

FAIREST OF THE FAIR

REV. DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON AT THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

The Eloquent Pastor Discusses the Attributes of Christ—The Great, the Good, the Fair, the Sublime—A Characteristic Sermon—Praise From a Thousand Voices.

BROOKLYN, April 23.—Mrs. Prentiss' hymn, "More Love to Thee, O Christ," was never more effectively rendered than this morning by the thousands of voices in the Brooklyn Tabernacle, led on by organ and cornet, while by new vocabulary and fresh imagery Dr. Talmage presented the gospel. The subject of the sermon was "Fairest of the Fair," the text chosen being Solomon's Song v, 16, "He is altogether lovely."

The human race has during centuries been improving. For awhile it deflected and degenerated, and from all I can read for ages the whole tendency was toward barbarism, but under the ever widening and deepening influence of Christianity the tendency is now in the upward direction. The physical appearance of the human race is 75 per cent more attractive than in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From the pictures on canvas and the faces and forms in sculpture of those who were considered the grand looking men and the attractive women of 200 years ago I conclude the superiority of the men and women of our time. Such looking people of the past centuries as painting and sculpture have presented as fine specimens of beauty and dignity would be in our time considered deformity and repulsiveness complete. The fact that many men and women in antediluvian times were 8 and 10 feet high tended to make the human race obnoxious rather than winning. Such portable mountains of human flesh did not add to the charms of the world.

The Physical Christ.

But in no climate and in no age did there ever appear any one who in physical attractiveness could be compared to him whom my text celebrates thousands of years before he put his infantile foot on the hill back of Bethlehem. He was and is altogether lovely. The physical appearance of Christ is, for the most part, an artistic guess. Some writers declare him to have been a brunette or dark complexioned, and others a blond of light complexioned. St. John of Damascus, writing 1,100 years ago, and squinch nearer than ourselves to the tin of Christ, and hence with more likelihood of accurate tradition, represents him with beard black, and curly eyebrows joined together, and "yellow complexion, and long fingers like his mother's." An author, writing 1,500 years ago, represents Christ as a blond: "His hair the color of wine and golden at the ends, straight and without lustre." From the level of the ears, curling and glossy, and divided down the center after the fashion of the Nazarenes. His forehead is even and smooth, his face without blemish and enhanced by a tempered bloom, his countenance ingenious and kind. Nose and mouth are in no way faulty. His beard is full, of the same color as his hair and forked in form; his eyes blue and extremely brilliant.

My opinion is, it was a Jewish face. His mother was a Jewess, and there is no womanhood on earth more beautiful than Jewish womanhood. Alas that he lived so long before the daguerrean and photographic arts were born, or we might have known his exact features. I know that sculpture and painting were born long before Christ, and they might have transferred from olden times to our times the forehead, the nostril, the eye, the lips of our Lord.

Phidias, the sculptor, put down his chisel of enchantment 500 years before Christ came. Why did not some one take up that chisel and give us the side face or full face of our Lord? Polygnotus, the painter, put down his pencil 400 years before Christ. Why did not some one take it up and give us at least the eye of our Lord—the eye, that sovereign of the face? Dionysius, the literary artist who saw at Heliopolis, Egypt, the strange darkening of the heavens at the time of Christ's crucifixion near Jerusalem, and not knowing what it was, but describing it as a peculiar eclipse of the sun, and saying, "Either the Deity suffers or sympathizes with some sufferer," that Dionysius might have put his pen to the work and drawn the portrait of our Lord. But, no; the fine arts were busy perpetuating the form and appearance of the world's favorites only, and not the form and appearance of the peasant, among whom Christ appeared.

Portraits of Christ.

It was not until the fifteenth century, or until more than 1,400 years after Christ, that talented painters attempted by pencil to give us the idea of Christ's face. The pictures before that time were so offensive that the council at Constantinople forbade their exhibition. But Leonardo da Vinci, in the fifteenth century, presented Christ's face on two canvases, yet the one was a repulsive face and the other an effeminate face. Raphael's face of Christ is a weak face. Albert Durer's face of Christ was a savage face. Titian's face of Christ is an expressionless face. The mightiest artists, either with pencil or chisel, have made signal failure in attempting to give the forehead, the cheek, the eyes, the nostril, the mouth of our blessed Lord.

