

TALMAGE IN KENTUCKY.

WITNESSES TO THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

The Dying Christian's Testimony—The Generous Action of Madame Sontag—The Missionaries and Their Reward—Ignorance of Unbelievers.

HIGH BRIDGE, Ky., July 12.—A vast concourse of people assembled this morning on the historic camp ground at High Bridge, Ky., to hear Dr. Talmage preach. They came from all the surrounding cities, towns and neighborhood. A large contingent from Louisville and another from Cincinnati were present. Many of the visitors have remained here since yesterday afternoon, when Dr. Talmage preached in the same place. The text of his sermon this morning was from Acts 13, "We are witnesses."

Standing amid the hills and groves of Kentucky, and before this great multitude that no man can number, most of whom I never saw before and never will see again in this world, I choose a very practical theme. In the days of George Stephenson, the inventor of the locomotive engine, the scientists proved conclusively that a railroad train could never be driven by steam power successfully without perit; but the rushing express trains from Liverpool to Edinburgh, and from Edinburgh to London, have made all the nation witnesses of the splendid achievement.

Mechanists and navigators proved conclusively that a steamer could never cross the Atlantic ocean; but no sooner had they successfully proved the impossibility of such an undertaking than the work was done, and the passengers on the Cunard, and the Inman, and the National, and the White Star lines are witnesses. There went up a guffaw of wise laughter at Professor Morse's proposition to make the lightning of heaven his errand boy, and it was proved conclusively that the thing could never be done; but now all the news of the wide world put in your hands every morning and night has made all nations witnesses.

So, in the time of Christ it was proved conclusively that it was impossible for him to rise from the dead. It was shown logically that when a man was dead, he was dead, and the heart, and the liver, and the lungs having ceased to perform their offices, the thing was done, and all power of friction or arousal. They showed it to be an absolute absurdity that the dead Christ should ever get up alive; but no sooner had they proved this than the dead Christ arose, and the disciples beheld him, heard his voice, and talked with him, and they took the witness stand to prove that to be true which the wisest of the day had proved to be impossible; the record of the experiment and of the testimony is in the text, "He hath God raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses."

FOLLY OF THE APOSTOLIC. Now let me play the skeptic for a moment. "There is no God," says the skeptic, "for I have never seen him with my physical eyesight. Your Bible is a pack of contradictions. There never was a miracle. Lazarus was not raised from the dead, and the water was never turned into wine. Your religion is an imposition on the credulity of the ages." There is an aged man moving in that pew as though he would like to respond. Here are hundreds of people with faces a little flushed at these announcements, and all through this throng there is a suppressed feeling which would like to speak out in behalf of the truth of our glorious Christianity, as in the days of the text, crying out, "We are witnesses!"

The fact is that if this world is ever brought to God it will not be through argument, but through testimony. You might cover the whole earth with apologies for Christianity and learned treatises in defense of religion—you would not convert a soul. Lectures on the harmony between science and religion are beautiful mental dishes, but they never saved a soul and never will save a soul. Put a man of the world and a man of the church against each other, and the man of the world will, in all probability, get the triumph. There are a thousand things in our religion that seem illogical to the world, and always will seem illogical.

Our weapon in this conflict is faith, not logic; faith, not metaphysics; faith, not profundity; faith, not scholastic exploration. But then, in order to have faith, we must have testimony, and if five hundred men, or one thousand men, or five hundred thousand men, or five million men get up and tell me that they have felt the religion of Jesus Christ a joy, a comfort, a help, an inspiration, I am bound as a fair minded man to accept their testimony. I want to know to put before you three propositions, the truth of which I think this audience will attest with overwhelming unanimity. The first proposition is: We are witnesses that the religion of Christ is able to convert a soul. The Gospel may have had a hard time to conquer us, we may have fought it back, but we were vanquished. You say conversion is only an imaginary thing. We know better. "We are witnesses." There never was so great a change in our heart and life as any other subject as this.

