

Boys and Girls Can Become Heroes.

A sermon preached on Children's Sunday, August 11, 1902, in Stockbridge, Mass., by the pastor, Rev. P. T. Farwell.

1 Timothy 6: 12, "Fight the good fight of faith." We have just sung together about "Christian soldiers, marching as to war." We are very fond of this hymn and we sing it in church and Sunday-school very often. But I wonder how often we think what the words mean.

Do you not suppose a stranger entering a Sunday-school for the first time, would be rather amused to hear a lot of boys and girls, singing about being "a mighty army"? He might, indeed, be surprised to hear such words sung in a church at all, and might think that even men and women who sometimes sing the words, do not appear like soldiers of any kind.

Now what I wish that all the boys and girls (old or young) should think about for a few moments, is this: It is possible for us to be really Christian soldiers. It is possible for us to live in such a way that it will be ridiculous for us to say these words about ourselves, the "mighty army," which we sing about so often. But on the other hand, we may be everything which we may admire in a soldier.

This was a thought which greatly helped the Apostle Paul. He had been a soldier and the captain of a company, before he became a Christian. In our country, he did not lay aside his soldier's life when he became a Christian, only he fought under a new leader. He fought with new weapons. But courage, earnestness, loyalty—all of these things which made him a true soldier before, he did not lay aside when he became a Christian. You know that Paul refers often to this soldier life. He calls Christ "the Captain of our Salvation."

He speaks about putting on the whole armor of God, and taking up the sword and shield of Christian warfare. In our text, writing to a young man, he says (as part of his most earnest advice): "Fight the good fight of faith." And finally, when it became clear to him that the end of his life was near, next to his thought of Christ, that on which he most dwelt, was that he had been a faithful soldier of Christ. "I have fought a good fight," he said, "and it sounds like a good victory: 'I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith.'"

Remember this: Paul had laid aside the armor and the weapons of a Jewish soldier many years before, and during all that time, in which he had been a follower of Christ, he had never yielded sword or spear, nor had he led armed troops to victory; and yet he knew that in the best sense he had been living a soldier's life. He had been fighting in a good warfare. He had been opposing himself against very terrible enemies. He had won victories, and had led other men on to victories which the world has never forgotten, for they made the world better. I say that in the best sense he had been a soldier, and he was a Christian because he had exercised those traits which we find in the true soldier. And just those things which we admire in Paul, it is possible also for each one of us to have, so that we may also be true Christian soldiers.

Let us think, then, what some of those things are which make one a true soldier. And what we are to say is of interest to girls as well as boys, you will see before we are through—some of the bravest, most useful, and soldierly lives, have been lived by Christian women, and even by young Christian girls.

1. A soldier must be a man of courage. If he is a true soldier, he is willing to face death on the field of battle. Every one admires courage. And when a man is seen risking his own life for the sake of others, forgetting himself in his desire to help some one else, the whole land is filled with the story, and everywhere men tell it to one another. Such a thing was done a few years ago by a boy not thirteen years of age. He was out in a boat with six others who were young as himself, when the boat upset, and he alone could swim. He saved the lives of five, and in trying to save the sixth became himself exhausted, and sank never to rise. Alexander Sutherland was his name, and he is long before that name is forgotten, because he gave his life to save the lives of others. Or if men suffer simply in obedience to duty, obeying commands, staying in a place of peril, keeping their post, then also the world honors.

But these virtues, which are the virtues of the hero and the soldiers, are also virtues of the true Christian. To be willing to give one's life for the good of others, to be willing to die at the post of duty rather than to be unfaithful; these are marks of the Christian. And in whom courage like this is found, has a right to call himself a soldier of Christ.

Christ Himself was an example to the world in this way. For He gave Himself for the sake of others. There has never lived a man who has shown more directly than Christ, this spirit of the soldier, who fears not danger, who offers his life for the saving of other lives.

And very soon after the death of Christ, His disciples learned that they too, must face danger, and must decide whether they would bear it for the sake of Christ and duty and their fellow-men. Stephen was stoned to death. And Peter and John were put in prison, and were threatened because they persisted in preaching about Christ, and in warning men of their mistakes and danger. Peter was beaten and put in prison, and carried away from his native land. And finally all of the apostles, excepting John, were put to death either on the cross, or by the sword; and John was banished from his home for Christ's sake. So if courage is a soldierly thing, these men were just as far soldierly.

But not only men like these showed the courage of Christian soldiers. Those men and women who have shown names we do not know, like those who showed themselves as brave for Christ's sake, as the bravest men that ever fought in armies. We know the names of some of them. There was one young woman, only twenty years old, a mother—and the men who hated Christians tried to make her give up her faith. She knew that if she did not do as they wished, she would be torn to pieces by wild beasts, and yet she preferred even such a death to unbelief. And many other women there were who showed equal courage and faithfulness. There

was one young girl named Perpetua who endured torture day and night, and a boy of fifteen, called Polidoro, who died rather than be disloyal to Christ.