But about his face I can tell you something positive and beyond controversy. I am sure it was a soulful face. The face is only the curtain of the soul. It was impossible that a disposition like Christ's should not have demonstrated itself in his physiognomy. Kindness as an occasional impulse may give no illumination to the features, but kindness as the lifelong, dominant habit will produce attractiveness of countenance as certainly as the shining of the sun produces flowers. Children are afraid of a scowling or hard visaged man. They cry out if he proposes to take them

rather than a kiss. All mothers know how hard it is to get their children to go to a man or woman of forbidding appearance. But no sooner did Christ appear in the domestic group than there was an infantile excitement, and the youngsters began to struggle to get out of their mothers' arms. They could not hold the children back. "Stand back with those children!" scolded some of the disciples. Perhaps the little ones may have been playing in the dirt, and their faces may not have been clean, or they may not have been well clad, or the disciples may have thought Christ's religion was a religion chiefly for big folks. But Christ made the infantile excitement still livelier by his saying that he liked children better than grown people, declaring, "Except ye become as a little child ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Alas for those people who do not like children! They had better stay out of heaven, for the place is full of them. That, I think, is one reason why the vast majority of the human race die in infancy. Christ is so fond of children that he takes time to himself before the world has time to despoil and harden them, and so they are now at the windows of the palace and on the doorsteps and playing on the green. Sometimes Matthew or Mark or Luke tells a story of Christ, and only one tells it, but Matthew, Mark and Luke all join in that picture of Christ girdled by children, and I know by what occurred at that time that Christ had a face full of geniality.

Habits of Christ.

Not only was Christ altogether lovely in his countenance, but lovely in his habits. I know, without being told, that the Lord who made the rivers and lakes and oceans was cleanly in his appearance. He disliked the disease of leprosy not only because it was distressing, but because it was not clean, and his curative words were: "I will be thou clean." He declared himself in favor of thorough washing and opposed to superficial washing when he denounced the hypocrites for making clean only "the outside of the platter," and he applauds his disciples by saying, "Now are ye clean," and giving directions to those who fasted, among other things, he says, "Wash thy face," and to a blind man whom he was doctoring, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," and he himself actually washed the disciples' feet. I suppose not only to demonstrate his own humility, but probably their feet needed to be washed.

The fact is, the Lord was a great friend of water. I know that from the fact that most of the world is water. But when I find Christ in such constant commendation of water I know he was personally neat, although he mingled much among very rough populations and took such long journeys on dusty highways. He wore his hair long, according to the custom of his land and time, but neither trouble nor old age had thinned or injured his locks, which were never worn shaggy or unkempt. Yea, all his habits of personal appearance were lovely.

Sobriety was also an established habit of his life. In addition to the water, he drank the juice of the grape. When at a wedding party this beverage gave out, he made gallons on gallons of grape juice, but it was as unlike what the world makes in our time as health is different from disease and as calm pulses are different from the paroxysms of delirium tremens. There was no strychnine in that beverage or logwood or nux vomica. The tipplers and the sots who now quote the winemaking in Cana of Galilee as an excuse for the fiery and darning beverages of the nineteenth century forget that the wine at the New Testament wedding had two characteristics—the one that the Lord made it and the other that it was made out of water. Buy all you can of that kind and drink it at least three times a day and send a barrel of it round to my cellar.

You cannot make me believe that the blessed Christ who went up and down healing the sick would create for man that style of drink which is the cause of disease more than all other causes combined, or that he who calmed the maniacs into their right mind would create that style of drink which does more than anything else to fill insane asylums, or that he who was so helpful to the poor would make a style of drink that crowds the earth with pauperism, or that he who came to save the nations from sin would create a liquor that is the source of most of the crime that now stuffs the penitentiaries. A lovely sobriety was written all over his face, from the hair line of the forehead to the bottom of the bearded chin.

Christ the Physician.

