

THE WATERS OF MEROM.

SUBJECT OF SUNDAY'S SERMON BY REV. T. DE WITT TALMAGE.

He Tells of Cities That Were Taken by Joshua Under God's Guidance When the Children of Israel Entered the Holy Land.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 21.—Dr. Talmage preached the following sermon this morning in the Academy of Music in this city, and again in the evening at The Christian Herald service in New York. His text was Josh. xi, 5. "And when all these kings were met together they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel."

We are encamped to-night in Palestine by the waters of Merom. After a long march we have found our tents pitched, our fires kindled, and though far away from civilization a variety of food that would not compromise a first class American hotel, for the most of our caravan starts an hour and a half earlier in the morning. We detain only two mules, carrying so much of our baggage as we might accidentally need and a tent for the noonday luncheon. The mariners around this Lake Merom are so poisonous that at any other season of the year encampment here is perilous, but this winter night the air is tonic and healthful. In this neighborhood Joshua fought his last great battle. The nations had banded themselves together to crush this Joshua, but along the banks of these waters Joshua left their carcasses. Indeed it is time that we more minutely examine this Joshua of whom we have in these discourses caught only a momentary glimpse, although he crossed and recrossed Palestine, and next to Jesus is the most stirring and mighty character whose foot ever touched the Holy Land.

JOSHUA READY TO TAKE MEROM'S PLACE. Moses was dead. A beautiful tradition says the Lord kissed him, and in that act drew forth the soul of the dying lawgiver. He had been buried, only one person at the funeral, the same One who kissed him. But God never takes a man away from any place of usefulness, but he has some one ready. The Lord does not go looking around amid a great variety of candidates to find some one especially fitted for the vacant position. He makes a man for that place. Moses has passed off the stage, and Joshua, the hero, puts his foot on the platform of history so solidly that all the ages echo with the tread. He was a magnificent fighter, but he always fought on the right side, and he never fought with God told him to fight. He got his military equipment from God, who gave him the promise at the start, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." God fulfilled this promise, although Joshua's first battle was with the spring freshet, and the next with a stone wall, and the next leading on a regiment of whipped cowards, and the next battle against darkness, and then the sun and the moon into his battalion, and the last against the king of terrors, death—five great victories.

For the most part, when the general of an army starts out in a conflict he would like to have a small battle in order that he may get his courage up and rally his troops and get them drilled for greater conflicts; but this first undertaking of Joshua was greater than the leveling of Fort Pulaski, or the overthrowing of Gibraltar, or the overthrowing of the Bastille. It was the crossing of the Jordan at the time of the spring freshet. The snows of Mount Lebanon had just been melting, and they poured down into the valley, and the whole valley was a raging torrent. So the Canaanites stand on one bank, and they look across and see Joshua and the Israelites, and they laugh and say, "Aha! aha! they cannot disturb us in time—until the freshets fall; it is impossible for them to reach us." But after a while they look across the water and they see a movement in the army of Joshua. They say, "What's the matter now? Why, there must be a panic among these troops, and they are going to fly, or perhaps they are going to try to march across the river Jordan. Joshua is a lunatic." But Joshua, the chieftain, looks at his army and cries, "Forward, march!" and they start for the bank of the Jordan.

THE PARTING OF JORDAN. One mile ahead go two priests carrying a glittering box four feet long and two feet wide. It is the ark of the covenant. And they come down, and no sooner do they just touch the rim of the water with their feet than by an Almighty fiat Jordan parts. The army of Joshua marches right on without getting their feet wet over the bottom of the river, a path of chalk and broken shells and pebbles, until they get to the other bank. Then they lay hold of the oleanders and tamarisks and willows and pull themselves up a bank thirty or forty feet high, and, having gained the other bank, they clap their shields and their cymbals and sing the praises of the God of Joshua. But no sooner have they reached the bank than the waters rush down and roar, and with a terrific rush they break loose from their strange anchorage. Out yonder they have stopped, thirty miles of distance they halted. On this side the waters roll off toward the salt sea.

