

THE END OF THE WAY.

(The following beautiful lines were written by a young lady in Nova Scotia, an invalid for many years.)
My life is a wearisome journey;
I'm sick with the dust and the heat;
The rays of the sun beat upon me;
The briars are wounding my feet;
But the city to which I am journeying
Will more than my trials repay;
All the toils of the road will seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way.

Visitor Pulpit.

"MORE WITH US THAN WITH HIM."

A Sermon Preached in Regent's Park Chapel By Rev. Dr. Landels.

"Be strong and courageous, for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him, for there be more with us than with him."—2 Chron. xxxii. 7.

You will see from the text that the occasion is the resolution taken to defend the city of Jerusalem against the assaults of Sennacherib. The king submitted to the destruction of the fountains of water outside the city that the invading hosts might find nothing to drink. A part of the wall where it was broken down was protected by the erection of another outer wall round about it. He repaired the breaches of the defence, and made darts in abundance. He organised the people into companies of soldiers, and set captains of war over them, and gathered them together, and spake comfortable words to them. It was to be noticed, however, that though he had done all this his comfortable words had no reference whatever to his own preparations for defence. Though he had made all these so carefully, his trust was not in them but in the help of that God who was greater than their enemies. He does not say to the people, Be strong and courageous because I have taken my measures wisely; I have prepared all proper means of defence; I have done this, or that, or the other. He does not say that. But, Be strong and courageous because He that is with us is more than he that is with them. The Lord our God is with us to help us and to fight our battles. Is there anything strange to you in this? Do you wonder that he should make such careful preparation when he had no confidence in it, when his trust looked in quite a different direction? The wonder would be easily explained if we understood rightly the lines on which God's help is promised. He helps our preparations themselves, and in them we must place our absolute dependence as well as in the final issue upon God alone. He who has helped all our preparations will not prove unavailing at the last. Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watcheth but in vain. If it be asked, again, Where is the need of your preparations if you need God's help as much as ever and why make them if your trust is on Him? the answer is because God does not by His providence or His grace compensate for our idleness, but He only helps our weakness. His blessing is given, not to sluggishness, not to idleness, but to the earnestness which bestirs itself that it might obtain the end in view. "Look to heaven," said the general to his

soldiers on the morning of the Dunbar fight, "and keep your powder dry!" There was need for the precaution. I doubt not for a moment that they looked to heaven all the more calmly for not having neglected the earthly means. The two things together—the vigilance and the trust—worked together to their splendid victory. Hezekiah spake comfortable words to his people and encouraged them to trust in God because he had adopted the proper means of defence. We, too, may best confide in God when we have left nothing undone that is conducive to our purpose. It is when the two things—the activity and the trust—go hand in hand that our purpose is most likely to be accomplished.

Notice, in the first place, where or in whom the good man puts his trust. "There be more with us than with them," for with us is the Lord our God, Jehovah our God. It was in Him that Hezekiah trusted when so sorely pressed by the invading army. Not to the means he must use, not to the courage and prowess of His people, but to God's almighty arm did he look for protection and deliverance. And that same God is the confidence of His people throughout all times, when their minds are rightly exercised, when they are not bask-sliding, when they are not unmindful of the relation God sustains to them, or what He has done for them, and what He promises to do—in a word, when they are not unfaithful to themselves and to their Lord. It is in Him that all their trust is placed for the accomplishment of the objects which are dear to them, and on which their hearts are most earnestly set. When they do not neglect the use of appropriate means, look not to the arm of flesh, not to creature help, not to what they do for themselves, or what is done for them by others, but solely and implicitly to the strength of the almighty arm; then does God prosper them. If their object be their own safety, they do not trust in themselves for it. Not in their own efforts or merits, but their trust rests solely on God's abounding grace exercised through Jesus Christ our Lord. If that object be the advancement of Christ's cause they are not negligent of effort for that end, but they trust in the Divine energy from which that sufficiency comes. Learning, for example, is not despised nor rejected, for they know that it has its uses in the kingdom of Christ, and most important uses too; but they know also that it is not in the power of learning to throw back the tide of evil, or make dead souls alive, or bring down the high thoughts of men who oppose themselves to the claims and supremacy of Christ, or to do many other things which are identified with the prosperity of God's cause. Hence their trust is not in learning, but in the operation of the Divine Spirit who brings to nothing the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent. Strength of course they do not make light of, for they know it can be well used, and God should be served with our best; vigorous organization, vigorous activity are all pressed into Christ's service provided that be within the power of the Church. But they know also that no human strength can prevail against spiritual weakness or breathe vitality into a soul dead in trespasses and sins. Hence while it is a man's duty to use his learning and his strength diligently, the strong man must not trust in his strength any more than the wise man in his wisdom; both alike depend on the power and the wisdom of God, because the foolishness of God is wiser than man. Riches they do not undervalue, of course. They know that wealth may be consecrated to useful purposes, may be turned to good account in various departments of philanthropic and benevolent effort; but they know well that wealth in a church is neither a sign nor a source of prosperity. Christianity was never more vital or powerful than when the apostles could say, "Silver and gold have I none." Accessions of wealth have proved accessions of corruption. Though the Church had not gold she commanded the resources of infinity. They could point to sections of the

