DEEP SEA FISHING.

DR. TALMAGE TELLS WHY CHRIST CHOSE FISHERMEN.

They Were Used to Hard Knocks and Possessed Intellectual and Physical Vigor—Great Congregations Assemble at the Tabernacle.

BROOKLYN, Oct. 2.—Since his return from Europe Dr. Talmage has faced audiences unusually large and enthusiastic, who are attracted to the Tabernacle no less by the potent eloquence of the preacher than through a desire to hear from his own lips the message of thanks intrusted to him by the czar to the contributors of The Christian Herald famine cargo, which he and Mr. Klopsch conveyed to Russia in the steamer Leo. It is understood that Dr. Talmage has in preparation a full account of the mission to Russia, as well as his own preaching tour to Germany, England, Scotland and Ireland. The text this morning was taken from Luke v, 4, "Launch out into the deep."

Christ, starting on the campaign of the world's conquest, was selecting his staff officers. There were plenty of students with high foreheads, and white hands, and intellectual faces, and refined tastes in Rome and in Jerusalem. Christ might have called into the apostleship twelve bookworms, or twelve rhetoricians, or twelve artists. Instead he takes a group of men who had never made a speech; never taken a lesson in belles-lettres; never been sick enough to make them look delicate—their hands broad, clumsy and hard knuckled. He chose fishermen, among other reasons, I think, because they were physically hardy. Rowing makes strong arms and stout chests. Much climbing of ratlines makes one's head steady. A Galilee tempest wrestled men into gymnasts.

The opening work of the church was rough work. Christ did not want twelve invalids hanging about him, complaining all the time how badly they felt. He leaves the delicate students at Jerusalem and Rome for their mothers and aunts to take care of, and goes down to the seashore, and out of the toughest material makes an apostleship. The ministry need more corporeal vigor than any other class. Fine minds and good intentions are important, but there must be physical force to back them. The intellectual mill wheel may be well built and the grist good, but there must be enough blood in the mill race to turn the one and to grind the other.

He chose fishermen also because they were used to hard knocks. The man who cannot stand assault is not fit for the ministry. It always has been and always will be rough work, and the man who, at every censure or caricature, sits down to cry had better be at some other work. It is no place for ecclesiastical doll babies. A man who cannot preach because he has forgotten his manuscript or lost his spectacles ought not to preach at all. Heaven deliver the church from a ministry that preach in kid gloves and from sermons in black morocco covers! These fishermen were rough and ready. They had been in the severest of all colleges.

When they were knocked over by the main boom of the ship they entered the Sophomore; when washed off by a great wave they entered the Junior; when floating for two days without food or drink on a plank they came to the Senior, and when at last their ship dashed on the beach in a midnight hurricane they graduated with the first honor.

JESUS ON SHIPBOARD.

My text finds Jesus on shipboard with one of these bronzed men—Simon by name. This fisherman had been sweeping his net in shoal water. "Push out," says Christ; "what is the use of hugging the shore in this boat? Here is a lake twelve miles long and six wide, and it is all populated just waiting for the sweep of your net. Launch out into the deep."

The advice that my Lord gave to Simon is as appropriate for us all in a spiritual sense. The fact is that most of us are just paddling along the shore. We are afraid to venture out into the great deeps of God and Christian experience. We think that the boat will be upset, or that we cannot "clew down the mizzen topsail," and our cowardice makes us poor fishermen. I think I hear the voice of Christ commanding us, as he did Simon on that day when bright Galilee set in among the green hills of Palestine, like water flashing in an emerald cup, "Launch out into the deep."

This divine council comes first to all those who are paddling in the margin of Bible research. My father read the Bible through three times after he was eighty years of age and without spectacles—not for the mere purpose of saying he had been through it so often, but for his eternal profit. John Colby, the brother-in-law of Daniel Webster, learned to read after he was eighty-four years of age in order that he might become acquainted with the Scriptures. There is no book in the world that demands so much of our attention as the Bible. Yet nine-tenths of Christian men get no more than ankle deep. They think it is a good sign not to venture too far. They never ask how or why, and if they see some Christain becoming inquisitive about the deep things of God they say, "Be careful; you had better not go out so far from shore."

My answer is: The farther you go from shore the better if you have the right kind of ship. If you have mere worldly philosophy for the hulk, and pride for a sail, and self conceit for the helm, the first squall will destroy you. But if you take the Bible for your craft, the farther you go the better, and after you have gone ten thousand furlongs Christ will still command, "Launch out into the deep." Ask some such question as "Who is God?" and go on for ten years asking it. Ask it at the gate of every parable; amid the excitement of every miracle; by the solitariness of every patriarchal thrashing floor; amid the white faces of Sennacherib's slain turned up into the moonlight; amid the flying chariots of the Golden City.

Ask who Jesus is, and keep on asking it of every Bible lily, of every raven, of every star, of every crazed brain cured, of every blind man come to sunlight, of every coin in a fish's mouth, of every loaf that got to be five loaves, of every wrathful sea pacified, of every pulseless arm stretched forth in gratulation; ask it of his mother, of Augustus, of Herod, of the Syrophœnician woman, of the damsel that woke up from the death sleep, of Joseph, who had him buried, of the angel posted as sentinel at his tomb, of the dumb earth that shook and groaned and thundered when he died.

