

THE CRUEL HEATHEN

DR. TALMAGE FINDS AN IMPRESSIVE LESSON IN THE ROMAN COLISEUM.

Condition of Rome When St. Paul Preached There—Emperor and People Alike Given Over to Lust and Cruelty—Christianity's Mighty Work.

BROOKLYN, Feb. 12.—Rev. Dr. Talmage this morning, after commenting on the Scriptures and giving out hymns in which the multitude of worshippers in the Brooklyn Tabernacle joined, discoursed from the text Romans 1, 15, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

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 Catiline conspired and Vespasian presented and Sulla legislated and Cicero thundered and Aurelius and Hadrian and Constantine and Augustus reigned and Paul the apostle preached the gospel.

I am not much of a draftsman, 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. Filled up wickedness. Enthroned acurses. Temples, crucifixes. Altars to sham deities. Glorified delusions. Pillared, arched, domed, turreted abominations. Wickedness of all sorts at a high premium and righteousness 60 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 Coliseum started.

THEIR MONUMENTS OF SHAME. Of the theater at Ephesus where Paul fought with wild beasts, the temple of Diana, of the Parthenon, of paragon'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 Coliseum 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 Mammetine 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 13 inches by 26. The ceiling at its highest point was 7 feet from the floor, but at the sides of the room the ceiling was 5 feet 7 inches. The room at the widest was 15 feet. There was a seat of rock 2 1/2 feet high. There was a shelf 4 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 subterranean 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 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 Coliseum—one of the most astounding miracles of architecture that the world ever saw. Indeed 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 Coliseum 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 613 feet. After it had furnished seats for 87,000 people it had room for 15,000 more to stand, so that 100,000 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 entered by ivory check, and a check dug up near Rome within a few years was marked, "Section 6, Lowest Tier, Seat No. 18." 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.

REFINEMENTS OF CRUELTY. 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 sparks of silver and gold, and Nero added cinnabar and Caligula added chrysoeolla. The sides of the arena were composed of smooth marble 11 feet high, so that the wild beasts of the arena could not climb up into the audience. On the top of the 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 one of those rollers it would revolve and drop him back again into the arena.

Back of this marble wall surrounding the arena was a level platform of stone, adorned with 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 swineherds with which he surrounded himself. Before the place where the emperor sat the gladiators would walk in singly after entering the arena, crying: "Hail, Caesar! 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 Coliseum having no roof. The outside wall was incased with marble and had four ranges, and the three lower ranges had 80 columns each and arches after arches, and on each arch an exquisite statue of a god or a hero.

Into 100 feet of altitude soared the Coliseum. It glittered and flashed and shone with whole armies and armadas of dazzelement. After the audience had assembled aromatic liquids cozed 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.

ORGANIZED MURDER AND TORTURE. 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 bears and leasly violence 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 be murdered. All the arrangements were complete, as enough of the cellars and galleries still remain to indicate. What fun they must have had turning lions without food or drink upon an unarmed disciple of Jesus Christ!

At the dedication of this Coliseum 9,000 wild beasts and 10,000 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 Coliseum 1,000 stags, 1,000 lions and 1,000 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 100,000 people clapped their hands, and there was a "Hail ha!" wide as Rome and deep as perdition!

The corpses of that arena were put on a cart or dragged by a hook out through what was called the Gate of Death. When 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 swordsmen strikes at the man with the net and spear. He dodges the sword and then flings the net over the head of the swordsmen 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 the accompanying shout of "Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill!"

CRUELTY ADDED TO CRUELTY. Yet it was far from being a monotone of sport, for there was a change of programme in that wondrous Coliseum. 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 Coliseum 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 Coliseum 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 cracking 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 Coliseum a Roman victory was being celebrated, and 100,000 enraptured spectators were looking down upon two gladiators in the arena stabbing and slicing each other to death, an Asiatic monk of 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 their 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 Coliseum were forever abolished.

THE SAME SPIRIT STILL MANIFESTED. 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 today, although it takes other shapes. Last summer in our southwest 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 Coliseum? In some respects it was worse by so much as the 19th century pretends to be more merciful and more decent than the 6th 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 cartoon on your table it is because you prefer cartoon.

The same spirit of brutality is seen today 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 diabolical insipidities. They lay out on one poor minister who cannot 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 puts his feet on the neck of the overthrown gazelle 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.

ABUSED IN LIFE; HONORED IN DEATH. In the worldly realms look at the brutalities of the presidential election eight years ago. Read the biographies of Daniel Webster and Alexander H. Stephens and Horace Greeley and Charles Sumner and Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar and James G. Blaine, and, if the story of defamation and calumny and scandalization and distribe and scurrility and lampoon and billingsgate and damnable parody 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 Coliseum.

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 their baptism?"

The same spirit of cruelty that you deplore in the Roman Coliseum 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 dominated 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 1,000 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!"

TRAIN THE CHILDREN RIGHT. 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 any one, know that the same devil that possessed the Roman Coliseum oppresses you. The Diocletians are not all dead. The cellars leading into the arena of life's struggle are not all emptied of their dogs and cats and birds most of the time adds nothing to human discovery, but is only a continuation of Vespasian's Coliseum.

The cruelties of the world generally begin in nurseries, and in home circles, and in day schools. The child that transfixes 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 starves 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 armchair of the sitting room, and an appropriate motto for judge and jury and district attorney and sheriff to look at in the courthouse, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!"

And so the ruins of that Coliseum preach to me. Indeed the most impressive things on earth are ruins. The four greatest structures ever built are in ruins. The Parthenon in ruins, the temple of Diana in ruins, the temple of Jerusalem in ruins, the Coliseum 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 that 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 be come unbinged. 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 unweeled. Not one of the thrones will ever be 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.