Church of Christ to-day which had lost their vitality and vigour just in proportion as they advanced in worldly prosperity. Their inroads on the kingdom of Satan became gradually weaker and smaller as their appliances increased; until their energies, borne down by their plethora of wealth, had threatened to die altogether of sheer respectability and fashion. It is not likely that any wise Christian who sees this will look to riches as the prosperity of Christ's kingdom. He will trust in them less than in either strength or wisdom. He will see that they are an occasion of danger rather than of congratulation; the churches need to be on their guard against being corrupted by their influence, and though she will use them in the service of the Gospel, he will nevertheless feel that the power which God bestows must come from on high, that the Omnipotent arm and not silver and gold, not man's strength or wisdom in anything else that pertains to men is the protection and the strength of the Church of Christ. Riches, wisdom, strength are all to be laid on God's altar, and our hope of success must not rest on them, but on the Lord our God who is with us to lead us and to fight our battles.

This leads me to notice, secondly, God's relation to the man who exercises this trust. This relation is indicated in four things: He is our God; we have a claim upon Him—not absolute, but relative and covenanted. He has been pleased to make a covenant with us. His being our God means that we love Him supremely, that we should obey Him implicitly, that we serve Him devotedly, that we trust Him fearlessly, and to all who thus take Him for their God He makes a promise by which, if we may so speak, He lays Himself under obligation. He gives us a right to expect the things which He has promised, and He will not disappoint us, be sure of that. If our part of the contract be fulfilled, His will not fail. He will not; fail to be our God, nor to exercise on our behalf His God-like promise.

Then, secondly, He is with us as the result of His promise, in virtue of His claim. As our God He is with us, always with us, never separated from us, unless we sin against Him. He is interested in the work we have in hand, and His heart desires our prosperity. His purposes are with us; we are working in harmony with the decrees of God; if our aim be the spread of truth, the promotion of good and the destruction of evil, and the cultivation of holiness in the earth—if that be our aim, all God's purposes are on our side, His presence is with us, His gracious solace, His essential presence, His power is with us. All His perfections are with us, and are all working on our side.

Then, again, He is with us to lead us. We have work to do for which our strength is incompetent. Again and again as we look at the magnitude of our past experience, we are led to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But haply—and here is what warms our breasts—the work is not to be done in our strength. In all our efforts we are only the agents of mightier power. We are set against the kingdom of darkness, but we are backed up by almighty forces. Through our feeble arm, omnipotence is exercised; God is pleased to make human instruments the conductors of His Divine power. These rams' horns—what was there in the sound of them to bring down the walls of Jericho? That serpent of brass—what was there in it to be healing to the diseased Israelites? But God was pleased to make these instruments the channels through which Divine power was exercised. In that brazen serpent the Divine efficacy was lodged; and in like manner, if we are the instrumentalities employed, the walls will fall flat as those of Jericho did before the rams' horns. There is nothing in the power which we can put forth, either to advance the Church or to reclaim the world. The barriers are too strong for us to remove; the stone is too heavy for us to roll away; the work is too difficult for us to accomplish; but when, in accordance with God's direction, we put forth our hand, His

power works, and we become the conductors of an omnipotent force. Our arm is weak, but it is Omnipotence that wields it, and gives energy to it, and all unlikely as we are to succeed in our work, we do succeed because we have God's help; we succeed to such an extent that when we look at the result accomplished we may be amazed; and as we see the inadequacy of our strength to the ends which we have accomplished, we are constrained to say, "what hath God wrought?" Verily He hath fulfilled his promise, "I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto Thee, Fear not, I will keep thee. Fear not Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord. . . Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hill as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel."

And the fourth thing in this relation is that He is with us to fight our battles. We have not only difficult work to do, but manifold adversaries against which to contend. The bad passions of man are set against us. The selfish instruments of men, the worldly ambitions of men are against us; the inveterate habits of men distract our progress; our own inward tendencies, more than anything else, hinder our movements; and these are not all. There are other forces operating behind all these, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Notice, in the third place, the good man's consequent superiority to all the forces that contend against him. Let it be observed that the strength of these forces is not to be made light of. Zechariah distinctly recognizes the power of those multitudes who wrest with Sennacherib. Even though it is the arm of the flesh it is still an arm that we have to fight with, capable, therefore, of striking the blow; capable of inflicting injury on those to whom it is opposed. He recognises all this. His confidence does not come from any depreciation of the enemy's strength, but through looking to One who is stronger; and it will be for us to form a proper estimate of those to whom we are opposed. It is never safe in conflict to under-estimate your enemies. That augurs a spirit of presumption. It is the part of a wise man to look at and measure the capabilities and resources of the foe. Worldliness is as formidable an obstacle as any against which we have to contend. And owing to our advancing civilization, to the rapid accumulation of wealth in many cases—owing to the many outlets for extending wealth, to the self-gratification which wealth commands, the worldly spirit is more rampant to-day than at any other period. It is not only active, but it assumes an insidious form which deceives the unwary; and if that spirit obtains a hold in the Church once, it defies us to dialogue it, when it speaks with all the prestige which it derives from its position. Then, again, false systems are making headway as they never made headway before; Ritualism, bastard Popery, is now making such inroads in the church as to excite the bitter lamentations of good men who are not strong enough to trust themselves to Christ's command. Popery itself seems to show signs of vigorous life in the extremities, and is taking a position such as it never held in this country since the Reformation. All these things are tending more or less to hinder the spread of the Gospel, because they are directly and indirectly leading men to substitute forms for things; and when along with all this it is remembered that the natural depravity of the human heart is as great as ever; it may be seen that the obstacles which we have to contend with in our efforts to spread the Gospel of Christ are neither few nor small.

