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THE MARCH HOMEWARD.

SERMON PREACHED BY REV. T. DE WITT TALMAGE, D. D., JAN. 20.

The Servants of the Lord Should Hous themselves as Did David and His Men and Recover Their Loved Ones from the Power of the Evil One.

BROOKLYN, Jan. 20.—The Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D. D., having expounded appropriate passages of Scripture, gave out the hymn: Who are these in bright array, This ignominious throng, Round the altar night and day, Telling their triumphant song?

The subject of the sermon was "The March Homeward," and the text 1 Samuel, xxx, 8: "Pursue for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." Dr. Talmage said:

There is intense excitement in the village of Ziklag. David and his men are bidding goodby to their families, and are off for the wars. In that little village of Ziklag the defenseless ones will be safe until the warriors, flushed with victory, come home. But will the defenseless ones be safe? The soft arms of children are around the necks of the bronzed warriors until they shake themselves free and start, and handkerchiefs and flags are waved and kisses thrown until the armed men vanish beyond the hills. David and his men soon got through with their campaign and start homeward. Every night on their way home, no sooner does the soldier put his head on the knapsack than in his dream he hears the welcome of the wife and the shout of the child. Oh, what long stories they will have to tell their families of how they dodged the battle axe! and then will roll up their sleeves and show their half-healed wounds. With glad, quick step, they march on, David and his men, for they are marching home. Now they come up to the last hill which overlooks Ziklag, and they expect in a moment to see the dwelling places of their loved ones. They look, and as they look their cheeks turn pale, and their lip quivers, and their hand involuntarily comes down on the hilt of the sword. "Where is Ziklag? Where are our homes?" they cry. Alas! the cutting smoke above the ruin tells the tragedy. The Amalekites have come down and consumed the village, and carried the mothers and the wives and the children of David and his men into captivity. The swarthy warriors stand for a few moments transfixed with horror. Then their eyes glance to each other, and they burst into uncontrollable weeping; for when a strong warrior weeps, the grief is appalling. It seems as if the emotion might tear him to pieces. "They wept until they had no more power to weep." But soon their sorrow turns into rage, and David, swinging his sword high in air, cries: "Pursue, for thou shalt overtake them, and without fail recover all." Now the march becomes a "double quick." Two hundred of David's men stop by the brook Besor, faint with fatigue and grief. They cannot go a step farther. These are left there. But the other 400 men under David, with a sort of panther step, march on in sorrow and in rage. They find by the side of the road a half-dead Egyptian, and they resuscitate him, and compel him to tell the whole story. He says: "Yonder they went, the captors and the captives," pointing in the direction. Forward, ye 400 brave men of fire! Very soon David and his enraged company come upon the Amalekites' host. Yonder they see their own wives and children and mothers, and under Amalekites' guard. Here are the officers of the Amalekites' army holding a banquet. The cups are full, the music is roused, the dance begins. The Amalekites' host cheer and cheer over their victory. But, without note of bugle or warning of trumpet, David and his four hundred men burst upon the scene suddenly, as Robert Bruce hurled his Scotchmen upon the revelers at Bannockburn. David and his men look up, and one glance at their loved ones in captivity and under Amalekites' guard throws them into a very fury of determination, for you know how men will fight when they fight for their wives and children. Ah! there are lightnings in their eye, and every finger is a spear, and their voice is like the shout of the whirlwind. Amidst the upset tankards and the costly vials crushed under foot, the wounded Amalekites in their blood mingling with their wine shrieking for mercy. No sooner do David and his men win the victory than they throw their swords down into the dust—what do they want with swords now!—and the broken families come together amidst a great shout of joy that makes the parting scene in Ziklag seem very insipid in the comparison. The rough old warrior has to use some persuasion before he can get his child to come to him now after so long an absence, but soon the little finger traces the familiar wrinkle across the scarred face. And then the empty tankards are set up, and they are filled with the best wine from the hills, and David and his men, the husbands, the wives, the brothers, the sisters, drink to the overthrow of the Amalekites and to the rebuilding of Ziklag. So, O Lord, let thine enemies perish!

THE LOST RECOVERED. Now they are coming home, David and his men and their families—a long procession. Men, women and children, loaded with jewels and robes and with all kinds of trophies the Amalekites had gathered up in years of conquest—everything now in the hands of David and his men. When they come by the brook Besor the place where they staid the men sick and incompetent to travel, the jewels and the robes and all kinds of treasures are divided among the sick as well as among the well. Surely, the lame and exhausted ought to have some of the treasures. Here is a robe for the pale faced warrior. Here is a pillow for this dying man. Here is a handful of gold for the wasted trumpeter. I really think that these men who fainted by the brook Besor may have endured as much as those men who went into battle. Some mean fellows objected to the sick ones having any of the spoils. The objectors said: "These men did not fight." David, with a magnanimous heart, replies: "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the staff."

This subject is practically suggestive to me. Thank God, in these times a man can go off on a journey, and be gone weeks and months, and come back and see his house untouched and incendiary, and have his family on the step to greet him, if by telegram he has foretold the moment of his coming. But there are Amalekites' disasters, and there are Amalekites' diseases, that sometimes come down upon one's home, making as devastating work as the day when Ziklag took fire. There are families in my congregation whose homes have been broken up. No battering ram smote in the door, no iconoclast crumbled the statues, no flame leaped amidst the curtains; but so far as all the joy and merriment that once belonged to that house are concerned, the home has departed. Armed diseases came down upon the quietness of the scene—scarlet fevers, or pleurisy, or consumptions, or undefined disorders came and seized upon some members of that family, and carried them away. Ziklag in ashes! And you go about, sometimes weeping and sometimes enraged, wanting to get back your loved ones as much as David and his men

wanted to reconstruct their despoiled households. Ziklag in ashes. Some of you went off from home. You counted the days of your absence. Every day seemed as long as a week. Oh, how glad you were when the time came for you to go aboard the steamboat or rail car and start for home! You arrived. You went up the street where your dwelling was, and in the night you put your hand on the door bell, and behold! it was wrapped with the signal of bereavement, and you found that Amalekites' Death, which has devastated a thousand other households, had blasted yours. You go about weeping amidst the desolation of your once happy home, thinking of the bright eyes closed, and the noble hearts stopped, and the gentle hands folded, and you weep until you have no more power to weep. Ziklag is ashes!