Domesticity was also his habit. Though too poor to have a home of his own, he went out to spend the night at Bethany, two or three miles' walk from Jerusalem, and over a rough and hilly road that made it equal to six or seven ordinary miles, every morning and night going to and fro. I would rather walk from here to Central park, or walk from Edinburgh to Arthur's Seat, or in London clear around Hyde park, than to walk that road that Christ walked twice a day from Jerusalem to Bethany. But he liked the quietude of home life, and he was lovely in his domesticity.

How he enjoyed handing over the resurrected boy to his mother, and the resurrected girl to her father, and reconstructing homesteads which disease or death was breaking up! As the song "Home, Sweet Home" was written by a man who at that time had no home, so I think the homelessness of Christ added to his appreciation of domesticity.

Furthermore, he was lovely in his sympathies. Now, dropsy is a most distressful complaint. It inflames and swells and tortures any limb or physical organ it touches. As soon as a case of that kind is submitted to Christ he, without any use of diaphoretics, commands its cure. And what an eye doctor he was for opening the long closed gates of sight to the

was for cooling fevers without so much as a spoonful of febrifuge, and straightening crooked backs without any pang of surgery, and standing whole choirs of music along the silent galleries of a deaf ear, and giving healthful nervous system to cataleptics! Sympathy! He did not give them stoical advice or philosophize about the science of grief. He sat down and cried with them.

It is spoken of as the shortest verse in the Bible, but to me it is about the longest and grandest, "Jesus wept." Ah, many of us know the meaning of that! When we were in great trouble, some one came in with voluble consolation and quoted the Scripture in a sort of heartless way and did not help us at all. But after awhile some one else came in, and without saying a word sat down and burst into a flood of tears at the sight of our woe, and somehow it helped us right away. "Jesus wept." You see, it was a deeply attached household, that of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. The father and mother were dead, and the girls depended on their brother. Lazarus had said to them: "Now, Mary, now, Martha, stop your worrying. I will take care of you. I will be to you both father and mother. My arm is strong. Girls, you can depend on me!"

Comfort of Tears.

But now Lazarus was sick—yea, Lazarus was dead. All broken up, the sisters sit disconsolate, and there is a knock at the door. "Come in," says Martha. "Come in," says Mary. Christ entered, and he just broke down. It was too much for him. He had been so often and so kindly entertained in that home before sickness and death devastated it that he choked up and sobbed aloud, and the tears trickled down the sad face of the sympathetic Christ. "Jesus wept." Why do you not try that mode of helping? You say, "I am a man of few words," or "I am a woman of few words." Why, you dear soul, words are not necessary. Imitate your Lord and go to those afflicted homes and cry with them.

John Murphy! Well, you did not know him. Once, when I was in great bereavement, he came to my house. Kind ministers of the gospel had come and talked beautifully and prayed with us and did all they could to console. But John Murphy, one of the best friends I ever had, a big souled, glorious Irishman, came in and looked into my face, put out his broad, strong hand and said not a word, but sat down and cried with us. I am not enough of a philosopher to say how it was or why it was, but somehow from door to door and from floor to ceiling the room was filled with an all pervading comfort. "Jesus wept."

I think that is what makes Christ such a popular Christ. There are so many who want sympathy. Miss Fiske, the famous Nestorian missionary, was in the chapel one day talking to the heathen, and she was in very poor health and so weak she sat upon a mat while she talked and felt the need of something to lean against, when she felt a woman's form at her back and heard a woman's voice saying, "Lean on me." She leaned a little, but did not want to be too cumbersome, when the woman's voice said, "Lean hard; if you love me, lean hard."

And that makes Christ so lovely. He wants all the sick and troubled and weary to lean against him, and he says, "Lean hard; if you love me, lean hard." Aye, he is close by with his sympathetic help. Hedley Vicars, the famous soldier and Christian of the Crimean war, died because when he was wounded his regiment was too far off from the tent of supplies. He was not mortally wounded, and if the surgeons could only have got at the bandages and the medicines he would have recovered. So much of human sympathy and helpfulness comes too late. But Christ is always close by if we want him, and has all the medicines ready, and has eternal life for all who ask for it. Sympathy!

A Sublime Self Sacrifice.