But as the land of the Lord God is taken away from the thus uplifted waters—waters perhaps uplifted half a mile—as the Almighty hand is taken away those waters rush down, and some of the unbelieving Israelites say, "Alas! alas, what a misfortune! Why could not those waters have staid parted? Because perhaps we may want to go back. O Lord, we are engaged in a risky business. Those Canaanites may eat us up. How if we want to go back? Would it not have been a more complete miracle if the Lord had parted the waters to let us come through and kept them parted to let us go back if we are defeated?" My friends, God makes no provision for a Christian's retreat. He clears the path all the way to Canaan. To go back is to die. The same gatekeepers that swing back the amethystine and crystalline gate of the Jordan to let Israel pass through now swing shut the amethystine and crystalline gate of the Jordan for the lost to stop.

But this is no place for the lost to stop. Joshua gives the command, "Forward, march!" In the distance there is a long grove of trees, and at the end of the grove is a city. It is a city of arbors, a city with walls seeming to reach to the heaven, to buttress the very sky. It is the great metropolis that commands the mountain pass. It is Jericho. The city was afterward captured by Pompey, and it was afterward captured by Herod the Great, and it was afterward captured by the Mohammedans; but this campaign the Lord plans. There shall be no swords, no shields, no battering ram. There shall be only one weapon of war, and that a ram's horn. The horn of the slain ram was sometimes taken, and holes were punctured in it, and then the musician could put the instrument to his lips, and he would run his fingers over this

rude musical instrument and make a great deal of sweet harmony for the people. That was the only kind of weapon. Seven priests were to take these rude rustic musical instruments, and they were to go around the city every day for six days—once a day for six days—and then on the seventh day they were to go around blowing these rude musical instruments seven times, and then at the close of the seventh blowing of the rams' horns on the seventh day the perforation of the whole seems to be a shout at which those great walls should tumble from crystone to base.

ROUND THE CITY'S WALLS.

The seven priests with the rude musical instruments pass all around the city walls on the first day, and a failure. Not so much as a piece of plaster broke loose from the wall; not so much as a loosened rock, not so much as a piece of mortar lost from its place. "There," says the unbelieving Israelites, "didn't I tell you so? Why, those musicians are fools. The idea of going around the city with these musical instruments, and expecting in that way to destroy it! Joshua has been spoiled; he thinks because he has overthrown and destroyed the spring freshet he can overthrow the stone wall. Why, it is not philosophic. Don't you see there is no relation between the blowing of these musical instruments and the knocking down of the wall? It isn't philosophy." And I suppose there were many wise men who stood with their brows knitted and with the forefinger of the right hand to the forefinger of the left hand arguing it all out and showing that it was not possible that such a cause could produce such an effect. And I suppose that night in the encampment there was plenty of philosophy and caricature, and if Joshua had been nominated for any high military position he would not have got many votes.

Joshua's stock was down. The second day the priests blowing the musical instruments go around the city, and a failure. Third day, and a failure; fourth day, and a failure; fifth day, and a failure; sixth day, and a failure. The seventh day comes, the climacteric day. Joshua is up early in the morning and examines the troops, walks all around about, looks at the city wall. The priests start to make the circuit of the city. They go all around once, all around twice, three times, four times, five times, six times, seven times, and a failure.

There is only one more thing to do, and that is to utter a great shout. I see the Israelitish army straightening themselves up, filling their lungs for a vociferation such as was never heard before and never heard after. Joshua feels that the hour has come, and he cries to his host, "Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city." All the people begin to cry, "Down, Jericho! Down, Jericho!" And the long line of solid masonry begins to quiver, and to move, and to rock. Stand from under! She falls! Crash! go the walls, the temples, the towers, the palaces, the air blackened with the dust! The huzzas of the victorious Israelites and the groan of the conquered Canaanites commingle, and Joshua standing there in the debris of the wall hears a voice saying, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life."

ONLY RAHAB'S HOUSE SPARED.

Only one house spared. Who lives there? Some great king? No. Some woman distinguished for great kindly deeds? No. She had been conspicuous for her crimes. It is the house of Rahab. Why was her house spared? Because she had been a great sinner? No, but because she repented, demonstrating to all theages that there is mercy for the chief of sinners. The red cord of divine injunction, reaching from her window to the ground, so that when the people saw that red cord they knew it was the divine indication they should not disturb the premises, making us think of the divine cord of a Saviour's deliverance, the red cord of a Saviour's kindness, the red cord of a Saviour's mercy, the red cord of our rescue. Mercy for the chief of sinners. Put your trust in that God, and no damage shall befall you. When our world shall be more terribly surrounded than was Jericho, even by the trumpets of the judgment day, and the hills and the mountains, the metal bones and ribs of nature shall break, they who have had Rahab's faith shall have Rahab's deliverance.