NIGHT IN THE COLISEUM. The last evening before leaving Rome for Brindisi and Athens and Egypt and Palestine I went alone to the Coliseum. There was not a living soul in all the immense arena. Even those accustomed to sell curios at the four entrances of the

Coliseum had come away. The place was so overwhelmingly silent I could hear my own heart beat with the emotions aroused by the place and hour. I paced the arena. I walked down into the dens where the hyenas were caged high. I ascended to the place where the emperor used to sit. I climbed up on the galleries from which the mighty throngs of people had gazed in enchantment.

To break the silence I shouted, and that seemed to awaken the echoes, echo upon echo. And those awakened echoes seemed to address me, saying: "Men die, but their work lives on. Gandentis, the architect who planned this structure; the 60,000 enslaved Jews brought by Titus from Jerusalem and who toiled on these walls, the gladiators who fought in this arena, the emperors and empresses who had place on yonder platform, the millions who during centuries sat and rose in these galleries, have passed away, but enough of the Coliseum stands to tell the story of cruelty and pomp and power—500 years of bloodshed!"

Then, as I stood there, there came to me another burst of echoes, which seemed throbbing with the prayers and songs and groans of Christians who had expired in that arena, and they seemed to say, "How much it cost to serve God in ages past, and how thankful modern centuries ought to be that the persecution which reddened the sands of this amphitheater have been abolished."

And then I questioned the echoes, saying, "Where is Emperor Titus, who sat here?" The answer came, "Gone to judgment." "Where is Emperor Trajan, who sat here?" "Gone to judgment." "Where is Emperor Maximinus, who sat here?" "Gone to judgment." "Where are all the multitudes who clapped and shouted and waved flags to let the vanquished up, or to have them slain put thumbs down?" The echoes answered, "Gone to judgment." I inquired, "All?" And they answered, "All."

And I looked up to the sky above the ruins, and it was full of clouds scurrying swiftly past, and those clouds seemed as though they had faces, and some of the faces smiled, and some of them frowned, and they seemed to have wings, and some of the wings were moonlight and the others thunder charged, and the voices of those clouds overpowered the echoes beneath. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."

THE LAST JUDGMENT. And as I stood looking up along the walls of the Coliseum they rose higher and higher, higher and higher, until the amphitheater seemed to be filled with all the nations of the past, and all the nations of the present, and all the nations of the future, those who went down under the paw of wild beasts, and those who sat waving flags to let up the conquered, and those who held thumbs down to command their assassination, and small and great, and emperor and slave, and pastor and people, and righteous and wicked, the amphitheater seeming to rise to indefinite heights on all sides of me, and in the center of that amphitheater, instead of the arena of combatants, a great throne stood, rising higher and higher, higher and higher, and on it sat the Christ for whom the martyrs died and against whom the Diocletians plotted their persecutions, and waving one hand toward the piled up splendors to the right of him he cried, "Come, ye blessed," and waving the other hand toward the piled up glooms on the left of him he cried, "Depart, ye cursed."

And so the Coliseum of Rome that evening of 1889 seemed enlarged into the amphitheater of the last judgment, and I passed from under the arch of that mighty structure, mighty even in its ruins, praying to Almighty God, through Jesus Christ, for mercy in that day for which all other days were made, and that as I expected mercy from God I might exercise mercy toward others and have more and more of the spirit of "Let him up" and less and less of the spirit of "Thumbs down!"

We may not all be able to do a sum in higher mathematics, but there is a sum in the first rule of gospel arithmetic which we all may do. It is a sum in simple addition: "Add to your faith, virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity."

Successful Women Candidates. The Washington Tribune reports among the women who were elected last fall: Miss Ella Gale of Groton, N. Y., was elected school commissioner in that state, being the Democratic and Prohibition nominee; Mrs. Jennie L. Cray was elected a member of the Minneapolis school board, having been endorsed by the Republican, Prohibition and People's parties. In North Dakota Mrs. Laura J. Eisenhuth was elected on the Fusion Democratic-People's ticket to the responsible position of state superintendent of public instruction—the first woman to hold this position. Mrs. M. L. Jennings was made superintendent of schools for Carbon county, Wyo. Mrs. S. H. Osgood was the Republican candidate for recorder of Henry county, Ia., and was elected, defeating Mrs. Lena Alsop, the Democratic and People's party nominee.

Diseases of the Lungs. Of all the organs of the body for general susceptibility to disease the lungs stand easily first. As regards the number of ailments by which an organ can be attacked, the eye comes first, as it is subject to no less than seven diseases, having among them 65 varieties. Next comes the heart, which is liable to be attacked by a large number of affections, all possibly fatal in given cases; but as regards actual affection resulting directly or indirectly, in death, the lungs are attacked nearly five times for every once that the heart is.—Exchange.

An Unknown Family. Little Boy—I think it's a regular shame. We seem to be just nobodies. Mother—Why, what's the matter? Little Boy—I've got one papa and two big brothers and four uncles, an not one of 'em is a champion anything.—Good News.

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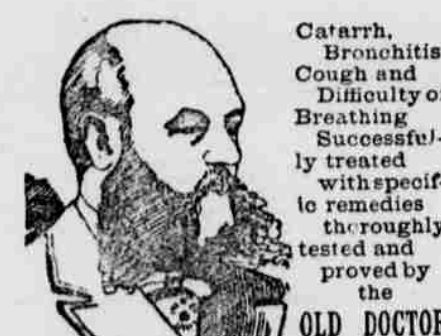
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