

A SERMON ON BABYLON.

DISCOURSE PREACHED SUNDAY, JAN. 25, BY DR. TALMAGE.

A Graphic Description of the Wonders of this Ancient Pagan City—Some Lessons that Should Be Heeded to Be Drawn from Its Fall.

BROOKLYN, Jan. 25.—Dr. Talmage preached the following sermon this morning in the Academy of Music in this city, and he repeated it to-night at The Christian Herald service in the New York Academy of Music. His text was Daniel v, 30: "In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain."

After the site of Babylon had been selected, two million of men were employed for the construction of the wall and principal works. The walls of the city were sixty miles in circumference. They were surrounded by a trench, out of which had been dug the material for the construction of the city. There were twenty-five gates of solid brass on each side of the square city. Between every two gates a great tower sprang up into the heavens. From each of the twenty-five gates on either side a street ran straight through to the gate on the other side, so that there were fifty streets, each fifteen miles long, which gave to the city an appearance of wonderful regularity.

The houses did not join each other on the ground, and between them were gardens and shrubbery. From housetop to housetop bridges swung, over which the inhabitants were accustomed to pass. A branch of the Euphrates was brought to the city, over which a bridge of marvelous structure was thrown, and under which a tunnel ran. To keep the river from overflowing the city in time of freshet, a great lake was arranged to catch the surplus, in which the water was kept as in a reservoir until times of drought, when it was sent streaming down over the thirsty land. A palace stood at each end of the Euphrates bridge: one palace a mile and three-quarters in compass, and the other palace seven and a half miles in circumference. The wife of Nebuchadnezzar, having been brought up among the mountains of Media, could not stand it in this flat country of Babylon, and so to please her Nebuchadnezzar had a mountain four hundred feet high built in the midst of the city.

This mountain was surrounded by terraces, for the support of which great arches were lifted. On the top of these arches flat stones were laid; then a layer of reeds and bitumen; then two rows of bricks, closely cemented; then thick sheets of lead, upon which the soil was placed. The earth here deposited was so deep that the largest trees had room to anchor their roots. All the glory of the flowery tropics was spread out at that tremendous height, until it must have seemed to one below as though the clouds were all in blossom, and the very sky leaned on the shoulder of the cedar. At the top an engine was constructed which drew the water from the Euphrates, far below, and made it spout up amid the garden of the skies. All this to please his wife! I think she must have been pleased.

THE TEMPLE OF BELUS. In the midst of this city stood also the temple of Belus. One of its towers was one-eighth of a mile high, and on the top of it an observatory, which gave the astronomers great advantage, as, being at so great a height, one could easily talk with the stars. This temple was full of cups and statues and censers, all of gold. One image weighed a thousand Babylonish talents, which would be equal to fifty-two million dollars. All this by day; but now night was about to come down on Babylon. The shadows of her two hundred and fifty towers began to lengthen. The Euphrates rolled on, touched by the fiery splendors of the setting sun, and gates of brass, burnished and glittering, opened and shut like doors of flame. The hanging gardens of Babylon, wet with the heavy dew, began to pour from starlit flowers and dripping leaves a fragrance for many miles around. The streets and squares were lighted for dance and frolic and promenade. The theatres and galleries of art invited the wealth and pomp and grandeur of the city to rare entertainments. Scenes of riot and wastal were mingled in every street; godless mirth, and outrageous excess, and splendid wickedness came to the king's palace to do their mightiest deeds of darkness.

A royal feast to-night at the king's palace. Rushing up to the gates are chariots, upholstered with precious cloths from Damascus and drawn by fire-eyed horses from Togamah, that rear and neigh in the grasp of the charioteers, while a thousand lords diamond, and women dressed in all the splendors of Syrian emerald, and the color blending of agate, and the chasteness of coral, and the somber glory of Tyrian purple, and the princely embroideries brought from afar by caravans across the desert, and by ships from Tarshish across the sea.

