

# CHRISTIAN HERALD

AND SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

OFFICES: BIBLE HOUSE, NEW YORK.

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VOLUME 21.—NUMBER 5.

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NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 2, 1898.

PRICE FIVE CENTS.



SHIPPING RELIEF FUND SUPPLIES FOR STARVING CUBA, AT PIER 16, EAST RIVER, NEW YORK. (See Page 37.)



THE METROPOLITAN PULPIT



The Men and Women now Needed.

A Sermon by Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, D.D., } Who knoweth whether thou art come on the Text: Esther 4: 14. . . . } to the kingdom for such a time as this?



ESTHER the beautiful was the wife of Ahasuerus the abominable. The time had come for her to present a petition to her husband in behalf of the Jewish nation, to which she had once belonged. She was afraid to undertake the work, lest she should lose her own life; but her cousin, Mordecai, who had brought her up, encouraged her with the suggestion that probably she had been raised up of God for that peculiar mission. "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther had her God appointed work. You and I have ours. It is my business to tell you what style of men and women you ought to be in order that you meet the demand of the age in which God has cast your lot. So this discourse will not deal with the technicalities, but only with the practicalities. When two armies have rushed into battle, the officers of either army do not want a philosophical discussion about the chemical properties of human blood or the nature of gunpowder; they want some one to man the batteries and take out the guns. And now, when all the forces of light and darkness, of heaven and hell, have plunged into the night, it is no time to give ourselves to the definitions and formulas and technicalities and conventionalities of religion. What we want is practical, earnest, concentrated, enthusiastic, and triumphant help.

In the first place, in order to meet the special demand of this age, you need to be an unmistakable, aggressive Christian. Of half and half Christians we do not want any more. The Church of Jesus Christ will be better without them. They are the chief obstacle to the church's advancement. I am speaking of another kind of Christian. All the appliances for your becoming an earnest Christian are at your hand, and there is a straight path for you to the broad daylight of God's forgiveness. You may this moment be the bondman of the world, and the next moment you may be princes of the Lord God Almighty. You remember what excitement there was in this country, years ago, when the Prince of Wales came here—how the people rushed out by hundreds of thousands to see him. Why? Because they expected that some day he would sit upon the throne of England. But what was all that honor compared with the honor to which God calls you—to be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; yea, to be queens and kings unto God. "They shall reign with him forever and forever."

But you need to be aggressive Christians, and not like those persons who spend their lives in hugging their Christian graces and wondering why they do not make progress. How much robustness of health would a man have if he hid himself in a dark closet? A great deal of the safety of to-day is too exclusive. It hides itself. It needs more fresh air, more common sense. There are many Christians who are saving their entire life to self-justification. They are feeling their robes to see what the condition of their consciences is. How long would a man have to sit in physical health if he kept all day long feeling his pulse instead of going out into the world to do his work?

I was once in the wonderful, bewitching city of the State of North Carolina. I remember that I was there with the best of intentions, and yet when I would take up my cross, I was hindered by the leaves of the fig tree, which were upon me. You could hardly tell that I had ever been a flower. And there are a great many Christians who are like that. They are so hindered by their own experiences, to see that there are no figs and that nothing left in them.

The first of self-examination is a dangerous method to advance to the Christian character. I remember when I was a boy I used to have a small piece in the garden that I called my own, and I planted some there, and every two days I would

pull it up to see how fast it was growing. Now, there are a great many Christian people in this day whose self-examination merely amounts to the pulling up of that which they only yesterday or the day before planted. Oh, my friends, if you want to have a stalwart Christian character, plant it right out of doors in the great field of Christian usefulness, and though storms may come upon it, and though the hot sun of trial may try to consume it, it will thrive until it becomes a great tree, in which the fowls of heaven may have their habitation. I have no patience with these flower-pot Christians. They keep themselves under shelter, and all their Christian experience in a small, exclusive circle, when they ought to plant it in the great garden of the Lord, so that the whole atmosphere could be aromatic with their Christian usefulness. What we want in the church of God is more strength of piety. The century plant is wonderfully suggestive and wonderfully beautiful, but I never look at it without thinking of its parsimony. It lets whole generations go by before it puts forth one blossom; so I have really more admiration when I see the dewy tears in the blue eyes of the violets, for they come every spring. My Christian friends, time is going by so rapidly that we cannot afford to be idle.

