

THE STORY OF SAMSON.

Dr. Talmage Uses It As a Lesson to Mankind.

Men of Spiritual Stature Are Surely Needed—Physical Exercise is Commended—We Should Use the Talents God Has Given Us.

In his recent sermon the popular Washington divine drew some useful lessons from the life of an ancient giant and urged his hearers to consecrate themselves, mind and body, to great and good purposes.

There are two sides to the character of Samson. The one phase of his life, if followed into the particulars, would administer to the grotesque and mirthful; but there is a phase of his character fraught with lessons of solemn and eternal import.

There he stands, looming up above other men, a mountain of flesh, his arms bunched with muscle that can lift the gate of a city, taking an attitude defiant of everything.

There is a dissolute woman living in the valley of Sorek by the name of Delilah. They appoint her the agent in the case. The Philistines are secreted in the same building, and then Delilah goes to work and coaxes Samson to tell what is the secret of his strength.

Now tell me the secret of this great strength? and he replies: "If you should take some ropes that have never been used and tie me with them I should be just like other men."

But after awhile she persuades him to tell the truth. He says: "If you should take a razor or shears and cut off this long hair, I should be powerless and in the hands of my enemies."

I hear the groan of the giant as they take his eyes out, and then I see him staggering on in his blindness, feeling his way as he goes on toward Gaza.

First of all, behold in this giant of the text that physical power is not always an index of moral power. He was a huge man—the lion found it out, and the 3,000 men whom he slew found it out; yet he was the subject of petty revenges and out-gianted by low passion.

God people sometimes ascribe to a wicked heart that they ought to ascribe to a slow liver. The body and the soul are such near neighbors that they often catch each other's diseases.

Those who never saw a sick day, and who, like Hercules, slew the giant in the cradle, have more to answer for than those who are the subjects of life-

long infirmities. He who can lift twice as much as you can, and walk twice as far, and work twice as long, will have a double account to meet in the judgment.

How often is it that you do not find physical energy indicative of spiritual power! If a clear head is worth more than one dizzy with perpetual vertigo—if muscles with the play of health in them are worth more than those drawn up in chronic "rheumatics"—if an eye quick to catch passing objects is better than one with vision dim and uncertain—then God will require of us efficiency just in proportion to what He has given us.

But while you find a great many men who realize that they ought to use their money aright, and use their intelligence aright, how few men you find aware of the fact that they ought to use their physical organism aright!

It is a most shameful fact that much of the business of the church and of the world must be done by those comparatively invalid. Richard Baxter, by reason of his disease, all his days sitting in the door of the tomb, yet writing more than 100 volumes, and sending out an influence for God that will endure as long as the "Salts" Everlasting Rest."

Oh, how often it is that men with great physical endurance are not so great in moral and spiritual stature! While there are achievements for those who are bent all their days with sickness—achievements of patience, achievements of Christian endurance—I call upon men of health to-day, men of muscle, men of nerve, men of physical power, to devote themselves to the Lord.

Behold also, in the story of my text, illustration of the damage that strength can do if it be misguided. It seems to me that this man spent a great deal of his time in doing evil—this Samson of my text. To pay a bet which he had lost by guessing of his riddle he robs and kills 30 people.

It is not the small, weak men of the day who do the damage. These small men who go wearing and loafing about your stores, and shops, and banking houses, assailing Christ and the Bible and the church—they do not do the damage. They have no influence. They are vermin that you crush with your foot.

Oh, men of stout physical health, men of great mental stature, men of high social position, men of great power of any sort, I want you to understand your power, and I want you to know that that power devoted to God will be a crown on earth, to you typical of a crown in Heaven; but misguided, bedraggled in sin, administrative of evil, God will thunder against you with His condemnation in the day when millionaire and pauper, master and slave, king and subject, shall stand side by side in the judgment; and money-bags, and judicial ermine, and royal robe shall be riven with the lightning.

Behold also, how a giant may be slain! Delilah started the train of circumstances that pulled down the temple of Dagon about Samson's ears. And tens of thousands of giants have gone down to death and hell through the same impure fascinations. It seems to me that it is high time that pulpits and platform and printing press speak out against the impurities of modern society. Fastidiousness and prudery say: "Better not speak—you will make worse what you want to make better; better

deal in glittering generalities; the subject is too delicate for polite ears." But there comes a voice from Heaven overpowering the mining sentimentalities of the day, saying: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins."