Aye, he was lovely in his doctrines. Self sacrifice or the relief of the suffering of others by our own suffering. He was the only physician that ever proposed to cure his patients by taking their disorders. Self sacrifice! And what did he not give up for others? The best climate in the universe, the air of heaven, for the wintry weather of Palestine, a scepter of unlimited dominion for a prisoner's box in an earthly courtroom, a flashing tiara for a crown of stinging brambles, a palace for a cattle pen, a throne for a cross. Self sacrifice! What is more lovely? Mothers dying for their children down with scarlet fever, railroad engineers going down through the open drawbridge to save the train, firemen scorched to death trying to help some one down the ladder from the fourth story of the consuming house. All these put together only faint and insufficient similes by which to illustrate the grander, mightier, farther reaching self sacrifice of the "altogether lovely."

Do you wonder that the story of his self sacrifice has led hundreds of thousands to die for him? In one series of persecutions over 200,000 were put to death for Christ's sake. For him Blandina was tied to a post and wild beasts were let out upon her, and when life continued after the attack of tooth and paw she was put in a net, and that net containing her was thrown to a wild bull that tossed her with its horns till life was extinct. All for Christ! Huguenots dying for Christ! Albigenes dying for Christ! The Vaudois dying for Christ! Smithfield fires endured for Christ! The bones of martyrs, if distributed, would make a path of molding life all around the earth. The loveliness of the Saviour's sacrifice has inspired all the heroisms and all the martyrdoms of subsequent centuries. Christ has had more men and women die for him than all the other inhabitants of all the ages have had die for them.

Furthermore, he was lovely in his sermons. He knew when to begin, when to stop and just what to say. The sermons he ever preached, so

At Selma, Ala., a cyclone destroyed the bridge over the river, and three cars were on one ship where they were required, and I imagine to compress our sermons into smaller spaces.

And his sermons were so full of sentiment and practicality and beauty and illustration. The light of the candle, the crystal of the salt, the cluck of a hen for her chickens, the hypocrite's dolorous physiognomy, the moth in the clothes closet, the black wing of a raven, the snowbank of white lilies, our extreme bothration about the splinter of imperfection in some one else's character, the swine fed on the pearls, wolves dramatizing sheep, and the peroration made up of a cyclone in which you hear the crash of a tumbling house unwisely constructed. No technicalities, no splitting of hairs between north and north-west side, no dogmatics, but a great Christly throb of helpfulness. I do not wonder at the record which says, "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him." They had but one fault to find with his sermon. It was too short. God help all of us in Christian work to get down off our stilts and realize there is only one thing we have to do—there is the great wound of the world's sin and sorrow, and here is the great healing plaster of the gospel. What you and I want to do is to put the plaster on the wound. All sufficient is this gospel if it is only applied. A minister preaching to an audience of sailors concerning the ruin by sin and the rescue by the gospel accommodated himself to sailors' vernacular and said, "This plank bears." Many years after this preacher was called to see a dying sailor and asked him about his hope and got the suggestive reply, "This plank bears."

An Appeal For Love.

Yea, Christ was lovely in his chief life's work. There were a thousand things for him to do, but his great work was to get our shipwrecked world out of the breakers. That he came to do, and that he did, and he did it in three years. He took 30 years to prepare for that three years' activity. From 12 to 80 years of age we hear nothing about him. That intervening 18 years I think he was in India. But he came back to Palestine and crowded everything into three years—three winters, three springs, three summers, three autumns. Our life is short, but would God we might see how much we could do in three years. Concentration! Intensification! Three years of kind words! Three years of living for others! Three years of self sacrifice! Let us try it.

Aye, Christ was lovely in his demise. He had a right that last hour to deal in anathematization. Never had any one been so meanly treated. Cradle of straw among goats and camels—that was the world's reception of him! Rocky cliff, with hammers pounding spikes through tortured nerves—that was the world's farewell salutation! The slaughter of that scene sometimes hides the loveliness of the sufferer. Under the saturation of tears and blood we sometimes fail to see the sweetest face of earth and heaven. Altogether lovely! Can coldest criticism find an unkind word he ever spoke, or an unkind action that he ever performed, or an unkind thought that he ever harbored?