LET THE GUESTS COME IN. Open wide the gates and let the guests come in. The chamberlains and cup-bearers are all ready. Hark to the rustle of the robes, and to the carol of the music! See the blaze of the jewels! Lift the banners. Fill the cups. Clap the cymbals. Blow the trumpets. Let the night go by with song and dance and ovation; and let that Babylonian tongue be palsied that will not say, "Oh, King Belshazzar, live forever!"

All my friends, it was not any common banquet to which these great people came. All parts of the earth had sent their richest vintners to that table. Brackets and chandeliers flashed their light upon tanks of burnished gold. Vases, ripe and luscious, in baskets of silver, entwined with leaves, plucked from royal conservatories. Vases, inlaid with emerald and ridged with exquisite traceries, filled with nuts that were thrashed from forests of distant lands. Wine brought from the royal vats, foaming in the decanters and bubbling in the chalices. Tufts of cassia and frankincense wafting their sweetness from wall and table. Gorgeous banners unfolding in the breeze that came through the opened window, bewitched with the perfume of hanging gardens. Fountains rising up from inclosures of ivory in jets of crystal, to fall in clattering rain of diamonds and pearls. Statues of mighty men looking down from niches in the wall upon crowns and shields brought from subdued empires. Lanes of wonderful work, standing on pedestals of precious stones. Embroideries drooping about the windows and wrapping pillars of cedar, and drifting on floor inlaid with ivory and agate. Music, mingling the thrum of harps, and the clash of cymbals, and the blast of trumpets in one wave of transport that went rippling along the wall, and breathing among the garlands, and pouring down the corridors, and thrilling the souls of a thousand banquets.

The signal is given, and the lords and ladies, the mighty men and women of the land, come around the table. Pour out the wine. Let foam and bubble kiss the rim! Hoist every one his cup, and drink to the

sentiment, "Oh, King Belshazzar, live forever!" Bestirred headband and jeweled royal beauty gazed to the uplifted chalices, as again and again they were emptied. Away with care from the palace! Tear royal dignity to tatters! Pour out more wine! Give us more light, wilder music, sweeter perfume! Lord shouts to lord, captain orders to captain. Goblets clash, decanters rattle. There comes in the vile song, and the drunken hiccough, and the slaving lip, and the guffaw of idiotic laughter, bursting from the lips of princes, flushed, reeling, bloodshot, while mingling with it all I hear, "Huzza! huzza! for great Belshazzar!"

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL. What is that on the plastering of the wall? Is it a spirit? Is it a phantom? Is it God? Out of the black sleeve of the darkness a finger of fiery terror trembles through the air and comes to the wall, circling about as though it would write, and then, with sharp tip of flame, engraves on the plastering the name of the king. The music stops. The goblet falls from the nerveless grasp. There is a thrill. There is a start. There is a thousand-voiced shriek of horror. Let Daniel be brought in to read that writing. He comes in. He reads it, "Weighed in the balance and found wanting."

Meanwhile the Assyrians, who for two years had been laying siege to that city, took advantage of that confusion and came in. I hear the feet of the conquerors on the palace stairs. Masses rush in with a thousand gleaming knives. Death bursts upon the scene, and I shut the door of that banquet hall, for I do not want to look. There is nothing there but torn banners, and broken wreaths, and the stush of upset tankards, and the blood of murdered women, and the kicked and tumbled carcass of a dead king. For "in that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain."

READ IT AS IT IS. I go on to learn that when God writes anything on the wall, a man had better read it as it is. Daniel did not misinterpret or modify the handwriting on the wall. It is all foolishness to expect a minister of the Gospel to preach always things that the people like or the people choose. Young men, what shall I preach to you tonight? Shall I tell you of the dignity of human nature? Shall I tell you of the wonders that our race has accomplished? "Oh, no," you say, "tell me the message that came from God." I will. If there is any handwriting on the wall it is this lesson, "Accept of Christ and be saved!" I might talk of a great many other things, but that is the message, and so I declare it. Jesus never flattered those to whom he preached. He said to those who did wrong and who were offensive in his sight, "Ye generation of vipers! ye whited sepulchres! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Paul the apostle preached before a man who was not ready to hear him preach. What subject did he take? Did he say, "Oh! you are a good man, a very fine man, a very noble man?" No; he preached of righteousness to a man who was unrighteous; of temperance to a man who was the victim of bad appetites; of the judgment to come to a man who was unfit for it. So we must always declare the message that happens to come to us. Daniel must read it as it is. A minister preached before James I of England, who was James VI of Scotland. What subject did he take? The king was noted all over the world for being unsettled and wavering in his ideas. What did the minister preach about to this man who was James I of England and James VI of Scotland? He took for his text James i, 6: "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed."

