

SATURDAY NIGHT TALKS

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Rutland, Vt.

CALL OF DUTY.

International Bible Lesson for
Sept. 12, '09—(Acts 21: 1-17).



One of the most remarkable exhibitions of grace ever shown by man, was the incident in the life of the Apostle Paul which we have for our lesson to-day. The characteristics of the man are shown in striking colors as we follow him through this remarkable experience.

The time has come in Paul's judgment when he must revisit Jerusalem. Duty pointed unmistakably in that direction, and he was convinced in his own mind beyond the shadow of a doubt that he ought to visit the holy city. There was no alternative. It was Jerusalem only. At the same time he was satisfied that if he went, it would be to bonds and imprisonment. The Holy Ghost witnessed in every city that the result of his visit would be personal discomfort, and physical sufferings.

Duty Heroic.

But what effect did it all have upon the apostle? Not the slightest. He said, "What mean ye to weep and break my heart? I know, as well as you what trouble awaits me, but I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem!" And the gritty little hero marched on into the lion's jaws. With him the question was not comfort, ease, life even; it was duty. He knew that "man is immortal till his work is done," and he did not propose to shirk responsibility even though bonds and imprisonment were included in it. Prudence is a good thing; there are times when it should be regarded. But when some great exigency arises which calls for action, the true soul will walk the path of duty though it be with bleeding feet, and though he walk alone.

Tennyson and Carlyle were once walking through the gallery of great sculptors in London, and Tennyson turning to Carlyle said, "What do you think of that, Thomas?" "An, mon, it's a sad sight," "Why?" "There is one man among them that has a jaw." That was the grim old Scotch method of diagnosing character. It was only another way of saying that the men lacked grit, backbone, "sand," gumption, words which stand for righteousness, loyalty and truth in the world's category.

Duty, not Stubbornness.

Paul's determination was altogether a different thing from stubbornness. His pluck must not be confounded with pightheadedness. He had none of the qualities of the mule in his disposition. He cannot be charged with the folly of biting off his nose to spite his face. He never deliberately jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. If those disciples could have shown him any good reason, except mere personal discomfort for avoiding Jerusalem, he would readily have taken their advice. The very first thing he did after arriving at the city was to yield to the advice of his friends in a matter where there was no principle involved, although the result was most disastrous to himself.

Soldiers declare that the most trying time in battle is before the battle begins. The awful hush that settles down upon the men while they wait for the signal, that is what blanches the cheek, and makes the knees tremble. When the fight is on, when the blood has risen to fever heat, when the air is at flame with bursting shell, and the slope is slippery with brothers' blood, and vengeance is bursting the heart, then it is easy to fight and glorious to die. But to march up to the muzzles of shotted cannon, waiting to vomit their iron hail into your very face requires the stuff that heroes are made of.

Duty Rewarded.

Such was Paul's grit. He knew that every step of the way toward the city was taking him nearer the headsman's block. He did not understand the reason, any more than you do, why certain things in your life must be, but he knew that the Leader and Commander of the forces of the universe had the plan of campaign perfectly arranged, and he was certain that He could make no mistake. When the six hundred English soldiers at Balaklava charged into the mouth of hell, they knew when they started that some one had blundered. Not so Paul. He had received his orders from headquarters. Those orders said, Jerusalem, and at Jerusalem he would have reported, though he had been compelled to fight his way through legions of devils.

Look out how you interfere with a man who has the call of God upon him. To stop him, to delay him, to divert him, may be as calamitous, as to turn a switch in the wrong direction before a flying express train. If you cannot go with him, uncover as the hero passes on. It may be, when the coronation day of eternity comes, you may be permitted to behold the light when the King puts the crown of glory upon his servant's head.

VIEWS ON MARRIAGE.

Men's Opinions Do not Always Coincide.

Four men sat lighting their cigars in the attitudes of physical comfort and mental dejection that follow the exodus of the women from the dining room wherever that custom relic of a deep drinking generation, is kept up. The dinner talk had been brilliant enough to do credit to the hostess. It had wound up on the brink of matrimony.

