

USES OF STRATAGEM.

DR. TALMAGE ADDRESSES HIS COMRADES OF THE THIRTEENTH.

Victorious Retreat—The Triumph of the Wicked Is Short—Theatres and Drinking Saloons to Be Turned Into Asylums, Art Galleries and Churches.

PREESKILL, N. Y., July 22.—Chaplain T. De Witt Talmage preached today to the Thirteenth regiment of the New York State National Guards, now encamped here. The regiment assembled at 3 p. m., when people from the neighboring country, towns and cities were present in immense numbers. A military band conducted the musical part of the service. Chaplain Talmage's sermon, which was on "Uses of Stratagem," was based on Joshua viii, 7: "Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city." He said:

Men of the Thirteenth regiment and their friends here gathered, of all occupations and professions, men of the city and men of the fields, here is a theme fit for all of us.

One Sabbath evening, with my family around me, we were talking over the scene of the text. In the wide open eyes and the quick interrogations and the blanched cheeks I realized what a thrilling drama it was. There is the old city, shorter by name than any other city in the ages, spelled with two letters—A, I—Al. Joshua and his men wait to take it.

How to do it is the question. On a former occasion, in a straightforward, face to face fight, they had been defeated; but now they are going to take it by ambuscade. General Joshua has two divisions in his army—the one division the battle vanguard commander will lead himself, the other division he sends off to encamp in an ambush on the west side of the city of Ai. No torches, no lanterns, no sound of heavy battalions, but 30,000 swartly warriors moving in silence, speaking only in a whisper; no clicking of swords against shields, lest the watchmen of Ai discover it and the stratagem be a failure. If a roystering soldier in the Israelitish army forgets himself, all along the line the word is "Hush!" Joshua takes the other division, the one with which he is to march, and puts it on the north side of the city of Ai, and then spends the night in reconnoitering in the valley. There he is, thinking over the fortunes of the coming day, with something of the feelings of Wellington the night before Waterloo, or of Meade and Lee the night before Gettysburg. There he stands in the night, and says to himself: "Yonder is the division in ambush on the west side of Ai. Here is the division I have under my especial command on the north side of Ai. There is the old city slumbering in its sin. To-morrow will be the battle. Look! the morning already begins to tip the hills. The military officers of Ai look out in the morning very early, and while they do not see the division in ambush, they behold the other division of Joshua, and the cry, "To arms! to arms!" rings through all the streets of the old town, and every sword, whether hacked and bent or newly welded, is brought out, and all the inhabitants of the city of Ai pour through the gates, an infuriated torrent, and their cry is: "Come, we'll make quick work with Joshua and his troops." No sooner had these people of Ai come out against the troops of Joshua, than Joshua gave such a command as he seldom gave: "Fall back!" Why, they could not believe their own ears. Is Joshua's courage failing him?

The retreat is beaten, and the Israelites are flying, throwing blankets and canteens on every side under this worse than Bull Run defeat. And you ought to hear the soldiers of Ai cheer and cheer and cheer. But they huzza too soon. The men lying in ambush are straining their vision to get some signal from Joshua that they may know what time to drop upon the city. Joshua takes his sun-ubushed spear, glittering in the sun like a shaft of doom, and points it toward the city; and when the men up yonder in the ambush see it, with hawklike swoop they drop upon Ai, and without stroke of sword or stab of spear take the city and put it to the torch. So much for the division that was in ambush. How about the division under Joshua's command? No sooner does Joshua stop in the flight than all his men stop with him, and as he wheels they wheel, for in a voice of thunder he cried "Halt!" One strong arm driving back a torrent of flying troops. And then, as he points his spear through the golden light toward that fated city, his troops know that they are to start for it. What a scene it was when the division in ambush which had taken the city marched down against the men of Ai on the one side, and the troops under Joshua doubled up their enemies from the other side, and the men of A. were caught between these two hurricanes of Israelitish courage, thrust before and behind, stabbed in breast and back, ground between the upper and the nether millstones of God's indignation. Wee to the city of Ai! Cheer for the triumphs of Israel!