A recent statistician says that human life now has an average of only thirty-two years. From these thirty-two years you must subtract all the time you take for sleep and the taking of food and recreation; that will leave you about sixteen years. From these sixteen you must subtract all the time that you are necessarily engaged in the earning of a livelihood; that will leave you about eight years. From these eight years you must take all the days and weeks and months—all the length of time that is passed in sickness—leaving you about one year in which to work for God. O my soul! wake up! How darest thou sleep in harvest time, and with so few hours in which to reap? So that I state it as a simple fact that all the time that the vast majority of you will have for the exclusive service of God will be less than one year.

"But," says some man, "I liberally support the Gospel, and the church is open, and the Gospel is preached; all the spiritual advantages are spread before men, and if they want to be saved let them come and be saved—I have discharged all my responsibility." Ah! is that my Master's Spirit? Is there not an old book somewhere that commands us to go out into the highways and the hedges and compel the people to come in? What would become of you and me if Christ had not come down off the hills of heaven; and if he had not come through the door of the Bethlehem caravansary; and if he had not with the crushed band of the crucifixion knocked at the iron gate of the sepulchre of our spiritual death, crying, "Lazarus, come forth?" Oh, my Christian friend! this is no time for inertia when all the forces of darkness seem to be in full blast—when steam printing-presses are publishing infidel tracts, when express trains are carrying messengers of sin, when fast clipper ships are laden with opium and strong drink, when the night air of our cities is polluted with the laughter that breaks up from the ten thousand saloons of dissipation and abandonment when the fires of the second death already are kindled in the cheeks of some who, only a little while ago, were merry. Oh, never since the curse fell upon the earth has there been a time when it was such an unwise, such a cruel, such an awful thing for the Church to sleep. The great and ences are not gathered in Christian churches; the great and ences are gathered in temples of sin—tears of an utterable woe than baptism, the blood of crushed hearts, the awful wine of their sacrament, blasphemies their litany, and the groans of the lost world the organ-drum of their worship.

Again if you want to be qualified to

meet the duties which this age demands of you, you must, on the one hand, avoid reckless iconoclasm and, on the other hand, not stick too much to things because they are old. The air is full of new plans, new projects, new theories of government, new theologies, and I am amazed to see how so many Christians want only novelty in order to recommend a thing to their confidence; and so they vacillate and swing to and fro, and they are useless and they are unhappy. New plans—secular, ethical, philosophical, religious, cis-Atlantic, trans-Atlantic—long enough to make a line reaching from the German universities to Great Salt Lake City. Ah, my brother, do not take hold of a thing merely because it is new! Try it by the realities of the Judgment Day. But, on the other hand, do not adhere to anything merely because it is old. There is not a single enterprise of the Church of the world but has sometime been scoffed at. There was a time when men derided even Bible societies, and when a few young men met in Massachusetts and organized the first missionary society ever organized in this country, there went laughter and ridicule all around the Christian Church. They said the undertaking was preposterous. And so also the work of Jesus Christ was assailed. People cried out: "Who ever heard of such theories of ethics and government? Who ever noticed such a style of preaching as Jesus has?" Ezekiel had talked of mysterious wings and wheels. Here came a man from Capernaum and Gennesaret, and He drew His illustrations from the lakes, from the sand, from the mountain, from the lilies, from the corn-stalks. How the Pharisees scoffed! How Herod derided! And this Jesus they plucked by the beard and they spat in His face, and they called Him "this fellow!" All the great enterprises in and out of the Church have at times been scoffed at, and there have been a great multitude who have thought that the chariot of God's truth would fall to pieces if it once got out of the old rut. And so there are those who have no patience with anything like improvement in church architecture, or with anything like good, hearty, earnest church singing, and they deride any form of religious discussion which goes down walking among everyday men, rather than that which makes an excursion on rhetorical stilts. Oh, that the Church of God would wake up to an adaptability of work! We must admit the simple fact that the churches of Jesus Christ in this day do not reach the masses. There are one million people in London who never hear the Gospel. The great majority of the inhabitants of this capital come not under the immediate ministrations of Christ's truth, and the Church of God in this day, instead of being a place full of living epistles, known and read of all men, is more like a dead-letter post-office.

