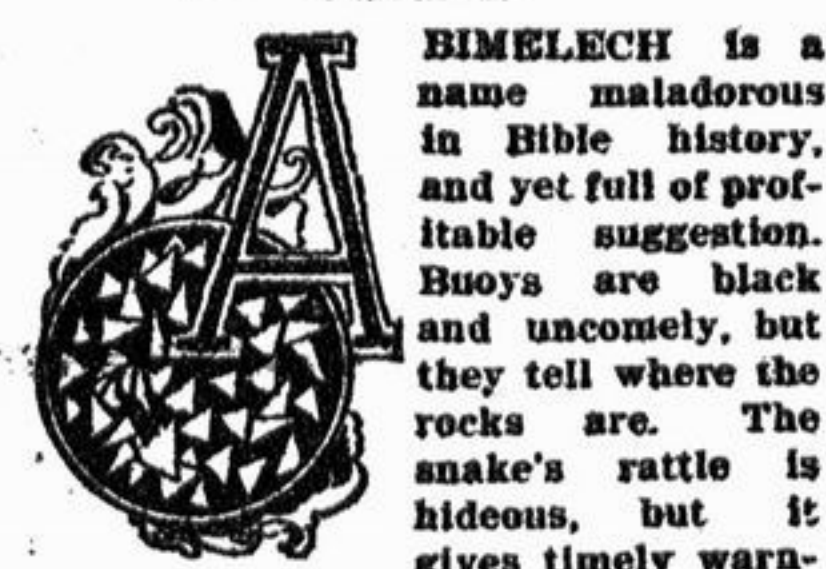


# TALMAGES' SERMON.

## "THE POWER OF EXAMPLE" LAST SUNDAY'S THEME.

Golden Text: "And Abimelech Took an Axe in His Hand and Cut Down a Bough from the Trees and Laid It on His Shoulder"—Jud. ix, 45.



**A**BIMELECH is a name malodorous in Bible history, and yet full of profitable suggestion. Buoys are black and uncomely, but they tell where the rocks are. The snake's rattle is hideous, but it gives timely warning.

From the piazza of my summer home, night by night, I saw a lighthouse fifteen miles away, not placed there for adornment, but to tell mariners to stand off from that dangerous point. So all the iron-bound coast of moral danger is marked with Saul, and Herod, and Rehoboam, and Jezebel, and Abimelech. These bad people are mentioned in the Bible not only as warnings, but because there were sometimes flashes of good conduct in their lives worthy of imitation. God sometimes drives a very straight nail with a very poor hammer.

The city of Shechem had to be taken, and Abimelech and his men were to do it. I see the dust rolling up from their excited march. I hear the shouting of the captains and the yell of the besiegers. The swords clack sharply on the parrying shields, and the vociferation of two armies in death grapple is horrible to hear. The battle goes on all day; and as the sun is setting Abimelech and his army cry: "Surrender!" to the beaten foe. And, unable longer to resist, the city of Shechem falls; and there are pools of blood and dismembered limbs, and glazed eyes looking up begging for mercy that war never shows, and dying soldiers with their head on the lap of mother, or wife, or sister, who have come out for the last offices of kindness and affection; and a groan rolls across the city, stopping not, because there is no spot for it to rest, so full is the place of other groans. A city wounded! A city dying! A city dead! Wall for Shechem, all ye who know the horrors of a sacked town.

As I look over the city, I can find only one building standing, and that is the temple of the god Berith. Some soldiers outside of the city in a tower, finding that they can no longer defend Shechem, now begin to look out for their own personal safety, and they fly to this temple of Berith. They go within the door, shut it, and they say: "Now we are safe. Abimelech has taken the whole city, but he cannot take this temple of Berith. Here we shall be under the protection of the gods." O Berith, the god! do your best now for these refugees. If you have eyes, pity them. If you have hands, help them. If you have thunderbolts, strike for them. But how shall Abimelech and his army take this temple of Berith and the men who are here fortified? Will they do it with sword? Nay. Will they do it with spear? Nay. With battering-ram, rolled up by hundred-armed strength crashing against the walls? Nay. Abimelech marches his men to a wood in Zalmon. With his axe he hews off a limb of a tree, and puts that limb upon his own shoulder, and then he says to his men: "You do the same. They are obedient to their commander. There is a struggle as to who shall have axes. The whole wood is full of bending boughs, and the cracking and the hacking, and the cutting, until every one of the host has the limb of a tree cut down, and not only that, but has put it on his shoulder just as Abimelech showed him how. Are these men all armed with the tree branch? The reply comes: "All armed." And they march on. Oh, what a strange army, with that strange equipment! They come up to the foot of the temple at Berith, and Abimelech takes his limb of a tree and throws it down; and the first platoon of soldiers come up and they throw down their branches; and the second platoon, and the third, until all around about the temple of Berith there is a pile of tree branches. The Shechemites look out from the window of the temple upon what seems to them childish play on the part of their enemies. But soon the flints are struck, and the sparks begin to kindle the brush, and the flame comes up all through the pile, and the red elements leap to the casement, and the woodwork begins to blaze, and one arm of flame is thrown up on the right side of the temple, and another arm of flame is thrown up on the left side of the temple, until they clasp their lurid palms under the wild night sky, and the cry of "Fire!" within, and "Fire!" without, announces the terror, and the strangulation, and the doom of the Shechemites, and the complete overthrow of the temple of the god Berith. Then there went up a shout, long and loud, from the stout lungs and swarthy chests of Abimelech and his men, as they stood amid the ashes and the dust crying: "Victory! victory!"

