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage took for the subject of a recent sermon "Rome," dwelling particularly on the Colosseum and its history. He took for his text:

I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome, also.—Romans i., 15.

Rome! What a city it was when Paul visited it! What a city it is now! Rome! The place where Virgil sang and Horace satirized, and Terence laughed and Cataline conspired, and Ovid dramatized and Nero fiddled, and Vespasian persecuted and Sulla legislated, and Cicero thundered, and Aurelius, and Decius, and Caligula, and Julian, and Hadrian, and Constantine, and Augustus reigned, and Paul, the apostle, preached the Gospel.

I am not much of a draughtsman, but I have in my memorandum book a sketch which I made in the winter of 1889, when I went out to the gate through which Paul entered Rome, and walked up the very street he walked up to see somewhat how the city must have looked to him as he came in on the Gospel errand proposed in the text. Palaces on either side of the street through which the little missionary advanced. Piled up wickedness. Enthroned accursedness. Templed cruelties. Altars to sham deities. Glorified delusions. Pillared, arched, domed, turreted abominations. Wickedness of all sorts at a high premium, and righteousness ninety-nine and three-quarters per cent. off. And now he passes by the foundations of a building which is to be almost unparalleled for vastness. You can see by the walls, which have begun to rise, that here is to be something enough stupendous to astound the centuries. Aye, it is the Colosseum started.

Of the theater at Ephesus where Paul fought with wild beasts, of the temple of Diana, of the Parthenon, of Pharoah's palace at Memphis, and of other great buildings, the ruins of which I have seen, it has been my privilege to address you, but a member of my family asked me recently why I had not spoken to you of the Colosseum at Rome, since its moral and religious lessons are so impressive.

Perhaps, while in Rome, the law of contrast wrought upon me. I had visited the Mamertine dungeon where Paul was incarcerated. I had measured the opening at the top of the dungeon through which Paul had been let down, and it was twenty-three inches by twenty-six. The ceiling, at its highest point, was seven feet from the floor, but at the sides of the room the ceiling was five feet seven inches. The room, at the widest, was fifteen feet. There was a seat of rock two and one-half inches high. There was a shelf four feet high. The only furniture was a spider's web suspended from the roof, which I saw by the torchlight I carried. There was the subterraneous passage from the dungeon to the Roman forum, so that the prisoner could be taken directly from prison to trial. The dungeon was built out of volcanic stone from the Albano mountains. Oh, it was a dismal and terrific place. You never saw a coal-hole so dark or so forbidding. The place was to me a nervous shock, for I remembered that was the best thing that the world would afford the most illustrious being, except One, that it ever saw, and that from that place Paul went out to die. From that spot I visited the Colosseum, one of the most astounding miracles of architecture that the world ever saw. I saw it morning, noon and night, for it threw a spell on me from which I could not break away.