People laughed at the missionaries in Madagascar because they preached ten years without one convert; but there are many thousands of converts in Madagascar today. People laughed at Dr. Judson, the Baptist missionary, because he kept on preaching in Barmah five years without a single convert; but there are many thousands of Baptists in Barmah today. People laughed at Dr. Morrison in China for preaching there seven years without a single conversion; but there are many thousands of Christians in China today. People laughed at the missionaries for preaching at Tahiti for fifteen years without a single conversion, and at the missionaries for preaching in Bengal seven years without a single conversion; yet in all those lands there are multitudes of Christians today.

But why go so far to find evidences of the Gospel's power to save a soul? "We are witnesses." We were so proud that no man could have humbled us; we were so hard that no earthly power could have melted us. Angels of God were all around about us; they could not overcome us; but one day, perhaps at a Methodist anxious meeting or at a Presbyterian catechetical lecture or at a burial or on horseback, a power seized us and made us get down and made us tremble and made us kneel and made us cry for mercy, and we tried to wrench ourselves away from the grasp, but we could not. It hung about us, and when we arose we were much changed, and as you are, the heathen, who went into a prayer meeting with a dagger and a gun, to disturb the meeting and destroy it, but the next day was found crying, "Oh, my great savior, Oh, my great savior!" and for eleven years preached the Gospel of Christ to his fellow mountaineers, the last words on his dying lips being, "Free grace!" Oh, it was free grace!

MILLIONS COMFORTED BY THE GOSPEL. There is a man who was for ten years a

hard drinker. The dreadful appetite had sent down its roots around the palace and down upon the downy pillow they were interlarded with the vitals of the body, mind and soul, but he has not taken any stimulants for two years. What did that? Not temperance societies. Not prohibition laws. Not moral suasion. Conversion did it. "Why," said one upon whom the great change had come, "I feel just as though I were somebody else." There is a sea captain who swore all the way from New York to Havana, and from Havana to San Francisco, and when he was in port he was worse than when he was on sea. What power was it that washed his tongue clean of profanities and made him a psalm singer? Conversion by the Holy Spirit. There are thousands of people here today who are no more what they once were than a water lily is a nightshade, or a morning lark is a vulture, or a day is night.

Now if I should demand that all those people here present who have felt the converting power of religion should arise, so far from being ashamed they would spring to their feet with far more alacrity than they ever sprang to the dance, the tears mingling with their exhilaration as they cried, "We are witnesses!" And if they tried to sing the old Gospel hymn they would break down with emotion by the time they got to the second line:

Ashamed of Jesus, that dear friend  
And from whom hope and heaven depend?  
Not when I blush, but in my shame,  
That I no more reverse his name.

Again, I remark that "we are witnesses" of the Gospel's power to comfort. When a man has trouble the world comes in and says: "Now get your mind off this; go out and breathe the fresh air; plunge deeper into business." What poor advice! Get your mind off it when everything is going wrong with the investment, and everything reminds you of what you have lost. Get your mind off it! They might as well advise you to stop thinking, and you cannot stop thinking in that direction. Take a walk in the fresh air! Why, along that very street, or that very road, she once accompanied you. Out of that grass plot she plucked flowers, or into that show window she looked, fascinated, saying, "Come see the pictures." Go deeper into business! Why, she was associated with all your business ambition, and since she has gone you have no ambition left. Oh, this is a clumsy world when it tries to comfort a broken heart!

I can build a Corliss engine. I can paint a Raphael's "Madonna." I can play a Beethoven's symphony as easily as this world can comfort a broken heart. And yet you have been comforted. How was it done? Did Christ come to you and say: "Get your mind off this." Go out and breathe the fresh air. Plunge deeper into business? No. There was a minute when he came to you—perhaps in the watches of the night, perhaps in your place of business, perhaps along the street—and he breathed something into your soul that gave peace, rest, infinite quiet, so that you could take out the photograph of the departed one and look into the eyes and the face of the dead one and say: "It is all right. She is better off. I would not call her back. Lord, I thank thee that thou has comforted my poor heart."

DIVINE HEALING FOR THE SICK SOUL. There are Christian parents here who are willing to testify to the power of this Gospel to comfort. Your son had just graduated from school or college and was going into business, and the Lord took him. Or your daughter had just graduated from the young ladies' seminary, and you thought she was going to be a useful woman and of long life, but the Lord took her, and you were tempted to say, "All this culture of twenty years for nothing!" Of the little child came home from school with the hot fever that stopped not for the agonized prayer or for the skillful physician, and the little child was taken. Or the babe was lifted out of your arms by some quick epidemic, and you stood wondering why God ever gave you that child at all if so soon he was to take it away. And yet you are not repining, you are not fretful, you are not fighting against God. What enabled you to stand all the trial?