Now I learn first from this subject, the folly of depending upon any one form of tactics in anything we have to do for this world or for God. Look over the weaponry of olden times—javelins, battle-axes, habergeons, and show me a single weapon with which Abimelech and his men could have gained such complete triumph. It is no easy thing to take a temple thus armed. I have seen a house where, during revolutionary times, a man and his wife kept back a whole regiment hour after hour, because they were inside the house, and the assaulting soldiers were outside the house. Yet here Abimelech and his army come up, they surround this temple, and they capture it without the loss of a single man on the part

of Abimelech, although I suppose some of the old Israelitish heroes told Abimelech: "You are only going up there to be cut to pieces." Yet you are willing to testify to-day that by no other mode—certainly not by ordinary modes—could that temple so easily, so thoroughly have been taken. Fathers and mothers, brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ, what the Church most wants to learn, this day, is that any plan is right, is lawful, is best, which helps to overthrow the temple of sin, and capture this world for God. We are very apt to stick to the old modes of attack. We've put on the old-style coat of mail. We come up with the sharp, keen, glittering spear of argument, expecting in that way to take the castle; but they have a thousand spears where we have ten. And so the castle of sin stands. Oh, my friends, we will never capture this world for God by any keen sabre of rhetoric, by any glittering lances of rhetoric, by any sapping and mining of profound disquisition, by any gunpowder explosions of indignation, by sharpshootings of wit, by howitzers of mental strength made to swing shell five miles, by cavalry horses gorgeously caparisoned pawing the air. In vain all the attempts on the part of these ecclesiastical foot soldiers, light horsemen and grenadiers.

My friends, I propose a different style of tactics. Let each one go to the forest of God's promise and invitation, and hew down a branch and put it on his shoulder, and let us all come around these obstinate iniquities, and then with this pile, kindled by the fires of holy zeal and the flames of a consecrated life, we will burn them out. What steel cannot do, fire may. And I announce myself in favor of any plan of religious attack that succeeds—any plan of religious attack, however radical, however odd, however unpopular, however hostile to all the conventionalities of Church and State. If one style of prayer does not do the work, let us try another. If the Church music of to-day does not get the victory, then let us make the assault with a backwoods chorus. If a prayer-meeting at half past seven in the evening does not succeed, let us have one as early in the morning as when the angel found wrestling Jacob too much for him. If a sermon with the three authorized heads does not do the work, then let us have a sermon with twenty heads, or no heads at all. We want more heart in our song, more heart in our almsgiving, more heart in our prayers, more heart in our preaching. Oh, for less of Abimelech's sword and more of Abimelech's conflagration! I had often heard

There is a fountain filled with blood, sung artistically by four birds perched on their Sunday roost in the gallery, until I thought of Jenny Lind, and Nilsson, and Sontag, and all the other warblers; but there came not one tear to my eye, nor one master emotion to my heart. But one night I went down to the African Methodist meeting-house in Philadelphia, and at the close of the service a black woman, in the middle of the audience, began to sing that hymn, and all the audience joined in, and we were floated some three or four miles nearer heaven than I have ever been since. I saw with my own eyes that "fountain filled with blood"—red, agonizing, sacrificial, redemptive, and I heard the crimson splash of the wave as we all went down under it.