Lesson the first: There is such a thing as a victorious retreat. Joshua's falling back was the first chapter in his successful besiegement. And there are times in your life when the best thing you can do is to run. You were once the victim of strong drink. The demijohn and the decanter were your fierce foes. They came down upon you with greater fury than the men of Ai upon the men of Joshua. Your only safety is to get away from them. Your dissipating companions will come around you for your overthrow. Run for your life! Fall back from the drinking saloon. Fall back from the wine party. Your flight is your advance. Your retreat is your victory. There is a saloon down on the next street that has almost been the ruin of your soul. Then why do you go along that street? Why do you not pass through some other street rather than by the place of your calamity? A spoonful of brandy taken for medicinal purposes by a man who twenty years before had been formed from drunkenness, hurled into the grave one of the best friends I ever had. Your retreat is your victory. Here is a converted infidel. He is so strong now in his faith in the Gospel he says he can read anything. What are you reading? Bolingbroke!

Andrew Jackson Davis' tracts? Tyn-dalla's Glasgow University address? Drop them and run. You will be an infidel before you die unless you quit that. These men of Ai will be too much for you. Turn your back on the rank and file of unbelief. Fly before they cut you with their swords and transfix you with their javelins.

There are people who have been well nigh ruined because they risked a fool-hardy expedition in the presence of mighty and overwhelming temptations, and the men of Ai made a morning meal of them. So also there is such a thing as a victorious retreat in the religious world. Thousands of times the kingdom of Christ has seemed to fall back. When the blood of the Scotch Covenanters gave a deeper dye to the heather of the highlands, when the Vaudois of France chose extermination rather than make an unchristian surrender, when on St. Bartholomew's day mounted assassins rode through the streets of Paris crying: "Kill! Blood letting is good in August! Kill! Death to the Huguenots! Kill!" when Lady Jane Grey's head rolled from the executioner's block; when Calvin was imprisoned in the castle; when John Knox died for the truth; when John Bunyan lay rotting in Bedford jail, saying: "If God will help me and my physician's life continues I will stay here until the moss grows on my eyebrows rather than give up my faith," the days of retreat for the church were days of victory.

The Pilgrim fathers fell back from the other side of the sea to Plymouth Rock, but now are marshaling a continent for the Christianization of the world. The church of Christ falling back from Piedmont, falling back from Rue St. Jacques, falling back from St. Denis, falling back from Wurtemberg castles, falling back from the Brussels market place, yet all the time triumphing. Notwithstanding all the shocking reverses which the church of Christ suffers, what do we see today? Three thousand missionaries of the cross on heathen ground; sixty thousand ministers of Jesus Christ in this land; at least two hundred millions of Christians on the earth. All nations today kindling in a blaze of revival. Falling back, yet advancing until the old Wesleyan hymn will prove true:

The Lion of Judah shall break the chain, And give us the victory again and again.

But there is a more marked illustration of victorious retreat in the life of our Joshua, the Jesus of the ages. First falling back from an appalling height to an appalling depth, falling from celestial hills to terrestrial valleys, from throne to manger; yet that did not seem to suffice him as a retreat. Falling back still further from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Nazareth to Jerusalem, back from Jerusalem to Golgotha, back from Golgotha to the mausoleum in the rock, back down over the precipices of perdition until he walked amid the caverns of the eternal captives, and drank of the wine of the wrath of Almighty God amid the Ahabs and the Jezebels and the Belshazzars. O, men of the pulpit and men of the pew, Christ's descent from heaven to earth does not measure half the distance. It was from glory to perdition. He descended into hell. All the records of earthly retreat are as nothing compared with this falling back. Santa Anna, with the fragments of his army flying over the plateaux of Mexico, and Napoleon and his army retreating from Moscow into the awful snows of Russia, are not worthy to be mentioned with this retreat, when all the powers of darkness seem to be pursuing Christ as he fell back, until the body of him who came to do such wonderful things lay pulseless and stripped. Methinks that the city of Ai was not so emptied of its inhabitants when they went to pursue Joshua, as perdition was emptied of devils when they started for the pursuit of Christ, and he fell back and back down lower, down lower, chasm below chasm, pit below pit, until he seemed to strike the bottom of oblongation and scorn and torture. Oh, the long, loud, jubilant shout of hell at the defeat of the Lord God Almighty!