When, wrapt in fire, the realms of ether glow, And Heaven's last thunder shakes the earth below;

Thou, undismayed, shall o'er the ruins smile, And light thy torch at Nature's funeral pile.

But Joshua's troops may not halt here. The command is, "Forward, march!" There is the city of Ai; it must be taken. How shall it be taken? A scouting party comes back and says, "Joshua, we can do that without you; it is going to be a very easy job; you just stay here while we go and capture it." They march with a small regiment in front of the city. The men of Ai look at them and give one yell, and the Israelites run like reindeer. The northern troops at Bull Run did not make such rapid time as these Israelites with the Canaanites after them. They never cut such a sorry figure as when they were on the retreat. Anybody that goes out in the battles of God with only half a force, instead of your taking you, the men of Ai, the men of Ai will take you. Look at the church of God on the retreat. The Bornean cannibals ate up Munson, the missionary. "Fall back!" said a great many Christian people. "Fall back, O church of God! Borneo will never be taken. Don't you see the Bornean cannibals have eaten up Munson, the missionary?" Tyndal delivers his lecture at the University of Glasgow, and a great many good people say, "Fall back, O church of God! Don't you see that Christian philosophy is going to be overcome by worldly philosophy? Fall back!" Geology plunges its crowbar into the mountains, and there are a great many people who say, "Scientific investigation is going to overthrow the Mosaic account of the creation. Fall back!" Friends of the church have never had any right to fall back.

JOSHUA IS CHALLENGED.

Joshua falls on his face in chagrin. It is the only time you ever see the back of his head. He falls on his face and begins to whine, and he says, "Oh, Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? Would to God we had been content and dwelt on the other side of Jordan! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round and cut off our name from the earth." I am very glad Joshua said that. Before it seemed as if he were a supernatural being, and therefore could not be an example to us; but I find he is a man, he is only a man. Just as sometimes you find a man under severe opposition, or in a bad state of physical health, or worn out with overwork lying down and sighing about everything being defeated. I am encouraged when I hear this cry of Joshua as he lies in the dust.

God comes and rouses him. How does he rouse him? By complimentary apostrophe? No. He says, "Get thee up. Wherefore best thou upon thy face?" Joshua rises, and I warrant you with a

mortified look, but his old courage comes back. The fact was that was not his battle. If he had been in it he would have gone on to victory. He gathers his troops around him and says, "Now, let us go up and capture the city of Ai; let us go up right away."

They march on. He puts the majority of the troops behind a ledge of rocks in the night, and then he sends comparatively small regiments up in front of the city. The men of Ai come out with their spears, small regiments of Israelites in stratagem fall back and fall back, and when all the men of Ai have left the city and are in pursuit of these scattered, or seemingly scattered, regiments Joshua stands on a rock—I see his locks flying in the wind as he points his spear toward the doomed city, and that is the signal. The men rush out from behind the rocks and take the city, and it is put to the torch, and then these Israelites in the city march down, and the flying regiments of Israelites return, and between these two waves of Israelitish prowess the men of Ai are destroyed, and the Israelites gain the victory. And while I see the curling smoke of that destroyed city on the sky, and while I hear the huzzas of the Israelites, and the groan of the Canaanites, Joshua hears something louder than all that, ringing and echoing through his soul, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life."

ON TO THE CITY OF GIBEON.

But this is no place for the host of Joshua to stop. "Forward, march!" cries Joshua to the troops. There is the city of Gibeon. It has put itself under the protection of Joshua. They sent word, "There are five kings after us; they are going to destroy us; send troops quick; send us help right away." Joshua has three days' march more than double quick. On the morning of the third day he is before the enemy. There are two long lines of battle. The battle opens with great slaughter, but the Canaanites soon discover something. They say, "That is Joshua. That is the man who conquered the spring freshet and knocked down the stone wall and destroyed the city of Ai. There is no use fighting." And they sound a retreat, and as they begin to retreat Joshua and his host spring upon them like a panther, pursuing them over the rocks and over the Canaanites with sprained ankles and gashed foreheads retreat, the catapults of the sky pour a volley of hailstones into the valley, and all the artillery of the heavens with bullets of iron pound the Canaanites against the ledges of Beth-horon.