Although now a vast ruin, the Colosseum is so well preserved that we can stand in the center and recall all that it once was. It is in shape ellipsoidal, oval, oblong. It is, at its greatest length, six hundred and twelve feet. After it had furnished seats for eighty-seven thousand people it had room for fifteen thousand more to stand, so that one hundred thousand people could sit and stand transfixed by its scenes of courage and martyrdom and brutality and horror. Instead of our modern tickets of admission they enter by ivory checks, and a check dug up near Rome within a few years was marked: "Section six, Lowest Tier, Seat Number Eighteen." You understand that the building was not constructed for an audience to be addressed by human voice, although I tested it with some friends and could be heard across it, but it was made only for seeing and was circular, and at any point allowed full view of the spectacle. The arena in the center in olden times was strewn with pounded stone or sand, so as not to be too slippery with human blood, for if it were too slippery, it would spoil the fun. The sand flashed here and there with sparkles of silver and gold, and Nero added cinnabar and Caligula added chrysocolla. The sides of the arena were composed of smooth marble, eleven feet high, so that the wild beasts of the arena could not climb into the audience. On the top of these sides of smooth marble was a metal railing, having wooden rollers, which easily revolved, so that if a panther should leap high enough to scale the wall, and with his paw touch any of those rollers, it would revolve and drop him back again into the arena. Back of this marble wall surrounding the arena was a platform of stone, adorned with the statues of gods and goddesses and the artistic effigies of monarchs and conquerors. Here were movable seats for the emperor and the imperial swine and swinesses with which he surrounded himself. Before the place where the emperor sat the gladiators would walk immediately after entering the arena, crying: "Hail, Cæsar! Those about to die salute thee." The different ranks of spectators were divided by partitions studded with mosaics of emerald, and beryl, and ruby, and diamond. Great masts of wood arose from all sides of the building, from which festoons of flowers were suspended, crossing the building, or in time of rain awnings of silk were suspended, the Colosseum having no roof. The outside wall was encrusted with marble, and had four ranges, and the three lower ranges had eighty columns each and arches after arches, and on each arch an exquisite statue of a god or a hero. Into one hundred and eighty feet of altitude soared the Colosseum. It glittered and flashed and shone with whole sunrises and sunsets of dazzlement. After the audience had assembled aromatic liquids oozed from tubes distilled from pipes and rained gently on the multitudes, and filled the air with odors of hyacinth, and heliotrope, and frankincense, and balsam, and myrrh, and saffron, so that Lucan, the poet, says of it:

> At once ten thousand saffron currents flow,
> And rain their odors on the crowd below.

But where was the sport to come from? Well, I went into the cellars opening off from the arena, and I saw the places where they kept the hyenas and lions and panthers and wild boars and beastly violences of all sorts, without food or water until made fierce enough for the arena, and I saw the underground rooms where the gladiators were accustomed to wait until the clapping of the people outside demanded that they come forth armed to murder or to be murdered. All the arrangements were complete, as enough of the cellars and galleries still remained to indicate. What fun they must have had turning lions without food or drink for a week upon an unarmed disciple of Jesus Christ! At the dedication of this colosseum, nine thousand wild beasts and ten thousand immortal men were slain; so that the blood of men and beast was not a brook but a river, not a pool but a lake. Having been in that way dedicated, be not surprised when I tell you that Emperor Probus on one occasion threw into that arena of the Colosseum one thousand stags, one thousand boars and one thousand ostriches. What fun it must have been! the sound of trumpets, the roar of wild beasts and the groans of dying men! while in the gallery the wives and children of those down under the lion's paw wrung their hands and shrieked out in widowhood and orphanage, while one hundred thousand people clapped their hands, and there was a "Ha! Ha!" wide as Rome and deep as perdition. The corpses of that arena were put on a cart or dragged by a hook through what was called the Gate of Death. What an excitement it must have been when two combatants entered the arena, the one with sword and shield and the other with net and spear. The swordsman strikes at the man with the net and spear; he dodges the sword, and then flings the net over the head of the swordsman and jerks him to the floor of the arena, and the man who flung the net puts his foot on the neck of the fallen swordsman, and, spear in hand, looks up to the galleries, as much as to say: "Shall I let him up, or shall I plunge this spear into his body until he is dead?" The audience had two signs, either of which they might give. If they waved their flags it meant spare the fallen contestant. If they turned their thumbs down it meant slay him. Occasionally the audience would wave their flags and the fallen would be let up, but that was too tame sport for most occasions, and generally the thumbs from the galleries were turned down, and with that sign would be heard the accompanying shout of "Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill!"

Yet it was far from being a monotone of sport, for there was a change of programme in that wondrous Colosseum. Under a strange and powerful machinery, beyond anything of modern invention, the floor of the arena would begin to rock and roll and then give away, and there would appear a lake of bright water, and on its banks trees would spring up rustling with foliage, and tigers appeared among the jungles, and armed men would come forth, and there would be a tiger hunt. Then, on the lake in the Colosseum, armed ships would float and there would be a sea fight. What fun! What lots of fun! When pestilence came, in order to appease the gods, in this Colosseum a sacrifice would be made, and the people would throng that great amphitheater, shouting: "The Christians to the wild beasts," and there would be a crackling of human bones in the jaws of leonine ferocity.