"Oh," you say, "I took the medicine that God gave my sick soul. In my distress I threw myself at the feet of a sympathizing God; and when I was too weak to pray or to look up, he reached into me a peace that I think must be the foretaste of that heaven where there is neither a tear nor a farewell nor a grave." Come, all ye who have been out to the grave to weep there—come, all ye comforted souls, get up off your knees. Is there no power in this Gospel to soothe the heart? Is there no power in this religion to quiet the worst paroxysm of grief? There comes up an aged man who has comforted widowhood and orphanage and childlessness, saying, "Ay, ay, we are witnesses!"

Again, I remark that we are witnesses of the fact that religion has power to give composure in the last moment. I shall never forget the first time I confronted death. We went across the cornfields in the country. I was led by my father's hand, and we came to the farmhouse where the bereavement had come and we saw the crowd of wagons and carriages; but there was one carriage that especially attracted my boyish attention, and it had black plumes. I said: "What's that? What's that? Why those black tassels at the top?" And after it was explained to me I was lifted up to look upon the bright face of an aged Christian woman, who three days before had departed in triumph. The whole scene made an impression on me I never forgot.

IT IS NO HEARSAY EVIDENCE. In our sermons and our lay exhortations we are very apt, when we want to bring illustrations of dying triumph, to go back to some distinguished personage—to a John Knox or a Harriett Newell. But I want you for witnesses. I want to know if you have ever seen anything to make you believe that the religion of Christ can give composure in the final hour. Now, in the courts, attorneys, jury and judge will never admit mere hearsay. They demand that the witness must have seen with his own eyes, or heard with his own ears, and so I am critical in my examination of you now, and I want to know whether you have seen or heard anything that makes you believe that the religion of Christ gives composure in the final hour.

"Oh, yes," you say, "I saw my father and mother depart. There was a great difference in their deathbeds. Standing by the one we felt more veneration. By the other, there was more tenderness." Before the one you bowed, perhaps, in awe. In the other case you felt as if you would like to go along with her. How did they seem to act? Were they very much frightened? Did they take hold of this world with both hands as though they did not want to give it up? "Oh, no," you say; "no; I remember as though it were yesterday; she had a kind word for us all, and there were a few mementoes distributed among the children, and then she told us how kind we must be to our father in his loneliness, and then she kissed us goodly and went to sleep as a child in a cradle." What made her so composed? Natural courage?

"No," you say, "mother was very nerv-

ous; when the carriage inclined to the side of the road she would cry out; she was a rather weakly." What gave her composure? Was it because she did not care much for you, and the pang of parting was not great? "Oh," you say, "she showered upon us a wealth of affection; no mother ever loved her children more than mother loved us; she showed it by the way she nursed us when we were sick, and she toiled for us until her strength gave out." What, then, was it that gave her composure in the last hour? Do you side it. Be frank and let me know. "Oh," you say, "it was because she was so good; she made the Lord her portion, and she had faith that she would go straight to glory, and that we should all meet her at last at the foot of the throne."

UNCOUNTED MILLIONS OF WITNESSES. Here are people who say, "I saw a Christian brother die, and he triumphed." And some one else, "I saw a Christian sister die, and she triumphed." Some one else will say, "I saw a Christian daughter die, and she triumphed." Come, all ye who have seen the last moments of a Christian, and give testimony in this cause on trial. Uncover your heads, put your hand on the old family Bible, from which they used to read the promises, and promise in the presence of high heaven that you will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. With what you have seen with your own eyes and what you have heard with your own ears, is there power in this Gospel to give calmness and triumph in the last exigency? The response comes from all sides, from young and old and middle aged, "We are witnesses!"

You see, my friends, I have not put before you an abstraction or a chimera, or anything like guess work. I present you with the plain facts of men and women, living and dead. Two witnesses in court will establish a fact. Here are not two witnesses, but millions of witnesses on earth and in heaven testifying that there is power in this religion to convert the soul, to give comfort in trouble and to afford composure in the last hour.

