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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OF HUDSON COUNTY

*Sermon to the soldiers on their return
by Rev. B. C. Taylor. July 28th 1861 (Civil War)*

Presented by

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II Samuel 11-12.

"Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people
and for the cities of our God : and the Lord do that which
sameth him good" —

The Soldier's Return

A Sermon to the Soldiers

returned from Washington & vicinity

Preached at Bergen July 28th 1861

II. Samuel 10-12.

Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people
and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which
seemeth him good'

This chapter records a war of David with the Ammonites and
the Syrians who were their allies, together with the occasion
and success of it. A friendly embassy was sent to Hanun
King of the Ammonites, who upon a base surmise that
it was of ill-intent, abused David's ambassadors. Then David
rebelled and the Ammonites prepared for war against him
who carried it into the enemies country, who and sent Joab
and Abishai against them. They addressed themselves
to the battle, with wisdom and valor, and their foes were
totally routed. and thus David strengthened his own reputation
for gratitude and for justice, in repaying injuries

Joab having the arrangements made for leading his forces into the conflict, intonates the plan of attack and of the conduct of it both as to the assault and as to the help to be secured in case of need and tells his brother Abishai "If the Syrians be too strong for me then thou shall help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee then I will come and help thee" Be of good ~~courage~~ courage and let us play the men for our people; and for the cities of our God! And the Lord do that which seemeth him good! — Here was mature judgement and practical wisdom in arrangement, and it only remained to bravely encourage himself and his brother and other officers and the soldiers to do their utmost, so to act well their part, not for pay and preferment, for honour and fame, but for their people and for the cities of their God. Thus cherishing the public

Safety and welfare. "God and their Country" above every thing else while engaged in this work. Thus he was valiant from two great principles - love of Country and love of God. And with this expression of his arrangements and purpose and feeling, he cheerfully leaves the issue with God. Let the Lord do that which seemeth him good. Let nothing be wanting in us, whatever the issue - Let God's work be done by us, and then let his will be done concerning us. The right was his to control the issues. Their business was to make conscience of doing their duty. Although their valor could not bring him, to prosper them, yet they could hope for his salvation in such manner and at such time as he should please.

Such then should be the principles on which and the plan by which the Contest waged and raging in our land should be conducted - Our national Government and the people of this

nation, believe they have the right on their side and that God will defend the right. This war is a war for principle - the very principles which are the bases of the Constitution under which we live - the palladium of our liberty civil and religious. If the foundations be destroyed what can the people do? - Must anarchy prevail - must civil and social order be overthrown then adieu to prosperity. But in the righteous efforts to uphold our Government, there is nothing more appropriate - more beautiful than constancy, valor, activity, and patient endurance of hardships, blended with that manly composure which rejoices in recognition of and submission to the will of God. This is true courage, which subserves its purpose both in victory and defeat. And if a dying Soldier on the field of Waterloo could cry out, and long for the answer "Is our General content

with us?" and die comfortably as he received the affirmative answer, how much more the soldier who can on the gory battle field, conscious of firmness, valor, and fidelity say "let the Lord do that which seemeth him good!"

In the warfare in which this our beloved country is involved we are confident multitudes of our people recognise the mighty hand of God. Why he should have suffered this deadly strife and to what extent he may see fit, to allow it to be carried on all unknown to us. We know its origin, its alleged purposes, and impede its development. We who have been compelled to go into it, have already shared some success, and some defeat and herein we are taught by the hand of God "lessons of utility to both national weal and national woe - to be humble in adversity - improsperity to consider. The state of things with us

demands, sober, solemn reflection, not merely for present exigencies but for ^{the} future. The peril of our government, ~~the~~ distresses civil, mercantile - social - and religious, are all blended in this unnatural strife. And it ^{is} good when the counsels of men are, like those of ~~Shitophel~~, turned into foolishness to have our God to go to, and to entreat him to do that which knoweth ^{the} good. And to encourage ourselves in God, who knoweth the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things not yet done, saying my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure. While that encouragement will stimulate to action bidding us to stand at our post and with alacrity do the bidding of the Lord.

We think we are not mistaken in this as the purpose of all who are loyal to our Government - as men, as

citizens, as soldiers. Disaster and even defeat at times
are not certain indications of an evil cause. Disappour-
ment, and even temporary failure may subserve the
making us
valuable purpose, of ~~looking~~^{making us} away from an arm of flesh
to an arm Almighty. God is the God of battles and he often
leads us by a way we know not and he can save by many
or by few. If we are proud of spirit - vain, and foolish
he will rebuke us for our meiquy - and
when he has humbled us, he will come and save us.
Our duty is to inquire of him what he will have us to
do. There girding on our armor to stand in our lot and
remember that ^{the} lot is cast unto the cap and the whole dis-
posal thereof is of the Lord.. Whatever issues may then follow
the consciousness of duty well done, will cheer even aimed
defeat and up death.

