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VICTORIA IN RETREAT

Dr. Talmage Points Out the Best
Plan of Christian Warfare.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD AIM

A Discourse in Which He Shows How
Christians Should Work For the
Overthrow of Their Pious Foes—
The Reasons of Many Pious Failures.

Washington, April 8.—From an old
time battle scene Dr. Talmage in this
discourse makes some startling sug-
gestions as to the best styles of
Christian work and points out the
reasons of so many pious failures;
text, Joshua viii, 7. "Then shall you
rise up from the ambush and seize
upon the city."

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 inter-
rogations 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.
At Joshua and his men wait to
take it. How to do it is the ques-
tion. On a former occasion, in a
straightforward, face to face fight,
they had been defeated, but now they
are going to take it by ambush.
General Joshua has two divisions in
his army. The one division the bat-
tle worn commander will lead him-
self, the other division he sends off
to encamp in an ambush on the west
side of the city of A. I. No torches,
no lanterns, no sound of heavy bat-
talions, but 30,000 savorily wait-
ing in silence, speaking
only in a whisper, no clicking of
swords against shields, lest the
watchman of A. I. discover it and the
stratagem be a failure. If the rois-
tering soldier in the Israelite 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 A. I. and then spends the night
in reconnoitering the valley. There
he stands in the night and says to
himself, "Yonder is the division in
ambush on the west side of A. I. Here
is the division I have under my es-
pecial command on the north side of
A. I. There is the old city slumber-
ing in its sin. To-morrow we will
take it. Look! The morning
already begins to tip the hills. The
military officers of A. I. look out in
the morning very early, and, while they
do not see the division in ambush,
they behold the other divisions 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 A. I. pour
through the gates, an infuriated hor-
drent, and their cry is, "Come, we'll
make quick work with Joshua and
his troops!"

No sooner had these people of A.
I. come out against the troops of Jo-
shua than Joshua gave such a "Fall
back!" as he seldom gave. "Fall
back!" Why, they could not be-
lieve their own ears! Is Joshua's
courage failing him? The retreat is
beaten, and the Israelites are flying,
throwing blankets and cantenons on
every side under this worse than
bull run defeat. And you ought to
hear the soldiers of A. I. cheer and
cheer and cheer. But they huzza
too soon. The men lying in am-
bush are straining their vision to
get some signal from Joshua that
they may know what time to drop
upon the city. Joshua takes his bur-
nished 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 A.
I. 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 divi-
sion under Joshua's command? No
sooner does Joshua stop in the fight
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 tor-
rent 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 troops under Joshua doubled up
their enemies from the other side,
and the men of A. I. were caught be-
tween these two hurricanes of Israel-
ite courage, thrust before and be-
hind, stabbed in breast and back,
ground between the upper and the
nether millstones of God's indigna-
tion! Woe to the city of A. I. Cheer
for Israel!

Lesson the first: There is such a
thing as 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 foes. They came down upon
you with greater fury than the men
of A. I. upon the men of Joshua. Your
only safety is to get away from
them. Run for your life! Fall
back! Fall back from the drinking
saloon! Fall back from the wine
party! Your fight is your advance;
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? Boling-
broke? Andrew Jackson? Davy
Crockett? Tyndall's Glasgow univer-
sity address? Drop them and run.
You will be an infidel before you die
if you don't quit that. These men
of A. I. will be too much for you. Turn
your back on the rank and file of un-
belief. Fly before they cut you with
their swords and transfix you with
their javelins.

So, also, there is victorious retreat
in the religious world. Thousands
of times the kingdom of Christ has

of the Scotch Covenanters gave a
deeper dye to the heather of the
highlands, when the Yauds 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 physical life contin-
ues, I will stay here until the moss
grows on my eyebrows rather than
give up my faith," the days of re-
treat for the church were days of
victory.

But there is a more marked illus-
tration of victorious retreat in the
life of our Joshua, the Jesus of the
ages. First falling back from an
appalling depth, falling from celestials
to terrestrial valleys, from
throne to manger, yet that did not
seem to subvert him as a retreat.
Falling back still farther from Beth-
lehem 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 un-
til he walked amid the caverns of
the eternal captives and drank of the
wine of the wrath of Almighty God,
amid the Abahs, and the Jezebels,
and the Belshazzars. Oh, 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.