But all this was to be stopped. By the outraged sense of public decency? No. There is only one thing that has ever stopped cruelty and sin, and that is Christianity, and it was Christianity, whether you like its form or not, that stopped this massacre of centuries. One day, while in the Colosseum, a Roman victory was being celebrated, and one hundred thousand enraptured spectators were looking down upon two gladiators in the arena stabbing and slicing each other to death, an Asiatic monk by the name of Telemachus was so overcome by the cruelty that he leaped from the gallery into the arena and ran in between the two swordsmen, and pushed first one back and then the other back, and broke up the contest. Of course, the audience was affronted at having its sport stopped, and they hurled stones at the head of Telemachus until he fell dead in the arena. But when the day was passed and the passions of the people had cooled off, they deplored the martyrdom of the brave and Christian Telemachus, and, as a result of the overdone cruelty, the human sacrifices of the Colosseum were forever abolished.

What a good thing, say you, that such cruelties have ceased. My friends, the same spirit of ruinous amusements and of moral sacrifice is abroad in the world to-day, although it takes other shapes. Last summer in our country there occurred a scene of pugilism on which all Christendom looked down, for I saw the papers on the other side of the Atlantic ocean giving whole columns of it. Will some one tell me in what respect that brutality of last summer was superior to the brutality of the Roman colosseum? In some respects it was worse, by so much as the nineteenth century pretends to be more merciful and more decent than the fifth century. That pugilism is winning admiration in this country is positively proved by the fact that years ago such collision was reported in a half dozen lines of newspaper, if reported at all, and now it takes the whole side of a newspaper to tell what transpired between the first blood drawn by one loafer and the throwing up of the sponge by the other loafer, and it is not the newspaper's fault, for the newspapers give only what the people want, and when newspapers put carrion on their table it is because you prefer carrion. The same spirit of brutality is seen to-day in many an ecclesiastical court when a minister is put on trial. Look at the countenances of the prosecuting ministers, and, not in all cases, but in many cases, you will find nothing but diabolism inspires them. They let out on one poor minister who can not defend himself, the lion of ecclesiasticism and the tiger of bigotry and the wild boar of jealousy, and if they can get the offending minister flat on his back some one put his feet on the neck of the overthrown gospelizer and looks up, spear in hand, to see whether the galleries and ecclesiastics would have him let up or slain. And, lo! many of the thumbs are down.

In the worldly realms look at the brutalities of the presidential election eight years ago. Read the biographies of Daniel Webster and Alexander H. Stevens and Horace Greeley and Charles Sumner and Lucius Quintius Lamar and James G. Blaine, and if the story of defamation and calumny and scandalization and diatribe and scurrility and lampoon and billingsgate and damnable perfidy be accurately recorded, tell me in what respects our political arena and the howling and blaspheming galleries that again and again look down upon it are better than the Roman Colosseum. When I read a few days ago that the supreme court of the United States had appropriately adjourned to pay honors to the two last distinguished men mentioned, and American journalism, north, south, east and west, went into lamentations over their departure and said all complimentary things in regard to them, I asked, when did the nation lie about these men? Was it when, during their life, it gave them malediction, or now, since their death, when bestowing upon them beatification. The same spirit of cruelty that you deplore in the Roman Colosseum is seen in the sharp appetite the world seems to have for the downfall of good men, and in the divorce of those whose marital life was thought accordant, and in the absconding of a bank cashier. Oh, my friends, the world wants more of the spirit of "Let-him up," and less of the spirit of "Thumbs down." There are hundreds of men in the prisons of America who ought to be discharged, because they were the victims of circumstances or have suffered enough. There are in all professions and occupations men who are domineered over by others and whose whole life is a struggle with monstrous opposition, and circumstances have their heel upon the throbbing and broken hearts. For God's sake, let them up! Away with the spirit of "Thumbs down!" What the world wants is a thousand men like Telemachus to leap out of the gallery into the arena, whether he be a Roman Catholic monk or a Methodist steward, or a Presbyterian elder, and go in between the contestants. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