OUR ZIKLAG IN ASHES. A gentleman went to a friend of mine in the city of Washington, and asked that through him he might get a consulship to some foreign port. My friend said to him: "What do you want to go away from your beautiful home for, into a foreign port?" "Oh," he replied, "my home is gone! My six children are dead! I must get away, sir. I can't stand it in this country any longer." Ziklag in ashes!

Why these long shadows of bereavement across this audience! Why is it that in almost every assemblage black is the predominant color of the apparel? Is it because you do not like saffron or brown or violet? Oh, no! You say: "The world is not so bright to us as it once was," and there is a story of silent voices, and of still feet, and of loved ones gone, and when you look over the hills, expecting only beauty and loveliness, you find only devastation and woe. Ziklag in ashes!

In Dutchess county, New York, the village church was decorated until the fragrance of the flowers was almost bewildering. The maidens of the village had emptied the place of flowers upon one marriage altar. One of their own number was affianced to a minister of Christ, who had come to take her to his home. With hands joined, amidst a congratulatory audience, the vows were taken. In three days from that time one of those who stood at the altar exchanged earth for heaven. The wedding march broke down to the funeral dirge. There were not enough flowers now for the coffin lid, because they had all been taken for the bridal hour. The dead minister of Christ is brought to another village. He had gone out from them less than a week before in his strength; now he comes home lifeless. The whole church bewailed him. The solemn procession moved around to look upon the still face that once had boomed with messages of salvation. Little children were lifted up to look at him. And some of those whom he had comforted in days of sorrow, when they passed that silent form, made the place dreadful with their weeping. Another village emptied of its flowers—some of them put in the shape of a cross to symbolize his hope, others put in the shape of a crown to symbolize his triumph. A hundred lights blown out in one strong gust from the open door of a sepulcher. Ziklag in ashes!

I preach this sermon today because I want to rally you, as David rallied his men, for the recovery of the loved and the lost. I want not only to win heaven, but I want all this congregation to go along with me. I feel that somehow I have a responsibility in your arriving at that great city. I have on other Sabbaths used other inducements. I mean today, for the sake of variety, hoping to reach your heart, to try another kind of inducement. Do you really want to join the companionship of your loved ones who have gone? Are you as anxious to join them as David and his men were to join their families? Then I am here, in the name of God, to say that you may and to tell you how.

I remark, in the first place, if you want to join your loved ones in glory, you must travel the same way they went. No sooner had the half-dead Egyptian been resuscitated than he pointed the way the captors and the captives had gone, and David and his men followed after. So our Christian friends have gone into another country, and if we want to reach their companionship we must take the same road. They repented; we must repent. They prayed; we must pray. They trusted in Christ; we must trust in Christ. They lived a religious life; we must live a religious life. They were in some things like ourselves. I know now that they are gone, there is a halo around their names, but they had their faults. They said and did things they ought never to have said or done. They were sometimes rebellious, sometimes cast down. They were far from being perfect. So I suppose that when we have gone some things in us that are now only tolerable may be almost repulsive. But, as they were like us in deficiencies, we ought to be like them in taking a supernatural Christ to make up for the deficits. Had it not been for Jesus, they would have all perished; but Christ confronted them and said: "I am the way," and they took it.

THE CAPTIVE'S PATH UNPLEASANT. I have also to say to you that the path that these captives trod was a troubled path, and that David and his men had to go over the same difficult way. While these captives were being taken off they said: "Oh, we are so tired, we are so sick, we are so hungry!" But the men who had charge of them said: "Stop this crying. Go on!" David and his men also found it a hard way. They had to travel it. Our friends have gone into glory, and it is through much tribulation that we are to enter into the kingdom. How our loved ones used to have to struggle! how their old hearts ached! how sometimes they had a tussle for bread! In our childhood we wondered why there were so many wrinkles on their faces. We did not know that what were called "crow's feet" on their faces were the marks of the black raven of trouble. Did you never hear the old people, seated by the evening stand, talk over their early trials, their hardships, the accidents, the burials, the disappointments, the empty flour barrel when there were so many hungry ones to feed, the sickness almost unto death, where the next dose of morphine decided between ghastly bereavement and an unbroken home circle? Oh, yes! it was trouble that whitened their hair. It was trouble that shook the cup in their hands. It was trouble that washed the luster from their eyes with the rain of tears until they needed spectacles. It was trouble that made the cane a necessity for their journey. Do you never remember seeing your old mother sitting, on some rainy day, looking out of the window, her elbow on the window sill, her hand to her brow—looking out, not seeing the falling shower at all (you well knew she was looking into the distant past), until the apron came up to her eyes, because the memory was too much for her?

Off the big, unbidden tear, Stealing down the furrowed cheek, Told in eloquence sincere, Tales of woe they could not speak. But this scene of weeping o'er, Past this scene of toil and pain, They shall feel distress no more, Never, never weep again.

"Who are these under the altar?" the question was asked; and the response came: "These are they, which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb." Our friends went by a path of tears into glory. Be not surprised if we have to travel the same pathway.

I remark again, if we want to win the so- (Continued on page three.)

3 SPECIALS. 3

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