"But," say the people, "the world is going to be converted; you must be patient; the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of Christ." Never, unless the Church of Jesus Christ puts on more speed and energy. Instead of the Church converting the world, the world is converting the Church. Here is a great fortress. How shall it be taken? An army comes and sits around about it, cuts off the supplies, and says: "Now we will just wait until from exhaustion and starvation they will have to give up." Weeks and months, and perhaps a year pass along, and finally the fortress surrenders through that starvation and exhaustion. But, my friends, the fortresses of sin are never to be taken in that way. If they are taken for God it will be by storm; you will have to bring up the great siege guns of the Gospel to the very wall and wheel the flying artillery into line, and when the armed infantry of heaven shall confront the battlements you will have to give the quick command: "Forward! Charge!"

Ah, my friends, there is work for you to do and for me to do in order to this grand accomplishment. I have a pulpit. I preach in it. Your pulpit is the bank. Your pulpit is the store. Your pulpit is the editorial chair. Your pulpit is the anvil. Your pulpit is the house scaffolding. Your pulpit is the mechanics' shop. I may stand in my place and through cowardice or through self-seeking, may keep back the word I ought to utter; while you, with sleeve rolled up and brow besweated with toil, may utter the word that will jar the foun-

datations of heaven with the shout of a great victory. Oh, that we might all feel that the Lord Almighty is putting upon us the hands of ordination! I tell you, even one, go forth and preach this Gospel. You have as much right to preach as have or any man living.

Hedley Vicars was a wicked man in the English army. The grace of God came to him. He became an earnest and emine Christian. They scoffed at him and said: "You are a hypocrite, you are as bad as every one were." Still he kept his faith in Christ, and after a while, finding that they could not turn him aside by calling him a hypocrite, they said to him: "Oh, you are not going but a Methodist!" This did not disturb him. He went on performing his Christian duty until he had formed all his troops into a Bible class, and the whole encampment was shaken with the presence of God. So Havelock went into the heathen temple in India while the English army was there and put a candle into the hand of each of the heathen gods that stood around in the heathen temple, and by the light of those candles held up by the idol General Havelock preached righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. And who will say on earth or in heaven that Havelock had not the right to preach? Go preach this Gospel. You say you are not licensed. In the name of the Lord Almighty, I license you. Go preach this Gospel, preach it in the Sabbath Schools, in the prayer-meetings, the highways, in the hedges. Woe unto you if you preach it not!

I remark again that in order to be qualified to meet your duty in this particular age, you want unbounded faith in the triumph of the truth and the overthrow of wickedness. How dare the Christian Church ever get discouraged? Have not the Lord Almighty on our side? How long did it take God to slay the hosts Sennacherib or burn Sodom or shake down Jericho? How long will it take God, when he once arises in his strength to overthrow all the forces of iniquity? Between this time and that there may long seasons of darkness, and the chariot wheels of God's Gospel may seem to roll heavily; but here is the promise: "The yonder is the throne, and when omniscience has lost its eyesight and omniscience falls back impotent and Jehovah driven from his throne, then the Church of Jesus Christ can afford to be despondent, but never until then. Despotisms and armies may march and the congresses of the nations may seem to this day, they are adjusting all the affairs of the world, but the mighty men of the earth are only the dust of the chariot wheels of God's providence. And I think before the sun of the next century shall set, the last tyranny will fall, and with a splendor of demonstration that shall be the astonishment of the universe, God will set forth the brightness and pomp and glory of the perpetuity of his eternal government, out of the stary flags and the emblazoned insignia of this world God will make a path for his own triumph, and returning from universal conquest he will sit down, the grandest, the strongest, the highest throne of earth his footstool.

I prepare this sermon because I want to encourage all Christian workers in every possible department. Hosts of the living God, march on! march on! His Spirit will bless you. His shield will defend you. His sword will strike for you. March on! march on! The despots will fail, and paganism will burn its idols, and Mahometanism will give up its false prophet, and the great walls of superstition will come down in thunder and walk at the long loud blast of the Gospel trumpet. March on! march on! The besetting will soon be ended. Only a few more steps on the long way; only a few more sturdy blows; only a few more tribulations, then God will put the laurel upon your brow, and from the living fountains of heaven will bathe off the sweat and the heat and the dust of the combat. March on! march on! For you the better work will soon be passed, and all the outflashes of the judgment time and the trumpeting of resurrection angels and the upheaving of a world of grass, and the hosanna and the groaning of the saved and the lost, we shall be rewarded for our faithfulness or punished for our stupidity. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen.