DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

THE NECESSITY FOR A MORE EARNEST BELIEF.

This Age of Infidelity Will Pass as Others Have Passed and the Bible in Its Entirety Will Remain—The Inspiring Example of Eleazar.

A Stout Grasp of Faith.

Dr. Talmage's text was II. Samuel xxiii, 10: "And his hand clave unto the sword."

A great general of King David was Eleazar, the hero of the text. The Philistines opened battle against him, and his troops retreated. The cowards fled. Eleazar and three of his comrades went into the battle and swept the field, for four men with God on their side are stronger than a whole battalion with God against them. "Fall back!" shouted the commander of the Philistine army. The cry ran along the host, "Fall back!" Eleazar having swept the field, throws himself on the ground to rest, but the muscles and sinews of his hand had been so long bent around the hilt of the sword that the hilt was imbedded in the flesh, and the gold wire of the hilt had broken through the skin of the palm of the hand, and he could not drop this sword which he had so gallantly wielded. "His hand clave unto the sword." That is what I call magnificent fighting for the Lord God of Israel, and we want more of it. I propose to show you this morning how Eleazar took hold of the sword and how the sword took hold of Eleazar. I look at Eleazar's hand, and I come to the conclusion that he took the sword with a very tight grip. The cowards who fled had no trouble in dropping their swords. As they fly over the rocks I hear their swords clanging in every direction. It is easy enough for them to drop their swords, but Eleazar's hand clave unto the sword.

On, my friends, in this Christian conflict we want a tighter grip of the Gospel weapons, a tighter grasp of the two edged sword of the truth. It makes me sad to see these Christian people who hold only a part of the truth and let the truth go, so that the Phillistines, seeing the loosened grasp, wrench the whole sword away from them. The only safe thing for us to do is to put our thumb on the book of Genesis and sweep our hand around the book until the New Testament comes into the palm, and keep on sweeping our hand around the book until the tips of the fingers clutch at the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." I like an infidel a great deal better than I do one of those nambypamby Christians who hold a part of the truth and let the rest go. By miracle God preserved this Bible just as it is, and it is a Damascus blade.

The severest test to which a sword can be put in a sword factory is to wind the blade around a gun barrel like a ribbon, and then when the sword is let loose it flies back to its own shape. So the sword of God's truth has been fully tested, and it is bent this way and that way, and wound this way and that way, but it always comes back to its own shape. Think of it! A book written eighteen centuries ago, and some of it thousands of years ago, and yet in our time the average sale of this book is more than 20,000 copies every week, and more than a million copies a year.

I say now that a book which is divinely inspired and divinely kept and divinely scattered is a weapon worth holding a tight grip of. Bishop Colenso will come along and try to wrench out of your hand the five books of Moses, and Strauss will come along and try to wrench out of your hand the miracles, and Renan will come along and try to wrench out of your hand the entire life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and your associates in the store, or the shop, or the factory, or the banking house will try to wrench out of your hand the entire Bible, but in the strength of the Lord God of Israel, and with Eleazar's grip, hold on to it. You give up the Bible, you give up any part of it, and you give up pardon and peace and life and Heaven.

I see hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young men in this audience. Do not be ashamed, young man, to have the world know that you are a friend of the Bible. This book is the friend of all that is good and it is the sworn enemy of all that is bad. An eloquent writer recently gives an incident of a very bad man who stood in the cell of a Western prison. This criminal had gone through all styles of crime, and he was there waiting for the gallows. The convict standing there at the window of the cell, the writer says, "looked out and declared, 'I am an infidel.' He said that to all the men and women and children who happened to be gathered there, 'I am an infidel,'" and the eloquent writer says, "Every man and woman there believed him." And the writer goes on to say, "If he had stood there saying, 'I am a Christian,' every man and woman would have said, 'He is a liar.'"

This Bible is the sworn enemy of all this wrong, and it is the friend of all that is good. Oh, hold on to it. Do not take part of it and throw the rest away. Hold on to all of it. There are so many people now who do not know. You ask them if the soul is immortal, and they say, "I guess it is, I don't know; perhaps it is, perhaps it isn't." Is the Bible true? "Well, perhaps it is, and perhaps it isn't; perhaps it may be figuratively, and perhaps it may be partly, and perhaps it may not be at all." They despise what they call the Apostolic creed; but if their own creed were written out it would read like this: "I believe in nothing, the maker of Heaven and earth, and in nothing which it hath sent, which nothing was born of nothing, and which nothing was dead and buried and descended into nothing, and arose from nothing, and ascended to nothing, and now sitteth at the right hand of nothing; from which it will come to judge nothing.

I believe in the holy agnostic church and in the communion of the nothingarians, and in the forgiveness of nothing, and in the resurrection of nothing, and in the life that never shall be. Amen!" That is the creed of tens of thousands of people in this day. If you have a mind to adopt such a theory I will not. "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, and in the holy Catholic church, and in the communion of saints, and in the life everlasting. Amen." Oh, when I see Eleazar taking such a stout grip of the sword in the battle against sin and for righteousness, I come to the conclusion that we ought to take a stouter grip of God's eternal truth, the sword of righteousness.