One-half the world is down and the other half is up, and the half that is up has its heel on the half that is down. If you, as a boss workman, or as a contractor, or as a bishop, or as a state or national official, or as a potent factor in social life, or in any way, are oppressing anyone, know that the same devil that possessed the Roman Colosseum oppresses you. The Diocletians are not all dead. The cellars leading into the arena of life's struggle are not all emptied of their tigers. The vivisection by young doctors of dogs and cats and birds most of the time adds nothing to human discovery, but is only a continuation of Vespasian's Colosseum. The cruelties of the world generally begin in nurseries and in home circles, and in day schools. The child that tranfixes a fly with a pin, or the low feeling that sets two dogs into combat, or that bullies a weak or crippled playmate, or the indifference that serves a canary bird, needs only to be developed in order to make a first-class Nero or a full armed Apollyon. It would be a good sentence to be written on the top line of a child's book, and a fit inscription to be embroidered in the arm-chair of the sitting room, and an appropriate motto for judge and jury and district attorney and sheriff to look at in the court room: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."

And so the ruins of that Collosseum preach to me. Indeed, the most impressive things on earth are ruins. The four greatest structures ever built are ruins. The Parthenon in ruins. The temple of Diana in ruins. The temple of Jerusalem in ruins. The Collosseum in ruins. Indeed, the earth itself will yet be a pile of ruins; the mountains in ruins, the seas in ruins, the cities in ruins, the hemispheres in ruins. Yea, further than that, all up and down the heavens are worlds burned up, worlds wrecked, worlds extinct, worlds abandoned. Worlds on worlds in ruins! But I am glad to say it is the same old Heaven, and in all that world there is not one ruin, and never will be a ruin. Not one of the pearly gates will ever become unhinged. Not one of the amethystine towers will ever fall. Not one of the mansions will ever decay. Not one of the chariots will ever be unwheeled. Not one of the thrones will ever rock down. Oh! make sure of Heaven, for it is an everlasting Heaven. Through Christ, the Lord, get ready for residence in the eternal palaces.

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Spanish	Dios
Catalan	Deu
Portuguese	Deos
Italian	Iddio
Piedmontese	Iddion
Roman	Dumnden
Welsh	Duw
Gaelic	Dia
Irish	Ozsi
Manx (Isle of Man)	Jee
Breton	Doue
Dutch	God
Danish and Swedish	Gud
Icelandic	Guo
Surinam	Gado
Creoleso of West Indies	Godt
Albanian (Gheg)	Perendia
Albanian (Tosk)	Heptvia
Basque	Ezme
Slavonic	Erz
Bohemian	Bun
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Upper Wendish	Boh
Lower Wendish	Bohg
Slovenian	Bog
Servian	Lory
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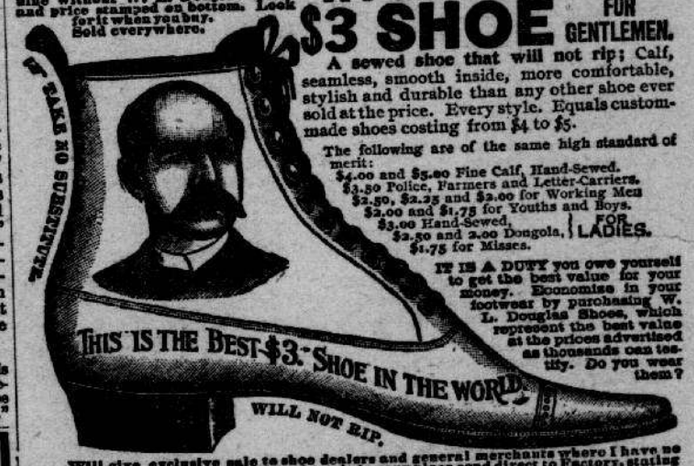

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