These things happened hundreds of years ago, when Christ had gone from the eyes of men but a short time. But equal heroism has been shown down to our day. It is not uncommon to find examples of this kind now, because comparatively few Christians are called upon to show physical courage, to endure bodily pain, and face death itself, for the sake of Christ. But still even today there are men and women suffering for His sake in those lands where our missionaries are carrying the gospel of Christ to men to worship idols. Sometimes the missionaries themselves are put to death. Sometimes those who are converted are made to bear great persecutions by their old friends and relatives.

Let us not forget, however, while we are speaking of courage, that there is a kind of courage which is more important than the courage to face death or bear pain. It is the courage to do right even though it is unpopular, and without caring for what people say or think. This is a higher kind of courage than that which can bear bodily pain. Bull dogs will fight to the death. And very brave men will endure pain and even death without being in the best sense of the word courageous. On the other hand, men and women, even boys and girls, I suspect may often be found who will bear pain heroically, but who are afraid of a sneer, and shrink from doing what they know is right, for fear that some one may laugh at them.

Here is something which meets the case of every one of you to whom I am speaking. You may never have to show your courage by enduring persecution for Christ's sake. But now and days in the place of the stake and the prison you have the laugh and sneer of the people to face. And I know that hardly a boy here is so young that he will not have to decide often whether he will "do the right thing," or be kept from doing it by fear of some companion. This is a kind of cowardice which we all have to fight against. He is a Christian hero in these days, who obeys his conscience at all times, who does his duty "everywhere, and every day," and is not moved by what other boys or men will say, any more than, if he were a soldier, he would be moved by a sense of some threatening peril when a question of a soldier's duty was at stake. This kind of courage was shown by Christ, who not only endured pain and hardship for our sakes, but also endured insulting rejection by His own people, and misrepresentation and scoffing, even until He hung upon the cross. And yet He never was moved from doing the right thing, by fear of the insults or sneers of men.

As Christ suffered, so will His disciples be called upon to suffer. An army chaplain once told this story: There came to him a young soldier who believed in prayer. But the first night when he was in the barracks, his companions laughed at him. He was a praying man, laughed at him and pelted him with everything they had. He came to the chaplain to ask advice, and the advice was to "give up his practice, and say his prayers in bed." A few days afterward the two men met again, and the chaplain asked the soldier how the plan worked. "I did as you said for a night or two," was the answer, "but then I thought it looked like being ashamed of Christ, and I knelt down again by my bed as before. He only does not say anything about it, but others are doing the same thing." The young soldier was right. It would have been an unsoldierly and cowardly thing for him to have given up doing what he believed to be right, because men laughed at him. It would have been unsoldierly and cowardly to have been ashamed of showing his faith in Christ. It was soldierly to be true to his colors, loyal to his leader, and courageous against all the laughter and opposition of others. You see how it is possible for every boy and girl here to be in a very true sense a soldier. For to every one of you will come times again and again when you must decide whether courageously to do the thing that is right, or cowardly to avoid it, because you are afraid of some one's laughter.

3. There is another thing also which is a mark of soldierly character, and which we may all possess, and that is obedience. Next to courage this is what we most admire in soldiers, and what we most admire in a defender of his country. A soldier is a man under orders. He cannot do what seems to him best, and refuse to do that for which he does not see and understand the reason. The true soldier must obey orders, or he court martyrdom. An engineer once urged on the Duke of Wellington, as possibility of executing a certain order which had been issued. "Sir," was the answer, "I did not ask your opinion; I gave you my orders, and I expect them to be obeyed."

The true soldier will obey orders as did the Light Brigade, of whose loyalty the world will never cease to sing: "Theirs not to make reply, Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die, Into the valley of Death." Rode the six hundred."

Do you children know the story of the Duke of the Birkenhead? Off the coast of Africa the vessel struck, and it soon became evident that it must go down. There were many soldiers on board, besides women and children, and all could not be rescued. The officers commanded the soldiers to form in parade, on the deck, and so they stood and watched the boats filled with as many as could be taken away, and then, still at their posts, they sank beneath the sea, true heroes, brave and obedient, never to be forgotten. It would be possible to tell this story after story, to show how obedience is an essential part of the soldier's character. It is also an essential part of the Christian's character. And Paul in his devotion to the work which Christ had given him, felt himself to be as truly a man under orders, as when he had worn the armor of a Jewish soldier. He was soldierly in his obedience to Christ. So he went where duty called him, without questioning or hesitating.

Now, human beings may make serious mistakes, but our leader is Christ, and He cannot err. His commands are

good. Obedience to them will indeed always bring a blessing. And we have the soldierly spirit, the followers of Christ, when we obey His orders exactly, and trust all results to Him. Is there any one here who is too young to obey Christ? Certainly not. Only remember this, that Christ does not command the little ones among us to do just the same things that He commands the older ones. He has special instructions for the children. We must all try to be like Christ; but children must try to be like Christ when He was a child, and when any woman must obey the principles shown in Christ's old life. Children can be loyal to Christ by being obedient to parents and teachers, and by growing in wisdom as they grow in stature. You can be obedient also by fighting the temptations that come to you, as are your battles. You are not expected to fight the battles of any one else at present. But you will have quite as much as you can do, if you fight against bad temper, and bad words and selfishness and disobedience and laziness. You will be better able to obey Him, when having grown older and stronger, you are given other work to do. And if you are trying to be courageous and obedient, trying bravely to do what is your duty, you have a very right to be proud of being a Christian soldier, for you see you have two of the qualities already which make you good soldiers—courage and obedience. But no one, whether young or old, no matter how brave he may be, who does not resist temptation, no one who will flinch from doing what he knows is right, to call himself a Christian soldier. He does not obey orders.