If ten men should come to you when you are sick with appalling sickness and say they had the same sickness and took a certain medicine and were cured, you would probably take it. Now, suppose ten other men should come up and say, "We don't believe that there is anything in that medicine." "Well," I say, "have you tried it?" "No, I never tried it, but I don't believe there is anything in it." Of course you discredit their testimony. The skeptic may come and say, "There is no power in your religion." "Have you ever tried it?" "No, I never tried it." Let me take the testimony of the millions of souls that have been converted to God and comforted in trial and solaced in the last hour. We will take their testimony as they cry, "We are witnesses!"

LOOK FOR THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM. Professor Henry, of Washington, discovered a new star, and the tidings sped by submarine telegraph, and all the observatories of Europe were watching for that new star. Oh, hearer, looking out through the darkness of thy soul, a little child, a bright light beaming on thee? "Where?" you say; "where? How can I find it? Look along by the line of the Cross of the Son of God. Do you not see it trembling with all tenderness and beaming with all hope. It is the Star of Bethlehem.

Deep horror then my vitals froze,  
Deathstruck I ceased the tide to stem,  
When suddenly I saw a gleam of light,  
It was the Star of Bethlehem.

Oh, hearer, get your eye on it. It is easier for you now to become Christians than it is to stay away from Christ and heaven. When Mme. Sontag began her musical career she was hissed off the stage at Vienna by the friends of her rival, Amelia Steinelinger, who had already begun to decline through her dissipation. Years passed on, and one day Mme. Sontag, in her glory, was hearing through the streets of Berlin, when she saw a little child leading a blind woman, and she said: "Come here, my little child, come here. Who is that you are leading by the hand?" And the little child replied: "That's my mother; that's Amelia Steinelinger. She used to be a great singer, but she lost her voice, and she cried so much about it that she lost her eyesight." "Give my love to her," said Mme. Sontag, "and tell her an old acquaintance will call on her this afternoon."

The next week in Berlin a vast assemblage gathered at a benefit for that poor blind woman, and it was said that Sontag sang that night as she had never sung before. And she took a skilled oculist, who in vain tried to give eyesight to the poor blind woman. Until the day of Amelia Steinelinger's death Madame Sontag took care of her and her daughter after her. That was what the queen of song did for her enemy. But oh, hear a more thrilling story still. Blind, immortal, poor and lost; thou who, when the world and Christ were rivals for thy heart, didst hiss thy Lord away—Christ comes now to give thee sight, to give thee a home, to give thee heaven. With more than a Sontag's generosity, he comes now to meet your need. With more than a Sontag's assistance, he comes to plead for thy deliverance.

Sign Language. A gang of laborers were relaying the tracks of the Pine street electric line, and in charge of one squad was a bony Irishman who walked to and fro picking up small stones. Curious to know why he gathered the pebbles and did not move the big stones, a bystander asked him why he carried his hand full of little rocks. "Them's me orthiders," was the prompt reply. "Does the company tell you to pick up all the small stones?" "No, no, no, ye don't understand me. Them's me instructors. See me now," and as he said the word he threw one of the pebbles at a stooping laborer, striking him sharply in the side. The man looked up, and he caught the eye of the boss another pebble struck two feet to his left. Without a word he began digging his pick into the macadam where the pebble fell. "Now, do ye understand me?" remarked the boss, getting ready to hit another laborer. "Are the men deaf?" he was asked. "Are they deaf? Not a bit of it." "Then why don't you talk to them?" "Talk to them, is it? It's a foine time I'd have tryin' to make them see the pit. Them's Epretians, every mother's son o' them."—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

A Snake Up a Tree. Recently J. C. Richardson cut down a tree. The honey was located in a limb that had two hollows that were fifty feet from the ground, the tree being three feet in diameter. When he went to get the honey from one hollow a large chicken snake ran its head out of the other hollow. The snake was promptly killed and measured six feet long.—Atlanta Constitution.

The Mark of a Gentleman. Geraldine—See over there! A gentleman and an usher are having a dispute. May—Which is the gentleman? Geraldine—The one who is talking so loudly.—New York Truth.

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