And now guided by these principles of action we are
Warranted by the example given us in the Text to
"Be of Good Courage and pray the men for our people -
Courage is that quality of mind which enables men to en-
counter danger and difficulties, with firmness, or without
fear or depression of spirits. It is a constituent part of fortitude
but fortitude implies patience to bear continued suffering
(It is well said) (by Addison) "Courage that grows from Constitution
often forsakes a man when he has occasion for it; courage
which arises from a sense of duty acts in a uniform
manner". This is Good Courage. It strengthens for resistance
of measures, rash and ill advised as well as ² nerved the arm;
and clears the vision, in the hour of conflict. But when
all this is said and felt, that higher moral and holy

courage, which maintains confidence in God and is based on
that holy faith and love to Him which the true Xian exercises
as he looks to Christ, who is the Captain of our Salvation and
has conquered sin and death and hell, reposing the inter-
ests of his country as well as of his soul in his hands is
the great Sustaining power of the Xian patriot and Sol-
dier - our praying Generals, ^{and soldiers,} who know the worth of their
holy bravery know the worth and power of prayer to
and reliance upon Him who hears and answers prayer.
They play the men for the people - They act the part of men
noblemen, valiant men for the people - They indulge no
treacherous feeling - practice no disguise - use no double deal-
ing - but striving to know and do their duty, go onward
to the conflict, with minds set upon the right and hearts
set on God and things above. Noble men who dare to

do their duty, ~~too~~ and whatever the issue, can appeal to God, as to the rectitude of their motives and the strength of their actions. In our present national trials may God give us such men and spare us the infliction of wicked rulers, for when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice but when the wicked beareth rule the people mourn.

Application

The occasion of this discourse is impressive. Three months ago and the alarm was sounded throughout the land that the Capitol of this great nation was in danger, being threatened by an invading force, in open rebellion against the national government, of our Country. Men and means were called for. All over the northern section of our land the uprising of the people was as that of

one man - Every State prepared for action and a mighty army was soon in motion for the field of conflict - our good State, though small willingly bore her part - our own County and Town being strongly represented and we well remember the parting scenes of that to us eventful day We bade Adieu to our fellow citizens about to be fully equip for battle - our choicest Sons and brothers - many of them husbands and fathers, were on the march - At this Sanctuary they halloo to hear the parting word of counsel from their friend and to many of them their pastor, and to join in solemn prayer to God for preservation, health, usefulness and success, on the sad but imperative duty on which they had entered at the call of God and their Country. Then we distributed to them the Word of God, for their perusal and their guidance and consolation - Thus furnished and

accompanied by the benedictions of near hundred and friends
and fellow citizens

they manfully set out and held on their way to the post of
duty assigned them. Often have we communicated
with them and endeavoured at least in some degree
to minister to their comfort, during the period of their
camp life. We have heard from various sources
of their fidelity, their vigorous and skillful toil in the
arduous work of rearing entrenchments and guard-
ing the great road way to the national Capitol. By
day and by night, every man, willing and ready to
action's part. A few under other commanders went
forth, to other points of danger and of action and periled
their lives in the field of battle. They were of good courage
and never this day and Evening, ~~see~~ our eyes behold

~~most~~ of them, ~~near~~ all of them, having fulfilled their day and with credit returned to their homes and friends, unharmed. Of a few we may say God hath covered their head in the day of battle - while companions in arms have fallen by their side. Of all it may be said they have been strong to labor and have labored well and effectively. If it had not been their lot to be in the field battle, they have stood in their lot as God appointed it. If ever soldiers were the subjects of fervent prayer these men have been such. ^{In} every Sabbath and every weekly service they have been remembered and at our family altars not been forgotten.

And now Soldiers we welcome you home. We greet you
gratefully
with joyful hearts in view of your leaving so truly and so well played the men for the people. The people bless you.

Your families bless you. Your pastors bless you - This church
 blesses you - Your country will bless you - God, the Holy God
 will bless you.

And now I have one desire, large and unbounded
 on your behalf, it is that you may all remember your
 Preserver God. Give him the Glory due to his name. Praise
 him in his Holiness - Consecrate yourselves to God - Enlist
 under the Banner of the Cross of Christ. Be devoted to his
 cause and Kingdom. Put on the gospel armor, and fight
 the good fight of faith and when your last battle shall have
 been fought and your last victory won, as desire accomplish
 ed is sweet to the soul, your great Captain's voice shall proclaim
 your welcome to his Kingdom and your crown
 "Soldier of Christ well done"
 "I began thy new employ
 "Sing while Eternal ages run
 "Thy matter and his joy."