4. But perhaps the most important thing in making a man a good soldier is, after all, that he be loyal to his leader and to his cause; for no soldier, however courageous he may be, can do his best for a cause in which he has no heart. Soldiers may obey leaders in whom they have no confidence; but obedience without heart behind it, is lacking in its most important element. Let men, however, have a cause to fight for in which they believe, which calls for all the devotion of their hearts, and let them be led by men whom they love, and their power is increased a hundredfold. It has been said of Nelson that when he was in command, shared his inspiration. In our own history the arrival of Sheridan turned the tide of battle, because his soldiers trusted in him, and received new courage from his very presence. And many a battle has been won as much through the soldier's confidence in his leader, as by any single influence.

But if any one can receive courage from confidence in the leader, should not the Christian do so? Nothing will have such power to make us true soldiers—courageous, persevering and loyal—as the memory that we have a Leader without reproach. He cannot fail. His armies, if they are loyal to Him, will be led on to victory. He has Himself endured for our sakes more than He asks any one of us to endure. He knows why we are doing it, and He knows what we ought to work, and He gives (boys, girls, fathers, mothers, all of us) the work to do for which we are best fitted. If we would only remember the cause, to establish the kingdom of God on earth, and in the hearts of men, we should be far more faithful and better soldiers than we are.

Now, the chance may never come to any of us who are here, to do such great things that the world will always remember us. But think of these words of not only of you, but of every one of us: "That means, 'If you do faithfully the little tasks which are given you now, they will also do faithfully greater tasks if they are given to you; it means that your faithfulness to Him, is as acceptable to God as if the thing was much greater. Remember this—let us all remember it—No crowned king, no general leading great armies, could do more than be faithful, and every little child even can do as much as he. You are not asked to fight any enemies except those that are right before you. If you resist and conquer them, then some other battles may be given you to wage by and by, but if you do not fight the good fight as it is, then you ought not to be given any more battles."

Christ wants the children to come into His kingdom, and He gives the children a part in the warfare. Be brave; do the right thing; obey Him; resist temptations; don't give up; be wide awake; and never allow the enemy to get the best of you. He will lead you, and follow where He leads. So not only in childhood, but down to old age, strive to fight the good fight of faith, and to prove yourself a true soldier of the Cross.

Talkers on the Street Corners. The noisy talkers upon religious subjects upon the street corners, in public offices, or in other places where listeners can be found and held by their conversations, and the spiritual heroes who seize upon the prayer-meeting as the place in which they can free their minds about other people's duties, are not those who do the most efficient work for Christ and His church. No doubt they think they are, and often make the same impression upon others. The pastor is never long deceived by them. He soon sees that the season for being "impressed" by those who would talk him to death. Mere rattle and clatter annoy him. He knows that they amount to nothing except in the way of disgusting sensible people with the sacred truth. These noisy talkers know less about the fact that a church is strong, and its pastor happy, in proportion to the absence of those who spend their strength in talking, and in the presence of those who

"Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame."

Christians Under a Cloud.

BY REV. THOMAS L. CUTLER.

Every Christian ought to live in the sunlight of Christ's countenance. But there are many who spend much of their time under a cloud. Perhaps the reader of this article is one of them; and he does not seem to understand that it is his own fault that he does not enjoy more assurance of hope, and more of the joys that are promised to believers. My friend, this depression that you complain of is not the result of providential afflictions, or of any other person's sin; it is the direct result of your own sin against both your soul and your Saviour. Christ commands you to believe Him, and you disobey. He bids you look to Him, and you either shut your eyes, or else look elsewhere. He invites you to lean on His everlasting arm, and you seek some other support. He bids you to trust in Him, and you do not trust in Him. He bids you to be true to Him, and you are untrue to Him. He bids you to be faithful to Him, and you are unfaithful to Him. He bids you to be obedient to Him, and you are disobedient to Him. He bids you to be pure in heart, and you are impure in heart. He bids you to be lowly in spirit, and you are proud in spirit. He bids you to be meek and gentle, and you are angry and contentious. He bids you to be patient, and you are impatient. He bids you to be kind, and you are unkind. He bids you to be merciful, and you are unmerciful. He bids you to be good, and you are evil. He bids you to be true, and you are false. He bids you to be honest, and you are dishonest. He bids you to be just, and you are unjust. He bids you to be loving, and you are unloving. He bids you to be faithful, and you are unfaithful. He bids you to be obedient, and you are disobedient. He bids you to be pure, and you are impure. He bids you to be lowly, and you are proud. He bids you to be meek, and you are angry. He bids you to be patient, and you are impatient. He bids you to be kind, and you are unkind. 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