THE BIBLE IS A STAFF.

A missionary in France offered a Bible in an humble dwelling. The man took it, tore out a dozen pages and with them began to light his pipe. Some years after the missionary happened in the same house. The family had just lost their son in the Crimean war, and his Bible had been sent back home. The missionary took it up and saw that it was the very same Bible that he had left in the house and from which the leaves had been torn. The dying soldier had written on one of the leaves of the Bible, "Rejected and scoffed at, but finally believed in and saved." The Bible may be used to light the pipe of witticism by some, but for us it is a staff in life, a pillow in death and our joy for eternity.

Walk all up and down this Bible domain! Try every path. Plunge in at the prophecies and come out at the epistles. Go with the patriarchs until you meet the evangelists. Rummage and ransack, as children who are not satisfied when they come to a new house until they know what is in every room and into what every door opens. Open every jewel casket. Examine the skylights. Forever be asking questions. Put to a higher use than was intended the oriental proverb, "Hold all the skirts of thy mantle extended when heaven is raining gold."

Passing from Bonn to Coblentz on the Rhine, the scenery is comparatively tame. But from Coblentz to Mayence it is enchanting. You sit on deck and feel as if this last flash of beauty must exhaust the scene; but in a moment there is a turn of the river, which covers up the former view with more luxuriant vineyards, and more defiant castles, and bolder bluffs, vine wreathed, and grapes so ripe that if the hills be touched they would bleed their rich life away into the bowls of Bingen and Hockheimer. Here and there there are streams of water melting into the river, like smaller joys swallowed in the bosom of a great gladness.

And when night begins to throw its black mantle over the shoulder of the hills, and you are approaching disembarkation at Mayence, the lights along the shore fairly bewitch the scene with their beauty, giving one a thrill that he feels but once, yet that lasts him forever. So this river of God's Word is not a straight stream, but a winding splendor—at every turn new wonders to attract, still riper vintage pressing to the brink and crowded with castles of strength—Stolzenfels and Johannisberger as nothing compared with the strong tower into which the righteous run and are saved—and our disembarkation at last in the evening amid the lights that gleam from the shore of heaven. The trouble is that the vast majority of Bible voyagers stop at Coblentz, where the chief glories begin.

A BOUNDLESS SEA.

The sea of God's Word is not like Gennesaret, twelve miles by six, but boundless, and in any one direction you can sail on forever. Why then confine yourself to a short psalm or to a few verses of an epistle? The largest fish are not near the shore. Hoist all sail to the winds of heaven. Take hold of both oars and pull away. Be like some of the whalers that went out from New Bedford or Portsmouth to be gone for two or three years. Yea, calculate on a lifetime voyage. You do not want to land until you land in heaven. Sail away, O ye mariners, for eternity! Launch out into the deep!

The text is appropriate to all Christians of shallow experience. Doubts and fears have in our day been almost elected to the parliament of Christian graces. Some consider it a bad sign not to have any doubts. Doubts and fears are not signs of health, but festers and carbuncles. You have a valuable house or farm. It is suggested that the title is not good. You employ counsel. You have the deeds examined. You search the record for mortgages, judgments and liens. You are not satisfied until you have a certificate, signed by the great seal of the state, assuring you that the title is good. Yet how many leave their title to heaven an undecided matter! Why do you not go to the records and find out? Give yourself no rest, day or night, until you can read your title clear to mansions in the skies.

Christian character is to come up to higher standards. We have now to hunt through our library to find one Robert M'Cheyne, or one Edward Payson, or one Harlan Page. The time will come when we will find half a dozen of them sitting in the same seat with us. The grace of God can make a great deal better men than those I have mentioned. Christians seem afraid they will get heterodox by going too far. They do not believe in Christian perfection. There is no danger of your being perfect for some time yet. I will keep watch and give you notice in time, if you get too near perfection for the safety of your theology.

One-half of you Christians are simply stuck in the mud. Why not cut loose from everything but God? Give not to him that formal petition made up of "O's"—"O Lord" this and "O Lord" that. When people are cold and have nothing to say to God they strew their prayers with "O's" and "Forever and ever, Amen," and things to fill up. Tell God what you want with the feeling that he is ready to give it, and believe that you will receive, and you shall have it. Shed that old prayer you have been making these ten years. It is high time that you outgrew it. Throw it aside with your old ledgers, and your old hats, and your old shoes. Take a review of your present wants, of your present sins and of you present blessings. With a sharp blade cut away your past half and half Christian life, and with new determination, and new plans, and new expectations launch out into the deep.

POINTERS TO FISHERMEN.

The text is appropriate to all who are engaged in Christian work. The church of God has been fishing along the shore. We set our net in a good, calm place, and in sight of a fine chapel, and we go down every Sunday to see if the fish have been wise enough to come into our net. We might learn something from that boy with his hook and line. He throws his line from the bridge—no fish. He sits down on a log—no fish. He stands in the sunlight and casts the line, but no fish. He goes up by the mill dam, and stands behind the bank, where the fish cannot see him, and he has hardly dropped the hook before the cork goes under. The fish come to him as fast as he can throw them ashore.

