

The Church's Warfare



"That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel."—PHIL. 1-27.

No one can read St. Paul's Epistles attentively, without being struck by the fact, that they are full of illustrations, drawn from the battlefield, the stadium, and the arena. Indeed it has been commented upon as a matter of surprise and reproach, that the chief herald of the Gospel of peace, should have had his eyes closed, as it were, to the teaching of nature in heaven above, and on the earth beneath, and should have moved so constantly as he does, amid the imagery of war and conflict. The Christian in his apprehension is, before everything else, a soldier of Jesus Christ; as such, his business is to fight. And if he would not prove himself a coward in the day of battle, he must prepare himself to endure hardness. He is exhorted to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life—to wage a good warfare, holding faith, and a good conscience—earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. His course is a race, a wrestle, a pugilistic encounter, in which the utmost watchfulness, skill, and energy, must be used, if he would not be defeated and overcome. And so everywhere throughout the Epistles, we hear the clang of the soldier's arms, and see the agony of the athlete's efforts. We have, if I mistake not, two of these illustrations implied in the text, the word *stekete*, stand fast, calls up before our minds, the picture of a battalion or an army, standing firm and unbroken against the assaults of their foes. And the words *sunathlountes*, striving together, carries us away to the stadium to witness over again the fixed purpose, the desperate effort, the unflagging energy of those who ran in a race, or the struggle, and the agony of those who engaged in the wrestle or the pugilistic encounter. This is the picture which St. Paul presents to us of the life to which we are called, and this, as a moment's reflection will show us, instead of being as has been supposed, an incongruity in the great Apostle's life, is one of those undesigned harmonies, which go to establish the authenticity of the Epistles. The pictures he drew were but the reflection of his own life's experiences. And the exhortations which he addressed to others, were but the echo of the voices that were ever sounding in his own ears. His life was, as he has told us, one long agony and battle for the faith of the gospel—lived among the tumult of angry mobs, confronted everywhere with stonings, and

shipwreck, and beasts, and death when the conflict of the faith." No! It runs through claimed by our on earth, but a hold. I send of all men for whosoever killeth endureth to this is the way. S representations the closing book to the end, I of heaven follow the end. And has been, as Church. Wh back over it! and triumph, Who can realize those ten long spirit of steadfast and anguish amid overwhelm when the Doctor and for a while to understand heartenment, discipline, the Christian heroes men. You ment, and the the conflict, a

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