

SATURDAY NIGHT TALKS

By REV. F. E. DAVISON
Rutland, Vt.

PAUL'S LAST WORDS.

International Bible Lesson for
Dec. 12 '09. [2 Tim. 4: 1-18].



The death of the Apostle Paul was like that of his Lord and Master—a tragedy; apparently a catastrophe, an unexplainable disaster. That the pioneer of Christendom, the pathfinder of the true religion, the founder of more churches than all the apostle college combined, the leader to whom converted Jew and Gentile looked for counsel and direction, the man who had come to the position where he was considered indispensable, that he, of all others, should be compelled to lay his head upon the block and give up his life with his work unfinished was a calamity that shook the infant church to its foundations.

No Complaints.

But the seasoned old warrior Paul, did not look at it in that light. When he enlisted in the service of the Prince of Peace, he calmly counted the cost. He enrolled himself in the army of the Lord with his eyes wide open. He knew perfectly well what he was doing and what it meant. He expected to suffer affliction and endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He fully realized what he was going up against for he had come from the ranks of the enemy himself, and he had the blood of bigotry in his own veins. He never anticipated ease and a comfortable position; the moment he laid down the weapons of his rebellion and was accepted as a raw recruit for the side he had persecuted he knew that the battle was on. And he knew also that that was an irrepressible conflict, a life-long warfare, and could only end in one way. Hence, he never murmured at the long marches, the weary sieges, the hand to hand conflicts, the bonds and imprisonments, the sacrifices, the garments rolled in blood.

Knighted on the Field.

And after all, what more appropriate thing than for a soldier to die upon the field of honor. Paul fell, as a brave soldier should, in the thick of the fight, with his face to the foe. And he was content. When Christ upon the cross knew that His hour had come, He bowed His head and said, "It is finished!" And when, the greatest of His apostles, years afterwards, in far off Rome, under the very shadow of caesar's palace was led out to execution, he, too, knew that he had accomplished his mission, and uttered his dying testimony, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." There was not a tremor in his voice, there was not a pang in his heart, there was not a fear in his soul. He knew that he was only about to be knighted upon the field of battle.

Fearless Soldier.

Yes, Paul had been a fighter. He had not been much of a dress-parade soldier, but as Phil Sheridan said, he had found "lovely fighting all along the line." His conversion at Damascus was a bombshell dropped right in the heart of the camp, his several appearances in Jerusalem always turned the city upside down. He had been compelled to lick his own soldiers into shape at the first council of the church; again and again he had cut loose from his base of supplies and like Sherman hewed a path for himself clear through to the sea, foraging on the enemy on the way. Men misunderstood him, criticised him, always got him into trouble when they attempted to improve on his plans, but they were compelled to admit that he was a peerless soldier. He knew not what fear was. He faced kings as calmly as he did howling mobs. And he was never defeated. When he entered a city, no matter what the opposition, he held his ground long enough to overthrow the powers of darkness. As he moved on his conquering way he established forts of righteousness all over Asia and Europe from Antioch to Rome. What are Antioch and Laodicea, and Philadelphia, and Sardis, and Thyatira, and Pergamos, and Smerna, and Ephesus—the seven churches of Asia spoken of in Revelation—together with Corinth and Thessalonica and Philippi, and Colosse, and Rome, but a matchless line of forts, garrisoned, armed and provisioned, to hold the ground where many of his greatest campaigns were waged and mightiest victories won.

Conquerer Always.

Oh, Paul's life was not a failure. He was immortal till his work was done. He was a greater soldier than Alexander or Caesar, for while they are dead and turned to dust, and the mighty empires they established have fallen and crumbled into dust, until not a trace remains, the kingdom Paul was instrumental in introducing has overturned all others and is more widespread and powerful this minute than it was when Paul cried out "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course," and went in to the presence of his Lord to lay a conquered world at his feet.

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LINGERIE WAIST.



Pattern No. 463.—Plain white batiste is the material and fine lace insertion the trimming of this dainty waist. The line for the inside band of insertion is marked by perforations in the pattern and the sleeves are long with points extending over the hand.

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