

The Lesson Heart Talk

BY MRS. J. H. KNOWLES

Why should we take this apparently backward leap from the light days of Jesus, the Conqueror by the cross, to the dim days of Hezekiah, the troubled king of Judah, and Sennacherib, the proud monarch of Assyria? Because there is a distinct connection between the lessons of the Old Testament and the New. There is the same teaching in both, the same gospel of the unchangeable God. This story of Jerusalem's trial and Sennacherib's defeat is history and parable too. When shall we ever learn its lesson, a lesson reiterated in the teachings of Jesus—that God is in closest touch with human affairs, and that it is highest wisdom to trust his word and his providence in the face of everything seemingly adverse to his promises and his will? The Rabshakeh from Assyria well personifies the temptations confronting a besieged and perplexed soul. It was Jerusalem's extremity—Jerusalem, where God had said the throne of David should be established forever. All the other cities of Judah had fallen into the Assyrian's hands, and the king had retreated to the fortress of his capital. If this shall fall, only ruin, defeat, and death will be left. But his heart was brave, and it was singing Luther's hymn written centuries after:

"A strong tower is the Lord our God,
To shelter and defend us."

and by his faith he held up the faint hearts around him. But now comes the Rabshakeh with specious words, compromises, threats, scoffs, allurements, and an array of facts so real as to delude anyone going by the sight of his eyes and not by faith in the Unseen. "What nonsense is this," he says, "to trust in a God who never yet has proved himself stronger than the forces of men! Look at the cities around you and see how every one has been overpowered by Assyria. They trusted their gods, but what good did it do? I tell you it is might that conquers: money, men, and implements of war are the forces that win. It is so useless for you to stay inside these walls and starve; come out and make a compromise with us and we will make it easy for you. Look at the facts. Did anyone ever get on who tried to stand against money and power? And, besides, do you think your God cares for nobody but you? He told us to come up against Jeru-

salem. You need not think he is going to do some great thing for a little handful of people just because you say you believe in him. You only say it with your lips; you do not really expect him to help you. Your religion is no better than ours; do not let your king nor your God deceive you." Ah, tested, besieged soul, having lost all else, and driven into your one fortress of faith in God and his promises, does the tempter so speak to you? He did so speak to David when he saw the prosperity of the wicked in contrast with his own losses and discouragements. And when Hezekiah heard what the Rabshakeh said, like David, his faith faltered for just a little while; but not for long, because he soon found the hiding place of strength in God. He said to Isaiah, in substance: "Can faith carry out in real life what in spiritual vision it sees? Can we really hold on to God in this extremity until we get the victory?" In his need he besought the prophet to pray for him, and was reassured. So we help one another by our prayers and by our steadfast trust.

The king commanded the people not to answer the Rabshakeh a word. We give the tempter an advantage when we argue with him. The unbeliever knows nothing of a believer's reason for holding on to a besieged fortress. "With us is our God to fight our battles." Where is the use in saying that to the world so confident in its arm of flesh? Do you remember the little woman patiently filling her pots of oil, and the unseen Hand using that unworldly-wise method to pay her debts? Do you recall the mountain filled with horses and chariots while the young man cried, "Alas! Master, what shall we do?" God was watching Jerusalem. It was a typical scene—Rabshakeh and a powerful army outside; Hezekiah prostrate in distress, yet *with God* inside. There could be no question of where the victory would be.

"Thinkest sometimes that thy Father
Hath forgot?
Though the clouds around thee gather
Doubt him not.
Always hath the daylight broken,
Always hath he comfort spoken,
Better hath he been for years
Than thy fears."

The Lesson in Literature and Art

1. Verse 10. They who look only at the things seen cannot but think the men of faith mad. They who look at the things unseen cannot but know that the men of sense are

fools. The latter elaborately prove that the former are impotent, but they have left out one factor in their calculations, and that is God. One man and God at his back are stronger

1. It has the boastful some respect
ian kings have historic confi
been in recei
the innume

3. V
Their
her
Withou
to
Is but a
No mor
They w
Themsel
sely
Short-liv
To their
Destruct
Or like a
Witherin
The bon

4. Ve
the grea
is in str
of Senna
prevails.
quite pos
different
yet the h
as they d
his purpo
the minds
either save
human co
having beg
either side
5. Vers
bekah appe
prevails w
derfully tu
bored for t
is discomfi
ered. Han

than
Mach
2.

C
V

T
T