Hugh Latimer offended the king by a sermon he preached, and the king said, "Hugh Latimer, come and apologize." "I will," said Hugh Latimer. So the day was appointed, and the king's chapel was full of lords and dukes, and the mighty men and women of the country, for Hugh Latimer was to apologize. He began his sermon by saying: "Hugh Latimer, be-think thee! Thou art in the presence of thine earthly king, who can destroy thy body. But be-think thee, Hugh Latimer, that thou art in the presence of the King of heaven and earth, who can destroy both body and soul in hell fire." Then he preached with appalling directness at the king's crimes.

THE BEGINNING AND THE END CONTRASTED. Another lesson that comes to us. There is a great difference between the opening of the banquet of sin and its close. Young men, if you had looked in upon the banquet in the first few hours, you would have wished you had been invited there, and could sit at the feast. "Oh! the grandeur of Belshazzar's feast, you would have said; but you look in at the close of the banquet and your blood curdles with horror. The King of Terrors has there a ghastlier banquet; human blood is the wine, and dying groans are the music. Sin has made itself a king in the earth. It has crowned itself. It has spread a banquet. It invites all the world to come to it. It has hung in its banquet hall the spoils of all kingdoms and the banners of all nations. It has gathered from all music. It has strewn, from its wealth, the tab and the floor with arches. And yet how often is that banquet broken up, and how horrible is its end! Ever and anon there is a handwriting on the wall. A king falls. A great culprit is arrested. The knees of wickedness knock together. God's judgment, like an armed host, breaks in upon the banquet; and that night is Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain."

Here is a young man who says: "I cannot see why they make such a fuss about the intoxicating cup. Why, it is exhilarating! It makes me feel well. I can talk better, think better, feel better. I cannot see why people have such a prejudice against it." A few years pass on, and he wakes up and finds himself in the clutches of an evil habit which he tries to break, but cannot; and he cries out, "Oh, Lord God, help me!" It seems as though God would not hear his prayer, and in an agony of body and soul he cries out, "It biteth like a serpent, and it stingeth like an adder." How bright it was at the start! How black it was at the last!

THE HORRORS OF A SINFUL LIFE. Here is a man who begins to read corrupt novels. "They are so charming," says he, "I will go out and see for myself whether all these things are so." He opens the gate of a sinful life. He goes in. A sinful spirit meets him with her wand. She waves her wand, and it is all enchantment. Why, it seems as if the angels of God had poured out phials of perfume in the atmosphere. As he walks on he finds the hills becoming more radiant with foliage and the ravines more resonant with the falling water. Oh! what a charming landscape he sees! But that sinful spirit with her wand meets him again; but now she reverses the wand, and all the enchantment is gone. The cup is full of poison. The fruit turns to ashes.

All the leaves of the bower are forked tongues of hissing serpents. The flowing fountains fall back in a dead pool, stenchful with corruption. The luring songs be-

come curses and screams of demoniac laughter. Lost spirits gather about him and feel for his heart, and beckon him on with "Hail, brother! Hail, blasted spirit, hail!" He tries to get out. He comes to the front door where he entered, and tries to push it back, but the door turns against him, and in the jar of that shutting door he hears these words, "This night is Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain." It ends dark as the night!