In other words, in our Christian work why do we not go where the fish are? It is not so easy to catch souls in church, for they know that we are trying to take them. If you can throw your line out into the world, where they are not expecting you, they will be captured. Is it fair to take men by such stratagem? Yes. I would like to cheat five thousand souls into the kingdom.

The whole policy of the church of God is to be changed. Instead of chiefly looking after the few who have become Christians our chief efforts will be for those outside. If after a man is converted he cannot take care of himself I am not going to take care of him. If he thinks that I am going to stand and pat him on the back, and feed him out of an elegant spoon, and watch him so that he does not get into a draft of worldliness, he is much mistaken. We have in our churches a great mass of helpless, inane professors, who are doing nothing for themselves or for others, who want us to stop and nurse them. They are so troubled with doubt as to whether they are Christians or not. The doubt is settled. They are not Christians. The best we can do with these fish is to throw them back into the stream and go after them again with the Gospel net.

"Go into the world and preach the Gospel," says Christ—into the factory, the engine house, the clubroom; into the houses of the sick; into the dark lane; into the damp cellar; into the cold garret; into the dismal prison. Let every man, woman and child know that Jesus died, and that the gate of heaven is wide open. With the Bible in one pocket, and the hymn book in another pocket, and a loaf of bread under your arm, launch out into the great deep of this world's wretchedness.

The text is appropriate to all the unforgiven. Every sinner would come to God if he thought that he might come just as he is. People talk as though the pardon of God were a narrow river, like the Kennebec or the Thames, and that their sins draw too much water to enter it. No; it is not a river nor a bay, but a sea. I should like to persuade you to launch out into the great deep of God's mercy. I am a merchant. I have bought a cargo of spices in India. I have, through a bill of exchange, paid for the whole cargo. You are a ship captain. I give you the orders and say, "Bring me those spices." You land in India. You go to the trader and say, "Here are the orders," and you find everything all right. You do not stop to pay the money yourself. It is not your business to pay it. The arrangements were made before you started. So Christ purchases your pardon. He puts the papers, or the promises, into your hand. Is it wise to stop and say, "I cannot pay for my redemption?" God does not ask you to pay. Relying on what has been done, launch out into the deep.

The Bible's promises join hands, and the circle they make will compass all your sins, and all your temptations, and all your sorrows. The round table of King Arthur and his knights had room for only thirteen banqueters, but the round table of God's supply is large enough for all the present inhabitants of earth and heaven to sit at, and for the still mightier populations that are yet to be.

KEEP AWAY FROM THE REEFS.

Do not sail coastwise along your old habits and old sins. Keep clear of the shore. Go out where the water is deepest. Oh, for the mid sea of God's mercy! "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins." I preach it with as much confidence to the eighty-year-old transgressor as to the maiden. Though your sins were blood red they shall be snow white. The more ragged the prodigal, the more compassionate the father. Do you say that you are too bad? The high water mark of God's pardon is higher than all your transgressions. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Do you say that your heart is hard? Suppose it were ten times harder. Do you say that your iniquity is long continued? Suppose it were ten times longer. Do you say that your crimes are black? Suppose that they were ten times blacker. Is there any lion that this Samson cannot slay? Is there any fortress that this Conqueror cannot take? Is there any sin this Redeemer cannot pardon.

It is said that when Charlemagne's host was overpowered by the three armies of the Saracens in the pass of Roncesvalles his warrior, Roland, in terrible earnestness seized a trumpet and blew it with such terrific strength that the opposing army reeled back with terror, but at the third blast of the trumpet it broke in two. I see your soul fiercely assailed by all the powers of earth and hell. I put the mightier trumpet of the Gospel to my lips and I blow it three times. Blast the first—"Whosoever will, let him come." Blast the second—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Blast the third—"Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

Does not the host of your sins fall back? But the trumpet does not, like that of Roland, break in two. As it was handed down to us from the lips of our fathers, we hand it down to the lips of our children, and tell them to sound it when we are dead, that all the generations of men may know that our God is a pardoning God—a sympathetic God—a loving God—and that more to him than the anthems of heaven; more to him than the throne on which he sits; more to him than are the temples of celestial worship is the joy of seeing the wanderer putting his hand on the door latch of his Father's house. Hear it, all ye nations! Bread for the worst hunger. Medicine for the worst sickness. Light for the thickest darkness. Harbor for the worst storm.

Dr. Prime, in his book of wonderful interest entitled "Around the World," describes a tomb in India of marvelous architecture. Twenty thousand men were twenty-two years in erecting that and the buildings around it. Standing in that tomb, if you speak or sing, after you have ceased you hear the echo coming from a height of one hundred and fifty feet. It is not like other echoes. The sound is drawn out in sweet prolongation, as though the angels of God were chanting on the wing. How many souls in the tomb of sin will lift up the voice of penitence and prayer? If now they would cry unto God the echo would drop from afar, not struck from the marble cupola of an earthly mausoleum, but sounding back from the warm heart of angels flying with the news, for there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth!

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