And now notice, in the fourth place, the courage which becomes a man in consequence of this. "Be

strong, be courageous, be not afraid." That was the exhortation of Hezekiah to the people, who addressed to them the statement contained in the text. And the people received these words of Hezekiah; and in the same grand spirit that they did it, it becomes us to adopt the same tone, to exercise the same trust. Oh, my brethren, workers for Christ, discouraged enough sometimes when you feel that your strongest desires and best interests are identified with the advancement of Christ's cause, be strong, be courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for all those who are opposed to you. Many well-meaning but mistaken friends of the Gospel to-day are seeking to contend with their adversary on their own ground with their own weapons, so forgetting the sources of their strength, and losing all the advantages they would have in cleaving to it. By a little Ritualism they try to meet the ritualistic tendency now so common. They think, because there is a craving in human nature for that type of things, that it must be gratified to some extent. Musical entertainments in religious services are resorted to by many. Let it be artistic; let it be such a performance as will please the heart and gratify the taste. That is why some are very much departing from the primitive simplicity of their fathers. The Ritualism to which human nature is prone is really the latent, sometimes unexpressed reason why such a system is spreading. Say they, the tendency to infidelity must be met by looseness of statement on the part of Christian teachers. Our young men who are inclined to free thinking must not be driven away by too strong statements of evangelical truth; we must dilute it a little—make it assume its best attitude towards infidelity. And the worldly spirit must be met by introducing the spirit of the world into the church. Our young people cannot be restrained too much; we must relax our discipline, and render our services entertaining. We must speak peaceful things to men, and do homage to the devil. Whatever in our doctrines is repulsive to men because manifestly untrue ought to be renounced. Whatsoever in our discipline is not consonant with truth ought to be abandoned, and whatever in our manner of worship is unnecessarily trying should not be retained. But you are not to fight your adversaries with their own weapons, not to use their plans, but call into exercise the Divine power which supports you. They will overmaster you if you fight on their ground; your skill is not superior to theirs. Resort to Ritualism! What a paltry insignificant thing yours is compared with that which Popery supplies. It is like child's play; it is nothing compared with what you find in the Church of Rome. If you conform to the world you cannot do so without renouncing your allegiance to Christ. You must renounce all such expedients, and show that you depend for victory on the help of the Almighty. You have no right to anticipate at all, except on the ground that He who is with you is more than all that are opposed to you. You can prevail against them through His help, but not otherwise. Their organizations are equal, perhaps superior to your own. Their wealth is quite as great; in fact, there is more wealth on the side of the devil to-day than on the side of Christ. Their skill is not inferior; you are not a match for them at all in your own strength; nevertheless you are stronger than they, because there be more with us than with them. God's strength is in you. In the strength of the Divine promise you shall make them small and beat them as chaff so that the wind can carry them away. Indeed, all their strength is nothing compared with that on which you rely. The amount of strength the world has at its command makes no difference; it is not of any account as opposed to Omnipotence. Be not afraid; you cannot expel infidelity from the hearts of men by argument; but without neglecting argument you can expel it with prayer. It takes hold of God's strength. You cannot get rid of Ritualism by a showier ritual, or Popery by an opposing Popery; but you can by an influx of spiritual

life and power. You cannot prevail against worldliness by a partial conformity to the world; but you, by bearing about with you such most precious tokens of the Divine presence will compel men to recognise powers of the world to come. Be strong, be courageous, and you must, you shall conquer, through the power of Him who is with helping you, and fighting your battles. To doubt it is to doubt the deity you teach, the righteousness of cause you uphold. Any fear for issue of the conflict is but a tacit admission that you are not on Lord's side. Wherefore be strong, be courageous, fear not what man do to you. He who is with you more than he who is with your adversaries. The Lord Himself help you, and fight your battles.

Indulgent parents, who allow children to eat heartily of high-seasoned food, rich pies, cake, &c., will have use Hip Bitters to prevent indigestion, sleepless nights, sickness, pain, and hays death. No family is safe without them in the house.

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