I learn further from this subject that Death sometimes breaks in upon a banquet. Why did he not go down to the prisons in Babylon? There were people there that would like to have died. I suppose there were men and women in torture in that city who would have welcomed Death. But he comes to the palace; and just at the time when the mirth is dashing to the tip-top pitch, death breaks in at the banquet. Why does he often seem the same thing illustrated. Here is a young man just come from college. He is kind. He is loving. He is enthusiastic. He is eloquent. By one spring he may bound to heights toward which many men have been struggling for years. A profession opens before him. He is established in the law. His friends cheer him. Eminent men encourage him.

After a while you may see him standing in the United States senate, or moving a popular assembly by his eloquence, as trees are moved in a whirlwind. Some night he retires early. A fever is on him. Delirium, like a reckless charioteer, seizes the reins of his intellect. Father and mother stand by and see the tides of his life going out to the great ocean. The banquet is coming to an end. The lights of thought and mirth and eloquence are being extinguished. The garlands are snatched from the brow. The vision is gone. Death at the banquet!

DEATH AT THE BANQUET. We saw the same thing on a larger scale illustrated at the last war in this country. Our whole nation had been sitting at a national banquet—north, south, east and west. What grain was there but we grew it on our hills. What invention was there but our rivers must turn the new wheel and rattle the strange shuttle. What warm furs but our traders must bring them from the Arctic. What fish but our nets must sweep them for the markets. What music but it must sing in our halls. What eloquence but it must speak in our senates. "Ho! to the national banquet, reaching from mountain to mountain, and from sea to sea! To prepare that banquet the shepherds and the aviaries of the country sent their best treasures. The orchards piled up on the table their sweetest fruits. The presses burst out with new wines. To sit at that table came the yeomanry of New Hampshire, and the lumberman of Maine, and the Carolinian from the rice fields, and the western emigrant from the plains of Oregon, and we were all brothers—brothers at a banquet. Suddenly the feast ended.

What meant those mounds thrown up at Chickamauga, Shiloh, Atlanta, Gettysburg, South Mountain? What meant those golden grain fields turned into a pasturing ground for cavalry horses? What meant the corn fields gullied with the wheels of the heavy supply train? Why those rivers of tears—those lakes of blood? God was angry! Just as we must come. A handwriting on the wall! The nation had been weighed and found wanting. Darkest! Darkest! Woe to the north! Woe to the south! Woe to the east! Woe to the west! Death at the banquet!

I have also to learn from the subject that the destruction of the vicious, and of those who despise God, will be very sudden. The wave of mirth had dashed to the highest point when that Assyrian army broke through. It was unexpected. Suddenly, almost always, comes the doom of those who despise God and defy the laws of men. How was it at the deluge? Do you suppose it came through a long northeast storm, so that people for days before were sure it was coming? No; I suppose the morning was bright, that calmness brooded on the waters; that beauty sat enthroned on the hills, when suddenly the heavens burst, and the mountains sank like anchors into the sea that dashed clear over the hills to the Himalayas.

OVERHELMED IN THE WATERS. The Red sea was divided. The Egyptians tried to cross it. There could be no danger. The Israelites had just gone through. Where they had gone, why not the Egyptians? Oh! it was such a beautiful winking place! A pavement of tinged shells and pearls, and on either side two great walls of water—solid. There can be no danger. Forward, great hosts of the Egyptians! Clap the cymbals, and blow the trumpets almost always, comes the doom of those who despise God and defy the laws of men. How was it at the deluge? Do you suppose it came through a long northeast storm, so that people for days before were sure it was coming? No; I suppose the morning was bright, that calmness brooded on the waters; that beauty sat enthroned on the hills, when suddenly the heavens burst, and the mountains sank like anchors into the sea that dashed clear over the hills to the Himalayas.