For sinners plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains. Still further, I learn from this subject the power of example. If Abimelech had sat down on the grass, and told his men to go and get the boughs, and go out to the battle, they would never have gone at all, or if they had, it would have been without any spirit or effective result; but when Abimelech goes with his own axe and hews down a branch, and with Abimelech's arms puts it on Abimelech's shoulder, and marches on, then, my text says, all the people did the same. How natural that was. What made Garibaldi and Stonewall Jackson the most magnetic commanders of the century? They always rode ahead. Oh, the overwhelming power of example! Here is a father on the wrong road; all his boys go on the wrong road. Here is a father who enlists for Christ; his children enlist. I saw in some of the picture galleries of Europe, that before many of the great works of the masters—the old masters—there would be sometimes four or five artists taking copies of the pictures. These copies they are going to carry with them, perhaps to distant lands; and I have thought that your life and character are a masterpiece, and it is being copied, and long after you are gone it will bloom or blast in the homes of those who knew you, and be a Gorgon or a Madonna. Look out what you say. Look out what you do. Eternity will hear the echo. The best sermon ever preached is a holy life. The best music ever chanted is a consistent walk. If you want others to serve God, serve him yourself. If you want others to shoulder their duty, shoulder yours. Where Abimelech goes his troops go. Oh, start out for heaven to-day, and your family will come after you, and your business associates will come after you, and your social friends will join you. With one branch of the tree of life for a baton, marshal just as many as you can together. Oh, the infinite, the semi-omnipotent power of a good or bad example!

I saw last summer, near the beach, a wrecker's machine. It was a cylinder with some holes at the side, made for the thrusting in of some long poles with strong leverage; and when there is any vessel in trouble or going to pieces in the offing, the wreckers shoot a rope out to the suffering men. They grasp it, and the wreckers turn the cylinder, and the rope winds around the cylinder, and those who are shipwrecked are saved. So, at your feet, to-day, there is an influence with a tremendous leverage. The rope attached to it swings far out into the billowy future. Your children, your children's children, and

all the generations that are to follow, will grip that influence, and feel the long-reaching pulg long after the figures on your tombstone are so near worn out that the visitor cannot tell whether it was 1896, or 1796, or 1696, that you died.

Still further, I learn from this subject the advantage of concerted action. If Abimelech had merely gone out with a tree-branch the work would not have been accomplished; or if ten, twenty, or thirty men had gone; but when all the axes are lifted and all the sharp edges fall, and all these men carry each his tree-branch down and throw it about the temple, the victory is gained—the temple falls. My friends, where there is one man in the Church of God at this day shouldering his whole duty, there are a great many who never lift an axe or swing a bough. It seems to me as if there were ten dromedaries in every live to one busy bee; as though there were twenty sailors sound asleep in the ship's hammocks to four men on the stormy deck. It seems as if there were fifty thousand men belonging to the reserve corps, and only one thousand active combatants. Oh, we all want our boats to get over to the golden sands; but the most of us are seated either in the prow or in the stern, wrapped in our striped shawl, holding a big-handed sunshade, while others are bilstered in the heat, and pull until the oar-locks groan, and the blades bend till they snap. Oh, you religious sleepy-heads, wake up! You have lain so long in one place that the ants and caterpillars have begun to crawl over you! What do you know, my brother, about a living Gospel made to storm the world? Now, my idea of a Christian is a man on fire with zeal for God; and if your pulse ordinarily beats sixty times a minute when you think of other themes, and talk about other themes, if your pulse does not go up to seventy-five or eighty when you come to talk about Christ and heaven, it is because you do not know the one, and have a poor chance of getting to the other.

In a former charge, one Sunday, I took into the pulpit the church records, and I laid them on the pulpit and opened them, and said: "Brethren, here are the church records. I find a great many of you whose names are down here are off duty." Some were afraid I would read the names, for at that time some of them were deep in the worst kind of oil stocks, and were idle as to Christian work. But if ministers of Christ to-day should bring the church records into the pulpit and read, oh, what a flutter there would be! There would not be fans enough in church to keep the cheeks cool. I do not know but it would be a good thing if the minister once in a while should bring the church records into the pulpit and call the roll, for that is what I consider every church record to be—merely a muster-roll of the Lord's army; and the reading of it should reveal where every soldier is and what he is doing.

Still further, I learn from this subject the danger of false refuge. As soon as these Shechemites got into the temple, they thought they were safe. They said: "Berith will take care of us. Abimelech may batter down everything else; he can not batter down this temple where we are now hid." But very soon they heard the timbers crackling, and they were smothered with smoke, and they miserably died. I suppose every person in this audience this moment is stepping into some kind of refuge. Here you step in the tower of good works. You say: "I shall be safe in this refuge." The battlements are adorned; the steps are varnished; on the wall are pictures of all the suffering you have alleviated, and all the schools you have established, and all the fine things you have done. Up in that tower you feel you are safe. But hear you not the tramp of your unparadised sins all around the tower? They each have a match. You are kindling the combustible material. You feel the heat and the suffocation. Oh, may you leap in time, the Gospel declaring: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified."

