

TALMAGE IN EUROPE.

EXTRAORDINARY CROWDS GATHER TO HEAR THE AMERICAN DIVINE.

The Witnesses to St. Paul's Combat at Ephesus and the Witnesses to Every Man's Combat with Sin—The Welcome Waiting in Heaven for the Victor.

LONDON, Sept. 4.—The great outpourings to hear Dr. Talmage preach continue. 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.

Crossing the Alps by the Mont Cenis pass or through the Mont Cenis tunnel, you are in a few hours set down at Verona, Italy, and in a few minutes begin examining one of the grandest ruins of the world—the amphitheater. The whole building sweeps around you in a circle. You stand in the arena where the combat was once fought or the race run, and on all sides the seats rise, Her above, until you count forty tiers, or galleries, as I shall see fit to call them, in which sat the senators, the kings and the twenty-five thousand excited spectators.

At the sides of the arena and under the galleries are the cages in which the lions and tigers are kept without food until, frenzied with hunger and thirst, they are let out upon some victim who, with his sword and alone, is condemned to meet them. I think that Paul himself once stood in such a place, and that it was not figuratively but literally that he had "fought with beasts at Ephesus."

The gala day has come. From all the world the people are pouring into Verona. Men, women and children, orators and senators, great men and small, thousands upon thousands, come, until the first gallery is full, and the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth—all the way up to the twentieth, all the way up to the thirtieth, all the way up to the fortieth. Every place is filled. Immensity of audience sweeping the great circle. Silence! The time for the contest has come. A Roman official leads forth the victim into the arena. Let him get his sword with firm grip into his right hand. The twenty-five thousand sit breathlessly watching. I hear the door at the side of the arena creak open. Out plunges the half-starved lion, his tongue athirst for blood, and with a roar that brings all the galleries to their feet he rushes against the sword of the combatant.

Do you know how strong a stroke a man will strike when his life depends upon the first thrust of his blade? The wild beast, lame and bleeding, stinks back toward the side of the arena; then, rallying his wasted strength, he comes up with fiercer eye and more terrible roar than ever, only to be driven back with a fatal wound, while the combatant comes in with stroke after stroke, until the monster is dead at his feet, and the twenty-five thousand people clap their hands and utter a shout that makes the city tremble.

THERE ARE LIONS IN THE WAY. Sometimes the audience came to see a race; sometimes to see gladiators fight each other, until the people, compassionate for the fallen, turned their thumbs down as an appeal that the vanquished be spared, and sometimes the combat was with wild beasts.

To one of the Roman amphitheatrical audiences of one hundred thousand people Paul refers when he says, "We are compassed about with so great a crowd of witnesses." The direct reference in the last passage is made to a race, but elsewhere having discussed that, I take now Paul's favorite idea of the Christian life as a combat.

"The fact is that every Christian man has a lion to fight. Yours is a bad temper. The gates of the arena have been opened and this tiger has come out to destroy your soul. It has lacerated you with many a wound. You have been thrown by it time and again, but in the strength of God you have arisen to drive it back. I verily believe you are conqueror. I think that the temptation is getting weaker and weaker. You have given it so many wounds that the prospect is that it will die and you shall be victor, through Christ. Courage, brother! Do not let the sands of the arena drink the blood of your soul!"

Your lion is the passion for strong drink. You may have contended against it twenty years, but it is strong of body and thirsty of tongue. You have tried to fight it back with broken bottle or empty wine flask. Nay! that is not the weapon. With one horrible roar he will seize thee by the throat and rend thee limb from limb. Take this weapon sharp and keen—reach up and get it from God's armory—the sword of the Spirit. With that thou mayest drive him back and conquer!

But why specify, when every man and woman has a lion to fight. If there be but one here who has no besetting sin, let him speak out; for him have I offended. If you have not fought the lion, it is because you have let the lion eat you up. This very moment the contest goes on. The Trojan celebration, where ten thousand gladiators fought and eleven thousand wild beasts were slain, was not so terrific a struggle as that which at this moment goes on in many a soul. The combat was for the life of the body; this is for the life of the soul. That war with wild beasts from the jungle; this is with the roaring lion of hell.

THE INFINITE HELPER. Men think when they contend against an evil habit that they have to fight it all alone. Not they stand in the center of an immense circle of sympathy.

Paul, had been reciting the names of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Joseph, Gideon and Barak, and then says, "Being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."

Before I get through I will show you that you fight in an arena around which circle, in galleries above each other, all the kindling eyes and all the sympathetic hearts of the ages; and at every victory gained there comes down the thundering applause of a great multitude that no man can number. "Being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."

On the first elevation of the ancient amphitheater, on the day of a celebration, set Tiberius or Augustus, or the reigning King. So, in the great arena of spectators that watch our struggles, and in the first divine gallery, as I shall call it, sits our King, our 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, the tears, and the tears wiped away, and the souls redeemed. The Roman emperor sat with folded arms indifferent as to whether the swordsman 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 to the men in the arena in the often time food to thicken their blood, so that it would flow slowly, and that for a longer time the people might gloat over the scene. But our King has no pleasure in our wounds, for we are bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood.

In all 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, "This 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 angels that swing the sword at the gate of Eden, the same that Ezekiel 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 yonder chanted the Christmas carol over Bethlehem until the chant awoke the shepherds. These, at creation, stood in the balcony of heaven and seraphim 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 their holy errand.

Now bring on your lions! Who can fend? 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 throng of bright angelic faces and swift wings and lightning feet! I hail you today from the dust and struggle of the arena. Do you come 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 hot struggles in the arena I wipe the sweat from my brow and stand on tiptoe, reaching up my right hand to clap their voices coming ringing down from the gallery, crying, "Be thou faithful to death, and you shall have a crown!"

But here I pause, overwhelmed with the majesty and the joy of the scene! Gallery of the King! Gallery of angelic faces and prophets and apostles! Gallery of friends and kindred! Oh, majestic circles of light and love! Through! Through! Through! How shall we stand the gaze of the universe! Myriads of eyes beaming on us! Myriads of hearts beating in sympathy for us! How shall we ever dare to sin again! How shall we ever become discouraged again! How shall we ever feel lonely again!

And prophets and apostles for us, and the great souls of the ages for us, and our glorified kindred for us—shall we give up the fight and die? Not of us, who did die to save us. Not ye angels, whose wings are spread forth to shelter us. Not ye prophets and apostles, whose warnings startle us. Not ye loved ones, whose arms are outstretched to receive us. No! we will never surrender! Sure I must fight if I would regain— Be faithful to my Lord! Be true to the ages for us, and our glorified kindred for us—shall we give up the fight and die? Not of us, who did die to save us. Not ye angels, whose wings are spread forth to shelter us. Not ye prophets and apostles, whose warnings startle us. Not ye loved ones, whose arms are outstretched to receive us. No! we will never surrender! Sure I must fight if I would regain— Be faithful to my Lord! Be true to the ages for us, and our glorified kindred for us—shall we give up the fight and die? Not of us, who did die to save us. 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