"Of course no man is quite a man until he's a married man," said one of the men with the license of the newly-wed.

"He never knows till then what a man he might have been," corrected an old bachelor.

"The influence of woman is necessary to the highest development of a man's character," continued the other.

"Precisely," agreed the bachelor.

"The greatest sacrifice of marriage is the loss of one's women friends."

"The country is evidently in danger," said a callow youth.

"One by one my women friends have offered up my friendship on their matrimonial altars," continued the bachelor. "We have had interests in common, one of the arts of sciences, a common object in life, friendship, in fact, but those finest of human links have snapped one by one. Her husband, say, is too busy a man to be merely cultivated. To see much of her while he is there would be selfish; at other times it would embarrass the neighborhood with unnecessary gossip. Friendship is such a delicate thing that it is quickly stifled under the mantle of discretion when it does not die outright. That piece of Mendelssohn should be called the funeral march of friendship."

"But is not the entire possession of one woman recompense enough for the capricious friendship of many?" asked the other.

"Marriage has already made you cynical," replied the bachelor.

"Possession!" snorted the callow youth; "that's what queers the whole business."

"To suggest that a wife is her husband's property is a remark that should never be made except in the presence of ladies, where it may be corrected," said the old bachelor.

"That's about all marriage is," added the youth.

"It is more than that," put in the host, and added:

"Shall we join the ladies? Possibly they may have something to say on the subject."

While they were depositing their half smoked cigars, dusting the specks of tobacco ash from their coats and settling the hang of their clothes with that show of indifference unknown to the more honest variety of women, there came a little cry from the upper regions. It was repeated, a thin wailing, querulous voice, followed by a hurried rustling of skirts up the stairs. Three of the men dropped their eyes, the other smiled. They crossed into the drawing room, where three women sat with a look of listening on their faces.

"We were just trying to persuade Miss Talenthed to play for us," said one of them with an encouraging smile.—Kansas City Times.

Terrible Lake Ronkonkoma.

The brakeman on the Long Island railroad was talking to two schoolboys who got on the train at Garden City. "Say, kids, did you know there's a lake down the island where the suicides disappear, and their bodies are found in the Atlantic ocean? That's a gospel fact. I lost a friend there once. We dragged for his body three days, and some fishermen picked it up near Oak Island Beach, just outside Fire Island Inlet. Now, kids, what do you think of that? Ask your teacher. Maybe she can explain all about it." Needless to remark, the boys were much interested.

The lake referred to is Ronkonkoma, a freak of nature, about forty-eight miles from New York's City Hall, and half way between Stony Brook and Sayville. Strange are the traditions hovering over this small body of water. The Indians around Islip used to call it Ron-konk-o-ma, but many of the present day Long Islanders say Ron-kon-KO-ma. Old "residents" tell that the tide rises and falls there twice in twenty-four hours, sometimes six inches, at other times two feet. It is believed that there is an underground connection with Great South bay, leading to the ocean by way of Fire Island Inlet. At times, they will declare, the water is salt, and at other times fresh.

The Boy and the Bishop.

A pompous Bishop of Oxford was once stopped on a London street by a ragged urchin, who asked: "The time o' day, please your lordship."

With considerable difficulty the portly bishop extracted his timepiece.

"It is exactly half-past 5, my lad."

"Well," said the boy, setting his feet for a good start, "at half-past 5 you go to 'ell," and he was off like a flash.

The bishop, flushed and furious, his watch dangling from its chain, thundered after him. Just as he rounded the corner he ran into the arms of the venerable Bishop of London.

"Oxford! Oxford!" remonstrated the surprised dignitary, "why this unseemly haste?"

Puffing, blowing, spluttering, the outraged bishop gasped out: "That young ragamuffin—I told him it was half-past 5. He—er—told me to go to h—l at half-past 6."

"Yes, yes," said the Bishop of London, with the suspicion of a twinkle in his kindly old eyes, "but why such haste? You've got almost an hour." —Philadelphia Record.

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