As I look at Eleazar's hand I also notice his spirit of self forgetfulness. He did not notice that the hilt of the sword was eating through the palm of his hand. He did not know it hurt him. As he went out into the conflict he was so anxious for the victory he forgot himself, and that hilt might go ever so deeply into the palm of his hand, it could not disturb him. "His hand clave unto the sword." Oh, my brothers and sisters, let us go into Christian conflict with the spirit of self abnegation. Who cares whether the world praises us or denounces us? What do we care for misrepresentation or abuse or persecution in a conflict like this? Let us forget ourselves. That man who is afraid of getting his hand hurt will never kill a Philistine. Who cares whether you get hurt or not if you get the victory? Oh, how many Christians there are who are all the time worrying about the way the world treates them. They are so tired, and they are so abused, and they are so tempted, when Eleazar did not think whether he had a hand or an arm or a foot. All he wanted was victory.

We see how men forget themselves in worldly achievement. We have often seen men who in order to achieve worldly success will forget all physical fatigue and all annoyance and all obstacle. Just after the battle of Yorktown, in the American Revolution, a musician, wounded, was told he must have his limbs amputated, and they were about to fasten him to the surgeon's table—for it was long before the merciful discovery of anæsthetics. He said. "No, don't fasten me to that table; get me a violin." A violin was brought to him and he said, "Now go to work as I begin to play," and for forty minutes during the awful pangs of amputation he moved not a muscle nor dropped a note, while he played some sweet tune. Oh, is it not strange that with the music of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and with this grand march of the church militant on the way to become the church triumphant, we cannot forget ourselves and forget all pang, and all sorrow and all persecution and all perturbation?

We know what men accomplish under worldly opposition. Men do not shrink back for worldly antagonism or for hardship. You have admired Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico," as brilliant and beautiful a history as was ever written; but some of you may not know under what disadvantages it was written—that "Conquest of Mexico"—for Prescott was totally blind, and he had two pieces of wood parallel to each other fastened, and totally blind, with his pen between those pieces of wood, he wrote, the stroke against one piece of wood telling how far the pen must go in one way, the stroke against the other piece of wood telling how far the pen must go in the other way. Oh, how much men will endure for worldly knowledge and for worldly success, and yet how little we endure for Jesus Christ. How many Christians there are that go around saysaying, "Oh, my hand, my hand, my hurt hand; don't you see there is blood on the hand and there is blood on the sword?" while Eleazar with the hilt imbedded in the flesh of his right hand, does not know it.

> Must I be carried to the skies
> On flowery beds of ease,
> While others fought to win the prize
> Or sailed through bloody seas.

What have we suffered in comparison with those who expired with suffocation, or were burned, or were chopped to pieces for the truth's sake? We talk of the persecution of olden times. There is just as much persecution going on now in various ways. In 1849, in Madagascar, eighteen men were put to death for Christ's sake. They were to be hurled over the rocks, and before they were hurled over the rocks, in order to make their death the more dreadful in anticipation, they were put in baskets and swung to and fro over the precipice that they might see how many hundred feet they would have to be dashed down, and while they were swinging in these baskets over the rocks they sang:

> Jesus, lover of my soul,
> Let me to thy bosom fly
> While the billows near me roll,
> While the tempest still is high.

When they were dashed down to death. Oh, how much others have endured for Christ, and how little we endure for Christ. We want to ride to Heaven in a Pullman sleeping car, our feet on soft plush, the bed made up early so we can sleep all the way, the black porter of death to wake us up only in time to enter the golden city. We want all the surgeons to fix our hand up. Let them bring on all the lint and bandages and all the salve, for our hand is hurt, while Eleazer does not know his hand is hurt. "His hand clave unto the sword."

As I look at Eleazar's hand, I come to the conclusion that he has done a great deal or hard hitting. I am not surprised when I see that these four men—Eleazar and his three companions—drove back the enemy of Philistines, that Eleazar's sword clave to his hand, for every time he struck an enemy with one end of the sword, the other end of the sword wounded him. When he took hold of the sword, the sword took hold of him. Oh, we have found an enemy who cannot be conquered by rose water and soft speeches. It must be sharp stroke and straight thrust. There is intemperance, and there is fraud, and there is gambling, and there is lust, and there are 100,000 battalions of iniquity, armed Philistine iniquity. How are they to be captured and overthrown? Soft sercaptured and overthrown? Soft sermons in morocco cases laid down in front of an exquisite audience will not do it. You have got to call things by their right names.

We have got to expel from our churches Christians who eat the sacrament on Sunday and devour widows' houses all the week. We have got to stop our indignation against the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Gergashites, and let these poor wretches go, and apply our indignation to the modern transgressions which need to be dragged out and slain. Ahabs here. Herods here. Jezebels here. The massacre of the infants here. The massacre of the infants here. Shrike for God so hard that while you slay the sin the sword will adhere to your own hand. I tell you, my friends, we want a few John Knoxes and John Wesleys in the Christian church to-day. The whole tendency is to refine on Christian work. We keep on refining it, until we send apologetic word to iniquity til we send apologetic word to iniquity and we are about to capture it. And we are about to capture it. And we are about to capture it. And