But let not the powers of dark-
ness rejoice quite so soon. Do you
hear that disturbance in the tomb
of Arimathea? I hear the sheet rend-
ing! What means that stone hurled
down the side of the hill? Who is
this coming out? Push him back! I
The dead must not stalk in the open
sunlight. Oh, 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 tri-
umphant 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 il-
lustrate the direful overthrow of hell
and our Joshua's eternal victory. So it
is said he will be all the crowns. In his
hands 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
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 A. I. looked out and saw those
men of Joshua in a stampede they
expected easy work. But their exultation
was brief, for the tide of bat-
tle turned, and these quondam con-
querors left their miserable carcasses
in the wilderness of Bethesda. 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 poor-
house. You made a fortune by in-
suring 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 awhile, like
the men of A. I., they went from con-
quest to conquest, but after awhile
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. How much may
be accomplished by lying in ambush
for opportunities. Are you hyper-
critical of Joshua's maneuver? Do
you say that it was cheating for him
to take that city by ambush? 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 ambushade
captured the city of A. I. 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 am-
bushade, you may take almost any
castle of sin for Christ. Come up
agent to a regular besiegement and
toward men 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
ambushade.

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 of Christian entreaty may ac-
complish. Oh, for more Christians
in ambushade—not lying in idleness,
but waiting for a quick spring, wait-
ing until just the right time comes!
Do not rub a man's disposition the
wrong way; do not take the impera-
tive mood when the subjunctive mood
will do just as well; do not talk in
perfidious 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.

Lesson the fourth: The importance
of taking good aim. There is Josh-
ua, but how are those people in am-
bush 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 di-
vision and to start the other. Joshua,
with a spear on which were ordi-
nary lying the colors of battle, points
toward the city. He stands in such a
conspicuous position, and there is
so much of the morning light drip-
ping 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!"

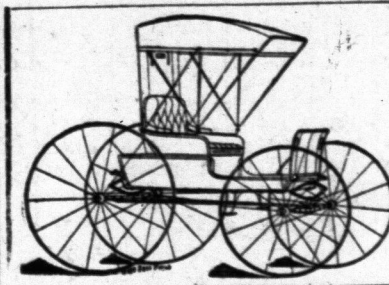
God knows and we know that a
great army of Christian attack am-
ounts to nothing simply because we
do not take good aim. Nobody
knows and we do not know our-
selves which point we want to take
when we ought to make up our minds
what God will have us do and point
our spear in that direction and then
hurl our body, mind, soul, time, eter-
nity at that one target. In our pul-
pits and pews, and Sunday schools
and prayer meetings we want to get
a reputation for saying pretty things,
and so we point our spear towards
the flowers, or we want a reputation
for saying sublime things, and we
point our spear towards the stars,
or we want to get a reputation for
historical knowledge, and we point
our spear towards the past, or we
want to get a reputation for great
liberality, so we swing our spear all
around, while there is the old world,
all righteousness, and armed against
running any farther away from its pur-
suit we ought to turn around, plant
our foot in the strength of our point
in the direction of the world's con-
quest, till the redeemed of earth,
marching up from one side and the
glorified of heaven marching down
from the other side, the last battle-
ment of sin is compelled to swing
out the streamers of Emanuel. O
church of God, take aim and con-
quer!

I have heard it said, "Look out for
a man who has only one idea; he is
irresistible." I say look out for the
man who has one idea, and that a
determination for soul saving. I be-
lieve God would strike me dead if I
dared to point the spear in any other
direction. Oh, for some of the cour-
age and enthusiasm of Joshua! He
flung two armies from the tip of that
spear. It is sinful for us to rest un-
less 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 ordina-
tion. Do you not feel the same ordina-
tion? Oh, that we might stand up side
by side and point the spear towards
the city! It ought to be taken. It
will be taken.

It is comparatively easy to keep on
a parade amid a shower of bouquets
and hand clappings 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 whiz-
ing bullets and bursting shells, half
regiment cut to pieces, and yet
the commander crying "Forward,
march!" Then it requires old fas-
tioned valor. My friends, the great
trouble of the kingdom of God in
this day is the cowards. They do
splendidly on a parade day and at
communion, when they have on their
best clothes of Christian profession,
but in the great battle of life, at the
first sharpshoot 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
open the battle against profanity, and
we find on our side a great many
people 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
ambushades. 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 rattions of canvasback
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 year will be
the most stupendous year that has
ever been. The nations are wak-
en up with the coming of God.
It will be a year of successes for the
men of Joshua, but of doom for the
men of A. I. You put your ear to the
rail track, and you hear the train
coming miles away. So I put my
ear to the ground, and I hear the
thundering of the lightning train
of God's mercies and judgments. The
mercy of God is first to be tried up
on this nation. It will be preached
in the pulpits. 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 A. I. or the
men of Joshua? Pass over this Sab-
bath into the ranks of Israel. I
would flap 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 help of
Christ. Come over! On this side
are your happiness and safety; on the
other side are disquietude and des-
pair. Eternal defeat to the men of
A. I. Eternal victory to the men of
Joshua!

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