But let not the power of darkness rejoice quite so soon. Do you hear that disturbance in the tomb of Arimathea? I hear the sheet rending! What means that stone hurled down the side of the hill? Who is this coming out? Push him back! the dead must not stalk in this open sunlight. O, it is our Joshua. Let him come out. He comes forth and starts for the city. He takes the spear of the Roman guard and points that way. Church militant marches up on one side and the church triumphant marches down on the other side. And the powers of darkness being caught between these ranks of celestial and terrestrial valor, nothing is left of them save just enough to illustrate the direful overthrow of hell and our Joshua's eternal victory. On his head be all the crowns. In his hand be all the scepters. At his feet be all the human hearts; and here, Lord, is one of them.

Lesson the second: The triumph of the wicked is short. Did you ever see an army in a panic? There is nothing so uncontrollable. If you had stood at Long bridge, Washington, during the opening of our sad civil war, you would know what it is to see an army run. And when those men of Ai looked out and saw those men of Joshua in a stampede, they expected easy work. They would scatter them as the equinox the leaves. Oh, the gleeful and jubilant descent of the men of Ai upon the men of Joshua! But their exhilaration was brief, for the tide of battle turned and these quondam conquerors left their miserable carcasses in the wilderness of Beth-aven. So it always is. The triumph of the wicked is short. You make \$20,000 at the gaming table. Do you expect to keep it? You will die in the poorhouse. You made a fortune by iniquitous traffic. Do you expect to keep it? Your money will scatter, or it will stay long enough to curse your children after you are dead. Call over the roll of bad men who prospered and see how short was their prosperity. For a while, like the men of Ai, they went from conquest to conquest, but after a while disaster rolled back upon them, and they were divided into three parts; misfortune took their property, the grave took their body, and the lost world took their soul. I am always interested in the building of theatres and the building of dissipating saloons. I like to have them built of the best granite and have the rooms made large and to have the pillars

made very firm. God is going to conquer them, and they will be turned into asylums and art galleries and churches. The stores in which fraudulent men do business, the splendid banking institutions where the president and cashier put all their property in their wives' hands and then fall for two hundred thousand dollars—all these institutions are to become the places where honest Christian men do business.

How long will it take your boys to get through your ill gotten gains? The wicked do not live out half their days. For a while they swagger and strut and make a great splash in the newspapers, but after awhile it all divides down into a brief paragraph: "Died suddenly, July 23, 1888, at 55 years of age. Relatives and friends of the family are invited to attend the funeral on Wednesday, at 2 o'clock, from his late residence on Madison square. Interment at Greenwood." Some of them jumped off the docks. Some took prussic acid. Some of them fell under the snap of a Derringer pistol. Some of them spent their last days in a lunatic asylum. Where are William Tweed and his associates? Where are Ketcham and Swartwout, absconding swindlers? Where is James Fisk, the libertine? Where is John Wilkes Booth, the assassin? and all the other maledameanants? The wicked do not live out half their days. Disembogue, O world of darkness! Come up, Hildebrand and Henry II and Robespierre, and with blistering and blaspheming and ashen lips, hiss out: "The triumph of the wicked is short." Alas for the men of Ai when Joshua stretches out his spear toward the city!

Lesson the third: How much may be accomplished by lying in ambush for opportunities. Are you hypocritical of Joshua's maneuver? Do you say that it was cheating for him to take that city by ambuscade? Was it wrong for Washington to kindle camp fires on New Jersey Heights, giving the impression to the opposing force that a great army was encamped there when there was none at all? I answer: If the war was right then Joshua was right in his stratagem. He violated no flag of truce. He broke no treaty, but by a lawful ambuscade captured the city of Ai. Oh, that we all knew how to lie in ambush for opportunities to serve God. The best of our opportunities do not lie on the surface, but are secreted; by tact, by stratagem, by Christian ambuscade, you may take almost any castle of sin for Christ. Come up toward men with a regular besiegement of argument and you will be defeated; but just wait until the door of their hearts is set ajar, or they are off their guard, or their severe caution is away from home, and then drop in on them from a Christian ambuscade. There has been many a man up to his chin in scientific portfolios which proved there was no Christ and no divine revelation, his pen a scimitar flung into the heart of theological opponents, who, nevertheless, has been discomfited and captured for God by some little three-year-old child who has got up and put her snowy arms around his sinewy neck, and asked some simple question about God and heaven.