"Oh!" says Joshua, "this is surely a victory." "But do you not see the sun is going down?" Those Amorites are going to get away after me and I will come up some other time and bother you and perhaps destroy us." See, the sun is going down. Oh, for a longer day than has ever been seen in this climate! What is the matter with Joshua? Has he fallen in an apoplectic fit? No. He is in prayer. Look out when a good man makes the Lord his ally. Joshua raises his face, radiant with prayer, and looks at the descending sun over Gibeon. I do not know and do not care. I leave it to the Christian scientists and the infidel scientists to settle the question, while I tell you I have seen the same thing. "What?" say you, "not the sun standing still?" Yes. The same miracle is performed nowadays. The wicked do not live out half their day, and the sun sets at noon. But let a man start out in battle for God and truth and against sin, and the day of his usefulness is prolonged and prolonged and prolonged.

THEIR WORK REMAINED.

John Summerfield was a consumptive Methodist. He looked fearfully white, I am told, as he stood in old Sands Street church in Brooklyn preaching Christ, and when he stood on the anniversary platform in New York pleading for the Bible until unusual and unknown glories rolled forth from that book. When he was dying his pillow was brushed with the wings of the angel from the skies, the messenger that God sent down. Did John Summerfield's sun set? Did John Summerfield's day end? Oh, no. He lives on in his burning utterances in behalf of the Christian church. Robert McCheyne was a consumptive Presbyterian. It was said when he preached he coughed so it seemed as if he would never preach again. His name is fragrant in all Christendom, that name mightier today than was ever his living presence. He lived to preach the gospel in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Dundee, but he went away very early. He preached himself into the grave. Has Robert McCheyne's sun set? Is Robert McCheyne's day ended? Oh, no! His dying delirium was filled with prayer, and when he lifted his hand to pronounce the benediction upon his family, and the benediction upon his country, he seemed to say, "I cannot die now; I want to live on and on. I want to start an influence for the church that will never cease. I am only 30 years of age. Sun of my Christian ministry, stand still over Scotland!" And it stood still.

HOW A CHRISTIAN CAN DIE.

A long time ago there was a Christian woman very concerned, and she had a drunken husband, and so on came the trials of domestic trouble. She lost her children, and there came the night of bereavement. She was very ill, and there came the night of sickness. Her soul departed, and there came the night of death. But all these nights of trouble and darkness and sorrow and sickness were illumined by the grace of the Gospel, and people came many miles to see how cheerfully a Christian could die. The man that illumined that night of trouble was a reflection from the Sun of righteousness. In the last hour of that night—that night of darkness and sickness and misfortune, as she lifted her hand toward heaven, those who stood nearest her pillow could hear the whisper—for she wanted to live on in the generations that were to follow, consoled to God; she wanted to have an influence long after she had entered upon her eternal reward, and while her hand was lifted and her lips were moving, those who stood nearest her pillow could hear her say, "Thou moon, stand still in the valley of Aijalon."

But Joshua was not quite through.

There was time for five funerals before the sun of that prolonged day set. Who will preach their funeral sermon? Massillon preached the funeral sermon over Louis XVI. Who will preach the funeral sermon of those five dead kings—king of Jerusalem, king of Hebron, king of Jerusalem, king of Lachish, king of Egion? Let it be by Joshua. What is his text? What shall be the epitaph put on the door of the tomb? "There shall not any man be

able to stand before thee all the days of thy life."

But before you fasten up the door I want five more kings beheaded and thrust into King Alcohol, King Fraud, King Lust, King Superstition, King Infidelity. Let them be beheaded and hurled in. Then fasten up the door forever. What shall the inscription and what shall the epitaph be for all Christian philanthropists of all ages are going to come and look at it. What shall the inscription be? "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life."

TIME FOR JOSHUA TO GO HOME.

But it is time for Joshua to go home. He is 110 years old. Washington went down the Potomac, and at Mount Vernon closed his days. Wellington died peacefully at Aspley House. Now, where shall Joshua rest? Why, he is to have his greatest battle now. After a hundred and ten years he has to meet a king who has more subjects than all the present population of Israelites, his throne a pyramid of skulls, his parterre the grave yards and the cemeteries of the world, his chariot the world's horse—the King of Terrors. But if this is Joshua's greatest battle, it is going to be Joshua's greatest victory. He gathers his friends around him and gives his valedictory, and it is full of reminiscence. Young men tell what they are going to do; old men tell what they have done. And as you have heard a grandfather or great-grandfather, seated by the evening fire, tell of Monument or Yorktown, and then lift the crutch or staff as though it were a musket, to fight and show how the old battles were won, so Joshua gathers his friends around his dying couch, and he tells them the story of what he has been through, and as he lies there, his white locks snowing down on his wrinkled forehead, I wonder if God has kept his promise all the way through.