The trouble is that when people write or speak upon this theme they are apt to cover it up with the graces of belles-lettres, so that the crime is made attractive instead of repulsive. Lord Byron in "Don Juan" adorns this crime until it smiles like a May queen. Michelet, the great French writer, covers it up with bewitching rhetoric until it glows like the rising sun, when it ought to be made loathsome as a small-pox hospital.

You who are seated in your Christian homes, compassed by moral and religious restraints, do not realize the gulf of iniquity that bounds you on the north and the south and the east and the west. While I speak and women going over the awful plunge of an impure life; and while I cry to God for mercy upon their souls, I call upon you to marshal in the defense of your homes, your church, and your nation. There is a banqueting hall that you have never heard described. You know all about the feast of Ahasuerus, where a thousand lords sat. You know all about Belshazzar's banquet, where the blood of the murdered king spurted into the faces of the banqueters.

Behold also in this giant of the text and in the giant of our own century that great physical power must crumble and expire. The Samson of the text long ago went away. He fought the lion. He fought the Philistines. He could fight anything, but death was too much for him. He may have required a longer grave and a broader grave; but the tomb nevertheless was his terminus.

If, then, we are to be compelled to go out of this world, where are we to go? This body and soul must soon part. What shall be the destiny of the former? I know—dust to dust. But what shall be the destiny of the latter? Shall it rise into the companionship of the white-robed, whose sins Christ has slain? or will it go down among the unbelieving, who tried to gain the world and save their souls, but were swindled out of both? Blessed be God, we have a champion. He is so styled in the Bible: A Champion who has conquered death and hell, and He is ready to fight all our battles from the first to the last.

Oh, men of the strong arm and the stout heart, what use are you making of your physical forces? Will you be able to stand the test of that day when we must answer for the use of every talent, whether it were a physical energy or a mental acumen, or a spiritual power?

The day approaches, and I see one who in this world was an invalid, and as she stands before the throne of God to answer she says: "I was sick all my days. I had but very little strength, but I did as well as I could in being kind to those who were more sick and more suffering." And Christ will say, "Well done, faithful servant."

And then a little child will stand before the throne and she will say: "On earth I had a curviture of the spine, and I was very weak, and I was very sick; but I used to gather flowers out of the wilderness and bring them to my sick mother, and she was comforted when she saw the sweet flowers out of the wilderness. I didn't do much, but I did something." And Christ shall say, as He takes her up in His arms and kisses her: "Well done, well done, faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." What, then, will be said to us—we to whom the Lord gave physical strength and continuous health?

I said to an old Scotch minister, who was one of the best friends I ever had: "Doctor, did you ever know Robert Pollock, the Scotch poet, who wrote 'The Course of Time'?" "Oh, yes," he replied, "I knew him well; I was his classmate." And then the doctor went on to tell me how that the writing of "The Course of Time" exhausted the health of Robert Pollock, and he expired. It seems as if no man could have such a glimpse of the day for which other days were made as Robert Pollock had, and long survive that glimpse. In the description of that day he says, among other things:

Behold the wee, ye woods, and tell it to the doleful winds, And doleful winds wail to the howling hills, And howling hills mourn to the dismal vales, And dismal vales sigh to the sorrowing brooks, And sorrowing brooks weep to the weeping stream, And weeping stream awake the groaning deep; Ye heavens, great archway of the universe, put sackcloth on; And ocean, robe thyself in garb of widowhood, And gather all thy waves into a gown, and utter it.

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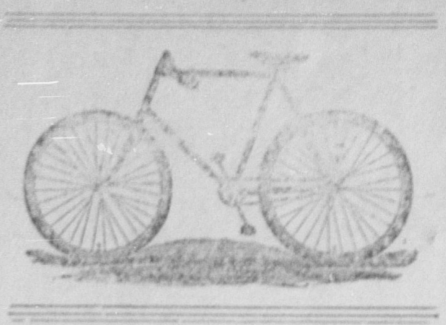
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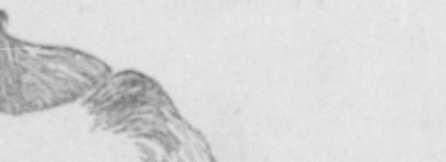
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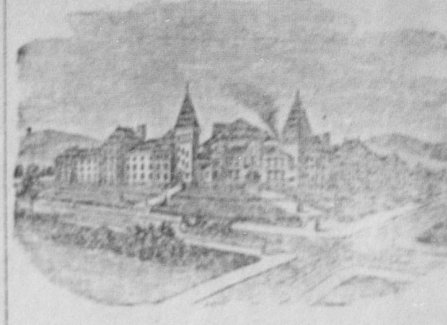
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