Oh, make a flank movement; steal a march on the devil; cheat that man into heaven. A \$5 treatise that will stand all the laws of homiletics may fail to do that which a penny tract Christian entreaty may accomplish. Oh, for more Christians in ambuscade, not lying in idleness, but waiting for a quick spring, waiting until just the right time comes. Do not talk to a man about the vanity of this world on the day when he has bought something at "twelve" and is going to sell it at "fifteen." But talk to him about the vanity of the world one day when he has bought something at "fifteen" and is compelled to sell at "twelve." Do not rub a man's disposition the wrong way. Do not take the imperative mood when the subjunctive mood would do just as well. Do not talk in perfervid style to a phlegmatic, nor try to tickle a torrid temperament with an icicle. You can take any man for Christ if you know how to get at him. Do not send word to him that to-morrow at 10 o'clock you propose to open your batteries upon him, but come on him by a skillful, persevering, God directed ambuscade.

Lesson the fourth: The importance of taking good aim. There is Joshua, but how are those people in ambush up yonder to know when they are to drop on the city, and how are these men around Joshua to know when they are to stop their flight and advance? There must be some signal—a signal to stop the one division and to start the other. Joshua, with a spear on which were ordinarily hung the colors of battle, points toward the city. He stands in such a conspicuous position, and there is so much of the morning light dripping from that spear tip, that all around the horizon they see it. It was as much as to say: "There is the city. Take it. Take it now. Roll down from the west. Surge up from the north. It is ours, the city of Ai." God knows and we know that a great deal of Christian attack amounts to nothing simply because we do not take good aim. Nobody knows and we do not know ourselves which point we want to take, when we ought to make up our minds what God will have us to do, and point our spear in that direction and then hurl our body, mind, soul, time, eternity at that one target. In our pulpits and pews and Sunday schools and prayer meetings we want to get a reputation for saying pretty things, and so we point our spear toward the flowers; or we want a reputation for saying sublime things, and we point our spear toward the stars; or we want to get a reputation for historical knowledge, and we point our spear toward the past; or we want to get a reputation for great liberality, so we swing our spear all around; and it strikes all points of the horizon, and you can make out of it whatever you please; while there is the old world's proud, rebellious, and armed against all righteousness; and instead of running any farther away from its pursuit, we ought to turn around, plant our foot in the strength of the eternal God, lift the old cross and point it in the direction of the world's conquest till the redeemed of earth, marching up from one side, and the glorified of heaven marching down from the other side, the last battlement of sin is compelled to swing out the streamers of Emanuel. Oh, church of God, take aim and conquer.

I have heard it said: "Look out for a

man who has only one idea, he is irreligious." I say: Look for the man who has one idea, and that a determination for soul saving. I believe God would strike me dead if I dared to point the spear in any other direction. Oh, for some of the courage and enthusiasm of Joshua! He flung two armies from the tip of that spear. It is sinful for us to rest, unless it is to get stronger muscle and fresher brain and purer heart for God's work. I feel on my head the hands of Christ in a new ordination. Do you not feel the same omnipotent pressure? There is a work for all of us. Oh, that we might stand up side by side and point the spear toward the city! It ought to be taken. It will be taken. Our cities are drifting off toward loose religion or what is called "liberal Christianity," which is so liberal that it gives up all the essential doctrines of the Bible, so liberal that it surrenders the rectitude of the throne of the Almighty. That is liberality with a vengeance. Let us decide upon the work which we, as Christian men, have to do, and, in the strength of God, go to work and do it.