SHOES MADE OF PORPOISE HIDE. This is the season for wet feet—I mean men's feet. Women, as a rule, wear rubber overshoes, but few men will undergo the trouble in rubber or articles are sure to inflame. A shoemaker the other day put me up to a wrinkle that is worth trying. Every one knows about porpoise hide shoe strings, how durable they are, and all that. This same shoemaker showed me a pair of shoes made of the same material, and told me that they were virtually waterproof on account of the porpoise hide retaining so much oil. The shoes were fashionably cut and handsomely made. They do not feel well, but look neat, and once the feet are snugly incased in them, slush and snow are held at defiance. The cost is a little more than the ordinary calfskin, but they will outlast two pairs of the latter.—Philadelphia Times.

A Great Electric Railroad. M. Baross, the Hungarian minister of commerce, is not satisfied with the renown which the introduction of the zone tariff has gained for him, but is coming forward with another plan by which he proposes to give us the fastest trains in the world. This plan is for an electric railway, for passengers only, between Vienna and Buda-Pesth. The distance of 156 miles would be achieved in two hours and a half. One railway carriage would start every ten minutes between 6 in the morning and midnight. The only difficulty is the capital required for the execution of the project, which is less than 38,000,000 florins. The fare from Vienna to Pesth would be 10 florins.—Vienna Cor. London News.

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ought by something, thou knowest not what, and there he shadows floating in the room, and a handwriting on the wall, and you see, that your last hour is come, and there he is fainting at the heart, and a tremor in the limb, and a catching of the breath—then thy doom would be but an echo of the words of the text. "In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain."

THE GOSPEL INVITATION. Hear the invitation of the Gospel! There may be some one in this house to whom I shall never speak again, and therefore let it be in the words of the Gospel, and not in my own, with which I close: "Ho, every one that thirsteth! Come ye to the waters. And let him that hath no money come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh! that my Lord Jesus would now make himself so attractive to your souls that you cannot resist him; and that, if you have never prayed before, or have not prayed since those days when you knelt down at your mother's knee, then that to-night you might pray, saying:

Just as I am, without one plea, But that thy blood was shed for me, And that thou hast not come to this, O Lamb of God, I come!

But if you cannot think of so long a prayer as that, I will give you a shorter prayer that you can say, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Or, if you cannot think of so long a prayer as that, I will give you a still shorter one that you may utter, "Lord, save me, or I perish!" Or if that be too long a prayer, you need not utter one word. Just look and live!

How to Regard the Past.

In the "good old times" men lived under the horrid shadows of frightful superstitions. Now it is to modern science only that we owe our emancipation from the yoke of this awful tyranny. Scientific explorers have been over the earth and, finding to mouth of hell, that is gone. Science has explained earthquakes and volcanoes, and now devils fight no longer in the bowels of the earth. Aina and Vesuvius are no longer toothholes of the pit. Astronomy has shattered the follies of astrology, and people have found out that the stars are minding their own business instead of meddling with theirs, and comets, no longer moon swallowing monsters, are only very natural and well behaved shadows.

Since psychology is studied we know that witchcraft is folly, and insanity is only a disease to be treated and cured. This science, like a mother going up stairs as bed with her frightened boy, has been with her candle into all the old dark corners that used to make us creep and shiver with terror. Croakers always have had a special faculty for seeing "breakers ahead" and smooth water behind. But the sober facts of history justify the statement that never was the ship of human hope in stancher trim, and never was a fairer, broader sea ahead.

What then? Why, this: In spite of present ills and difficulties and corruptions and discouragements, learn to see things as they are. How many a cure has this servile, unreasoning worship of the past fastened upon us! As if an evil that has stood a thousand years was not as abominable as one sprung up today! We ought indeed in church, society and state to reverence the past as father of the present, but not so blindly as to keep errors and fallacious systems simply because our ancestors endured them.—Minot J. Savage in Arena.

Misleading Book Titles.

A paper has been read before the Library association on the misleading titles of modern books. The subject is one in which the book buying public is necessarily interested. There are many, even in these shrewd and careful times, who purchase volumes on the strength of advertisements, or after a casual glance at the names of a book and its author. The wisest mind waits to know something about the wares offered to it, but to many the mere title of a book is alluring, suggesting all sorts of possibilities which may or may not be fulfilled. Mankind does not learn by experience, either personally or by deputy.