What a marvel it is that all the nations of earth do not rise up in raptures of affection for him! I must say it here and now. I lift my right hand in solemn attestation. I love him, and the grief of my life is that I do not love him more. Is it an impertinence for me to ask, Do you, my hearer—you, my reader, love him? Has he become a part of your nature? Have you committed your children on earth into his keeping, as your children in heaven are already in his bosom? Has he done enough to win your confidence? Can you trust him, living and dying and forever? Is your back or your face toward him? Would you like to have his hand to guide you, his might to protect you, his grace to comfort you, his sufferings to atone for you, his arms to welcome you, his love to encircle you, his heaven to crown you?

A Grand Thought.

Oh, that we might all have something of the great German reformer's love for this Christ which led him to say, "If any one knocks at the door of my breast and says, 'Who lives there?' my reply is, 'Jesus Christ lives here, not Martin Luther.'" Will it not be grand if, when we get through this short and rugged road of life, we can go right up into his presence and live with him world without end?

And if, entering the gate of that heavenly city, we should be so overwhelmed with our unworthiness on the one side, and the supernal splendor on the other side, we get a little bewildered and should for a few moments be lost on the streets of gold and among the burnished temples and the sapphire thrones, there would be plenty to show us the way and take us out of our joyful bewilderment, and perhaps the woman of Naim would say, "Come, let me take you to the Christ who raised my only boy to life." And Martha would say, "Come, let me take you to the Christ who raised my brother from the dead."

Did John get it? Well, rather cinnati Times-Star.

Childhood Sayings of an Emperor. The Empress Frederick has been a deliciously naughty child, the stories told of her juvenile life true. Everybody knows the "Night, Brown," story, but here are few others not quite so familiar: Walking one day in Windsor with her daily governess, the prince then 3 years old, showed a good deal rather naughty temper. "Look at the governess," "at that very nice girl over there. How good she is, quiet!" "I dare say she may be, but the little princess; but, I also see she has no daily governess." "Shall we meet every one we know in heaven?" she asked another time. "Yes, my dear," was the reply. "ly," thoughtfully remarked the "not Dr. A." Dr. A., it should be, was an extremely plain old man. The Prince of Wales was born, the news was conveyed to her smallness. "Are you not pleased with little brother?" it was asked some later. "Oh, no," was the reply, "would so much rather have had a pe-

Snobbish Loyalty. To those who regard loyalty and business as the same thing a great opportunity is offered by a West End. The circular of these astute trades states that: "To enable lovers of the beautiful nature to share the pleasure taken her majesty in floriculture a few reductions of a painting representing a group of pansies specially selected growing in the queen's gardens at Windsor have been made." The price is only 10s. 6d. For a reproduction of a painting of an ordinary group of pansies this might seem a large figure, but when the pansies are the queen's pansies who would give half a guinea for the pleasure of a reproduction of a painting of a cloud, a piece of orange peel, an end cigar. Once trod on by a princely heel, how beautiful they are! —Labouchere's Truth.

The Pyramid of Dashur. M. de Morgan, chief of the antiquities department, claims to have made the discovery of the long sought entrance to the mysterious brick pyramid of Dashur near Sakkarah. After numerous borings in the ground surrounding the pyramid, he found, 27 feet below the surface, a gallery 230 feet long, cut in the rock and inclining upward toward the pyramid. Fifteen chambers were found containing numerous tombs and sarcophagi of high functionaries, among them the sarcophagus of a queen, all of the twelfth dynasty, over 2,000 years before Christ. It is expected that further research will reveal the sarcophagus of King Usurtesen III.—London Times.

"Pillar of the Center of Population." The limestone monument bearing the title used as a headline is located in Decatur county, Ind. The center of the population in the United States, as located by the census of 1890, is in the above named county, 20 miles east of Columbus, one of the cities of Hoosierdom. This is the second time in the history of our country that the center of population has been indicated by marking it with a monument. The first was the spot located by the census of 1810. The "monument," which may still be seen, is simply a flat stone imbedded in the soil 40 miles northwest of Washington, bearing the above words, "Center of Population."—Louis Republic.