"Well," you say, "I have been driven out of that tower; where shall I go?" Step into this tower of indifference. You say: "If this tower is attacked, it will be a great while before it is taken." You feel at ease. But there is an Abimelech, with ruthless assault, coming on. Death and his forces are gathering around, and they demand that you surrender everything, and they throw their skeleton arms in the window, and with their iron flats they beat against the door, and while you are trying to keep them out you see the torches of judgment kindling, and every forest is a torch, and every mountain a torch, and every sea a torch, and while the Alps, and Pyrenees, and Himalayas turn into a live coal, blown redder and redder by the whirlwind breath of a God omnipotent, what will become of your refuge of lies?

"But," says some one, "you are engaged in a very mean business, driving us from tower to tower." Oh, no! I want to tell you of a Gibraltar that never has been and never will be taken: of a wall that no Satanic assault can scale; of a bulwark that the judgment earthquakes cannot budge. The Bible refers to it when it says: "In God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms." Oh! sling yourself into it. Tread down unceremoniously everything that intercepts you. Wedge your way there. There are enough hounds of death and peril after you to make you hurry. Many a man has perished just outside the tower, with his foot on the step, with his hand on the latch. Oh! get inside. Not one surplus second have you to spare. Quick! quick! quick!

Capua, the famous city where Hannibal's army was ruined by passing a winter, was noted for its manufactures of perfumes. The Capuan perfumes were sent in earthen and glass vessels to all parts of the Roman world.

# FOR WOMAN AND HOME

## UP TO DATE READING FOR DAMES AND DAMSELS.

Some Current Notes of the Modes—A Driving Cloak—Costumes of Scotch Tweed—Answers to Correspondents—Hints for the Household.



**A**NOTHER sample of graceful design is shown in a long fur cloak for driving purposes, when the furs are too heavy and warm, as is often the case in our changeable climate. It is in color a pale yellow tan, and in material a lovely rough boucle, all covered with its silky hairiness. The long underbody is but half-fitting, though curving beautifully at the back, and fastened down the double-breasted front with great horn buttons. A set of tiny, round horn buttons decorate the strap at the throat, and another at the top of the convenient side pocket.

There is a set of full triple capes, piped about the edge with a thick cord of silk as big as your finger. A jaunty collar, tilted back from the face, and wired so as to stand against the wind, finishes the throat prettily. A smart hat, perked directly up in front, and held there by a bow of cream lace, is of tan felt, faced with black velvet, the outside loaded with a lot of silky black plumes.

Another charming coat is of scarlet wool, with all the seams banded with Persian lamb, and a huge butterfly collar of the same fur to turn up about the ears. The modistes are also turning out many handsome fur-trimmed gowns for riding and skating wear, some of which are remarkably swell. The one which most takes the fancy has a combination of steel gray broadcloth, yellowish white kid and ermine fur. The skirt was a whirling Paolina, with stripes of ermine laid over the side seams and reaching to the waist. The jacket is a short one, with flaring basque, the body of ermine, fastened with huge ivory buttons. There are sleeves of steel gray, and a huge muff of ermine, while the sweetest bit of a hat is made of ermine, lace, and a gray wing.

Most gowns show a deal of handsome braiding and the more popular applique work, outlined often with tiny jewels.



Now that almost everyone has one of the jaunty little coats of tan or the darker shades, everyone is suddenly becoming dissatisfied because they are a part of the common herd who flock the streets in refter coats. This is a catastrophe difficult to avoid, as it is to be expected that all pretty, modish things will become more or less common, unless the price is so high as to place it above their heads. It is a positive relief from the masses of tan-coated girls to meet one in a jaunty cloth suit, who has braved the first popularity of the coat and clung to her first love, a dainty street suit. A pretty costume of this description was recently seen, and may be copied at a trifling expense, at least trifling as compared with the prices paid for a tailor-made jacket. The material is tweed, genuine Scotch tweed, in dull shades of brown, barred with black, something one may wear continually without being noticed. The skirt is in the latest mode, and made to flare abnormally at the feet, while fitting like a glove at the waist. It is lined throughout with rustling percaline, and stiffened smartly at the feet with a broad band of specially prepared and wired canvas. The tiny round bodice is double-breasted and fastened with a

row of brown horn buttons. The sleeves are huge gigot affairs, stiffened so as not to be crushable. The shoulders are warmly covered by a set of capes, very much rippled, lined with wood-brown satin. A black collar of wood-brown velvet finishes the neck. With it is worn a pretty hat, moderately wide, of wood-brown beaver, and massed on top with a lot of choux of creamy white crepon, with jet centers. A muff of sealskin completes the toilet.