With the old standing example before them of the ingenious countryman who bought Ruskin's work "On the Construction of Sheepfolds" under the impression that it was an agricultural treatise, men and women still rush upon their fate in the matter of book titles. And they are meanwhile fooled to the top of their bent. The title we have just quoted is, as every body knows, by no means Ruskin's only achievement in the direction of misleading—or at least mystifying—the public. "Sesame and Lilies," "The Crown of Wild Olive," "The Queen of the Air," "The Crown of Life," and others, in their time, have created quite as much confusion in the minds of the simple and confiding.

And, fortified by so illustrious an example, the book producers go on mystifying and misleading, outdoing each other in the perverted ingenuity of their inventions.—London Globe.

Shoes Made of Porpoise Hide.

This is the season for wet feet—I mean men's feet. Women, as a rule, wear rubber overshoes, but few men will undergo the trouble in rubber or articles are sure to inflame. A shoemaker the other day put me up to a wrinkle that is worth trying. Every one knows about porpoise hide shoe strings, how durable they are, and all that. This same shoemaker showed me a pair of shoes made of the same material, and told me that they were virtually waterproof on account of the porpoise hide retaining so much oil. The shoes were fashionably cut and handsomely made. They do not feel well, but look neat, and once the feet are snugly incased in them, slush and snow are held at defiance. The cost is a little more than the ordinary calfskin, but they will outlast two pairs of the latter.—Philadelphia Times.

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A TWICE TOLD TALE!

The wise man selecteth the "Burlington route" and therefore starteth aright.

He arrayeth himself in purple and fine linen, for lo, and behold, he is snugly ensconced in a "lower center" on the famous vestibule flyer, where smoke and dust are never known.

He provideth himself with a book from the generous library near at hand, adjusteth his traveling cap, and proceeded to pass a day of unalloyed pleasure and contentment.

And it came to pass, being hungry and athirst, he steppeth into the dining car, and by the beard of the prophet, 'twas a feast fit for the gods. Venison, Blue Points, Bergundy, frog legs, canvassbacks, Mum's extra dry, English plum pudding, fruits, nuts, leas, French coffee—verily, the wise man waxeth fat, and while he lighteth a cigar, he taketh time to declare that the meal was "out of sight."

It cometh to the wise man that the country through which he journeyed was one of wondrous beauty, inasmuch that it was with deep regret he noted the nightly shadows fall. However, tenfold joy returned as he beheld the brilliantly lighted car, and the merry company it contained.

The wise man retirith to rest. Deliciously unconcerned, he sleeps the sleep of the righteous and awakes much refreshed. His train is on time, his journey ended. He rejoiceth with exceeding great joy, as he holds a return ticket by the same route, the "Great Burlington."

The foolish man buyeth a ticket of a scapler. In the morning, behold, he saveth fifty cents; and lo, at nightfall he is out \$9.27. He starteth wroth.

With might and main he hurrieth to the depot, only to find his train four hours late. The peanut boy seizeth him up and selleth him a paper of an uncertain "ate."

As he journeyeth along, he formeth a new acquaintance, for whom he casheth a check.

Five minutes for refreshments. While he rusheth to the lunch counter some one stealth his grip sack. He changeth cars, lo these many times, and it striketh the foolish man that he "doesn't get through pretty fast," and he bemoaneth his ill luck.

He getteth a cinder in his eye, and verily he sweareth and cusseth full free. He exchangeeth three pieces of silver for a bunk in a sleeper, and awaketh just in time to catch an infernal nigger sneaking off with his boots; the Porter's excuse availeth nothing, and the foolish man straightway putteth his boots under his pillow, that no man may break in and steal.

His train runneth into a washout, a hackman taketh him in to the tune of six shillings, and the foolish man fifteth up his voice in great lamentation, for lo and behold, the tavern is away but half a block.

He reacheth home weary and heartsore; his trunk cometh next day minus the cover and one handle, he resolveth hereafter to travel only by the "Great Burlington."

MORAL: Travel by the Burlington Route

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