

“The Great Dragon”

The Present Truth – June 28, 1900

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Since the beginning of the war in South Africa, you have doubtless heard, and perhaps thought, a great deal, about soldiers and battles, defeats and victories, and many things connected with armies, comp, and war.

During the last few weeks especially, in celebration of the victories gained by the British troops, the streets have been lined with flags and banners. The union flag of Great Britain has been seen floating everywhere.

This, as you most likely know, is made by the union of the three national crosses of England, Scotland and Ireland, the cross of St. George of England, of St. Andrew of Scotland, and of St. Patrick of Ireland.

A red cross on a white ground is the emblem of St. George. You know the story of St. George and the dragon . . ., the fable of how St. George fought and conquered the great dragon that was a terror to the people, and delivered them from its destroying power.

Now I am going to tell you a story, not a fable, but a true story of a real dragon, and how he was conquered. This is of much more importance to you than the relief of Mafeking [capital city of the North West province of South Africa] or the fall of Pretoria, for the old Dragon is still going about seeking whom he may devour. But the One who has conquered him has told us just how we may escape from his power.

The Apostle John saw in a vision the history of this “great red Dragon,” and he was told by the Lord to write it out for us. So John wrote:—

“I beheld and there was war in heaven; Michael and His angels fought against the Dragon, and the Dragon fought and his angels.”

“Michael the Archangel,” “the chief Prince,” the Captain of the Lord’s host, is the Lord Jesus Christ. You know who it was that fought against Him in heaven: he who was once called “Lucifer, Son of the Morning,” but who is now, as John goes on to explain, “that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan.” You see that there were some in heaven who joined him in his war against Michael, for “the Dragon fought, and his angels.”

Then John tells the result of this war: “And the Dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.”

This was the beginning of the great war that has been going on ever since, the war between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong. For Jesus is “the Truth,” and Satan is the father of lies. God’s Word tells us that “he abode not in the truth, . . . for he is a liar, and the father of it.” So all truth, all that is right and true and good, comes from Jesus; while falsehood, error, wrong of any kind comes always from His enemy Satan.

Think of this, children, when you are tempted to stray ever so little from the strict truth, that in doing this you are joining the Dragon and his angels in their warfare against the Son of God, and I am sure you do not want to enlist in their army.

Perhaps you know the old Latin proverb which means, "Great is the truth, and it must prevail." The same thing is taught in Faber's lines,

"For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win."

So Michael did not fight with the Dragon to see who would get the victory, but to show to every one that he already had it. The victory was decided before the war began.

How different this from any of the wars of the nations of earth. In them any small chance may turn the tide of battle and bring victory to one side or other, as history has often proved. But in this great warfare the victory is always on the right side, the side of truth, because it is the side of Christ, who has, "all power in heaven and in earth." "The banner that has Christ on one side, always has Victory on the other."

So "the great Dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." The prophet Isaiah saw this long before John did, and he said: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! how art thou cut down to the ground." And Jesus said: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

But though defeated in this first great battle, the Dragon did not stop his war. He came into Eden, the garden of God, in the form of a beautiful fiery serpent (this was before the serpent was cursed and made to grovel in the dust, as it now does) and he deceived Eve so that she did not know it was the Dragon, the great enemy of Christ. So she was taken captive by him, and through conquering Adam and Eve he got power over the earth and began his work of destruction here.

Then Michael, who had conquered him in heaven, came down to earth to fight the great Dragon that was destroying His children. But because it was man whom the Dragon had overcome, it was man only that could break his power over the human family. So the Son of God came in the form of man and fought with the Dragon and conquered him, so that all might see that God had given to man the victory over him.

Michael dealt the Dragon a crushing blow, bruising his great head, but in doing this His own heel was bruised, and for ever He will bear the marks, the scars of the wounds that He received in this conflict.

"Crown Him the Lord of Love;
Behold His hands and side,
Those wounds yet visible show,
In beauty glorified."

Now the great Dragon knows that he has been conquered, and that his power over man has been taken away; but he still lifts his ugly head and roars in a way to make people think that he has all power. But Jesus says: "Behold I give unto you power over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

If we believe Him, and place ourselves on His side, He will clothe us in invincible armour, give us a sharp sword that cannot be broken, and Michael Himself and all His angels will fight for us. Then we can sing the grand old hymn of Martin Luther:—

"And were this world all devils o'er,
And watching to devour us,
We lay it not to heart so sore;
Not they can overpower us.
And let the prince of ill
Look grim as e'er he will,
He harms us not a whit:
For why? His doom is writ;
A word shall quickly slay him."

Another time we will talk more about the war that the Dragon is still carrying on in the earth, and the armour that God has provided for His soldiers.

"Conquering now, and still to conquer,
Rideth a King in His might,
Leading the host of all the faithful
Into the midst of the fight.
Not to the strong is the battle,
Not to the swift is the race,
But to the true and the faithful
Victory is promised through grace."