As he lies there he tells the story one, two or three times—you have heard old people tell a story two or three times over—and he answers, "I go the way of all the earth and not one word of the promise has failed, not one word thereof has failed; all has come to pass, not one word thereof has failed. And then he turns to his family as a dying parent will and says, "Choose now whom you will serve, the god of Baal, or the God of the Amorites. As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." A dying parent cannot be reckless or thoughtless in regard to his children. Consent to part with them forever at the door of the tomb we cannot. By the cradle in which their infancy was rocked, by the bosom on which they first lay, by the blood of the covenant, we will not part, we cannot part. Jehovah Jireh, we take thee at thy promise. "I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee."

Dead, the old chieftain must be laid out. Handle him very gently; that sacred body is over a hundred and ten years of age. Lay him out, stretch out those feet that walked dry shod the parted Jordan. Close those lips which helped hold the blast at which the walls of Jericho fell. Fold the arm that lifted the spear toward the doomed city of Ai. Fold it right over the heart that exulted when the five kings fell. But where shall we get the burnished granite for the headstone and the footstone? I bethink myself now. I imagine that for the head it shall be the sun that stood still upon Gibeon, and for the foot the moon that stood still in the valley of Aijalon.

The California Horse.

In reading the accounts of early days in California I am struck with the endurance of hardship, exposure and wounds by the natives and the adventures, the rancheros, horsemen, herdsmen the descendants of soldiers and the Indians, their insensibility to fatigue, and their agility and strength. This is ascribed to the climate, and while it is true of man is true of the native horse. His only rival in strength, endurance, speed and intelligence is the Arabian. It was long supposed that this was racial, and that but for the smallness of the size of the native horse crossing with it would improve the breed of the eastern and Kentucky racers. But there was reluctance to cross the finely proportioned eastern horse with his diminutive western brother. The importation and breeding of thoroughbreds on this coast has led to the discovery that the desirable qualities of the California horse were not racial but climatic. The eastern horse has been found to improve in size, compactness of muscle, in strength of limb, in wind, with a marked increase in power of endurance. The traveler here notices the fine horses and their excellent condition, and the power and endurance of those that have come of age. The records made on eastern race courses by horses from California breeding farms have already attracted attention. It is also remarked that the eastern horse is usually improved greatly by a sojourn of a season or two on this coast, and the plan of bringing eastern race horses here for the winter is already adopted.—Charles Dudley Warner in Harper's.

The Smallest Church.

There has recently been quite a discussion in the various religious papers concerning the location of the smallest church in the world. The French papers, aided by the valuable researches of Professor Lesqueriaux, have been getting the best of the argument until recently, when some one discovered a 20-year-old article by Moncreux D. Conway in Harper's Magazine, where that able writer gives a description of two miniature churches of religious worship. The first is at Bonchurch. Conway gives the following concerning it: "It cannot be 10 yards long, and is only 3 or 4 wide; it has seven pews and four galleries, and might hold twenty persons. There is still regular preaching here, the large part of the congregation being seated outside." Further on in the same article he says, in describing the village of St. Lawrence on the Isle of Wight: "The village is notable for its queer little church, the smallest in the world. It is 25 feet long and 11 feet wide, and about as high as a tall man. Its walls are Saxon, and very old."

The location of several other small and unique churches has been made public since this discussion began. Among others, the church in the stump of a gigantic redwood tree in some county in Oregon, and the famous "Bell chapel," of Moscow, where services are regularly held in a large bell, which has a piece out of the side, the opening being used as a door.—St. Louis Republic.

Very beautiful mosaic patterns are wrought in stained woods for the tops of occasional tables and for chess boards, in which extremely beautiful patterns are produced. Different strips of variously colored woods, when glued together side by side, are afterward cut according to the exigencies of various patterns for maretry inlays and borders for jewelry boxes, music boxes, writing cases, toilet cases, decorative panels, etc.—Decorator and Furnisher.

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