# CURRENT READING

## NEWEST BOOKS ON SALE BOOKSTORES.

"A Singular Life," by William Phelps. Phelps's Latest Story—The "Singular Life," by William Phelps. Literary Notes.

**A SINGULAR LIFE.** By William Phelps. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Mr. Phelps has made a collection of essays of the day. Many are of distinct local color, and all will be found of timely interest. The contents of the book consist of a number of editorials which have appeared in the Dial during the last three years, and the author explains in his preface that "the paper make no pretense of doing more than touch the skirts and fringes of the great subjects with which they are concerned."

More pretentious works, however, have failed to go more deeply into the same subjects and still be so entertaining as this volume offered by Mr. Phelps. He has an attractive and easy style, which, while scholarly, is free from any taint of pedantry. He has ideas and expresses them clearly in a direct method which leads conviction to his views.

That the writings themselves were worthy of preservation no one who knows the author and his conscientious labors in many fields for all that is best in art of every kind can doubt for a moment. Furthermore, the work is enriched by three sonnets which centralize and epitomize the thought of the three parts of the work which they precede on "Literature and Criticism," "Education" and "In Memoriam."

To all literary men these papers will have exceptional interest, as they appeal most to this class and deal in a large measure with criticism from a professional view-point.

**A Singular Life.** By Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. An amazing amount of art, humanity, fervor, wit, satire, skill in characterization, dramatic power, and about everything else imaginable or desirable in fiction, has been lavished on this most absorbing and moving story. And yet it deals with the temperance question! Almost anyone can write an enthralling tale about one of the commandments, particularly the seventh; but who could imagine a genuinely fine work about that important twelfth or thirteenth, or something in the appendix of the decalogue? "There shall not be a swinish drunkard!" Temperance is so intimately connected in our minds with blue-goggled apologetics and undertakerish and mercenary exhortors, that no one could think of a work of art in connection with it. Yet here one is Bayard is a latter-day Crusader, a village Parkhurst. He is a minister fighting the liquor curbs in his New England town. He is just a little too heterodox to be passed by his parish examiners; so he has the added glory of independence. There is no pietistic gnash, but there is all the ardor the theme is capable of, and wit enough to keep it from morbidness. The title of the book is the poorest thing about it. It is doubtless Mrs. Ward's masterpiece. Cloth, \$1.25. (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York.)

**Godey's Magazine.** Godey's Magazine for February appears in a beautiful and original cover by F. C. Ransom—a quaint Japanese conception for St. Valentine's day. Most striking among the contents is a profusely illustrated article on the famous museum freaks. Cleveland Moffet tells some of the richest stories about the late Eugene Field; and among the interesting articles are "Stodie Life in Paris," "What the Bicycle Does for the Muscles," and a description of how the deaf are taught speech; and specca-reading. In the series on "Music in America," which is a distinctive and successful feature of Godey's, Rupert Hughes writes entertainingly on the subject of cantatas, and discusses Mr. G. W. Chadwick's works. Under the head of "Talks by Successful Women" appears an interview with Mrs. Dunlap Hopkins, who has accomplished so much for women in New York and elsewhere.

**Haunts of Famous Authors.** Second edition, by Theodore F. Wolfe. "A Literary Pilgrimage Among the Haunts of Famous British Authors." By Theodore F. Wolfe. These two booklets are beautiful specimens of the printer's and binder's art, illustrated as they are with excellent photographs of scenes about which reminiscences cling innately. Dr. Wolfe's share of the book-making is equally successful. He has a smooth, suggestive, cordial style, an abundance of well-put information. Polished buckram, \$1.25 each. Wolfe or in a box, \$2.50. (J. B. Lippincott, Philadelphia.)

**The Private Home.** The sketches in Private Home and Other Stories, by John Strang, who are wholesome, entertaining and broad. It shows an American method of handling matters in the home. Household, also an American, thus marking a study of the month and social conditions. It is illustrated. Cloth, \$1.25. (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York.)

**Family Recipes.** Grape Sherbet—Take one quart of grape juice, two cups of orange juice, and two cups of sugar; mix and stir until the latter is dissolved; turn into a freezer and freeze. When half frozen take out the dasher and add the beaten whites of two eggs, mixing well. Pack, and set away to harden.

**St. Louis is making an effort to build a labor hall.**