It is comparatively easy to keep on a parade amid a shower of bouquets and hand clapping, and the whole street full of enthusiastic huzzas; but it is not so easy to stand up in the day of battle, the face blackened with smoke, the uniform covered with the earth plowed up by whizzing bullets and bursting shells, half the regiment cut to pieces, and yet the commander crying, "Forward, march!" Then it requires old fashioned valor. My friends, the great trouble of the kingdom of God in this day is the cowardice. They do so splendidly on a parade day, and at the communion, when they have on their best clothes of Christian profession; but put them out in the great battle of life, at the first sharpshoot-ing of skepticism they dodge, they fall back, they break ranks. We confront the enemy, we open the battle against fraud, and lo! we find on our side a great many people that do not try to pay their debts. And we open the battle against intemperance, and we find on our own side a great many people who drink too much. And we open the battle against profanity, and we find on our own side a great many men who make hard speeches. And we open the battle against infidelity, and lo! we find on our own side a great many men who are not quite sure about the Book of Jonah. And while we ought to be massing our troops, and bringing forth more than the united courage of Austerlitz, and Waterloo, and Gettysburg, we have to be spending our time in hunting up ambuscades. There are a great many in the Lord's army who would like to go out on a campaign with satin slippers and holding umbrellas over their heads to keep off the heavy dew, and having rations of canvas back ducks and lemon custards. If they cannot have them they want to go home. They think it is unhealthy among so many bullets!

I believe that the next twelve months will be the most stupendous year that heaven ever saw. The nations are quaking now with the coming of God. It will be a year of successes for the men of Joshua, but of doom for the men of Ai. You put your ear to the rail track and you can hear the train coming miles away. So I put my ear to the ground and I hear the thundering on of the lightning train of God's mercies and judgments. The mercy of God is first to be tried upon this nation. It will be preached in the pulpits, in theatres, on the streets, everywhere. People will be invited to accept the mercy of the Gospel and the story and the song and the prayer will be "mercy." But suppose they do not accept the offer of mercy—what then? Then God will come with his judgments, and the grasshoppers will eat the crops, and the freshets will devastate the valleys, and the defalcations will swallow the money markets, and the fires will burn the cities, and the earth will quake from pole to pole. Year of mercies and of judgments. Year of invitation and of warning. Year of jubilee and of woe. Which side are you going to be on? With the men of Ai or the men of Joshua? Pass over this Sabbath into the ranks of Israel. I would clap my hands at the joy of your coming. You will have a poor chance for this world and the world to come without Jesus. You cannot stand what is to come upon you and upon the world unless you have the pardon and the comfort and the help of Christ. Come over. On this side is your happiness and safety, on the other side is disappointment and despair. Eternal defeat to the men of Ai! Eternal victory to the men of Joshua!

"Booking" for the Season. This is the time of year when the managers of country opera houses come into the city to go through a process which they importantly call "booking." Translated, that means the engaging of companies to visit their houses during the approaching season. The smaller places, or "one night stands," are represented by "managers," who generally pursue other occupations, varying from blacksmith to lawyer. Their knowledge of the theatricals is brief, but they can argue on sharing terms with great plausibility, and they sign contracts with the utmost care for their own interests. To well known stars they gladly yield 75, 80, 85, and sometimes 90 per cent. of the entire receipts. The smaller companies have to be content with 55, 60, and 65 per cent. Most of the minstrel shows, which are big cards in the minor cities, get 80 or 85 per cent.—New York Sun.

"Promising Churches." At the Unitarian festival in Boston a minister from St. Louis remarked that when ministers came to the "unfenced pasture" in the west he was always tempted to warn them of the privations that awaited them in "promising churches"—that is, churches that promise to pay \$700 a year or more and do not keep their promise. Some ministers have found such "promising churches" without taking such a long trip.—Christian Inquirer.

According to a London paper, the New Testament in Arabic is in demand in the land of Meab. In one day a colporteur sold fifty-four copies—four being the purchasing power. When night came every receptacle in the colporteur's house was filled with flour, and not a copy of the Scriptures remained unsold.



Mrs. Dart's Triplets.

President Cleveland's Prize for the three best babies at the Aurora County Fair, in 1887, was given to these triplets, Mollie, Ida, and Ray, children of Mrs. A. K. Dart, Hamburgh, N. Y. She writes: "Last August the little ones became very sick, and as I could get no other food that would agree with them, I commenced the use of Lactated Food. It helped them immediately, and they were seen as well as ever, and I consider it very largely due to the Food that they are now so well." Lactated Food is the best Food for bottle-fed babies. It keeps them well, and is better than medicine when they are sick. Three sizes: 25c, 50c, \$1.00. At druggists. Colored photo of these triplets sent free to the mother of any baby born this year. Address WELLS, RICHARDSON & CO., Burlington, Vt.

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