

THE LESSONS OF WINTER.

ALL SEASONS HAVE THEIR LESSONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN.

Beautiful Imagery of the Bible, Teaching Lessons from Nature—The Snows of Lebanon and Mount Hermon—The Dogs of St. Bernard.

New York, Feb. 8.—The remarkable movement, initiated by the Christian Herald in the Academy of Music in growing space, and negotiations are pending for additional accommodations on a gigantic scale. Dr. Talmage's sermons have set thousands of the people of New York to serious thinking on religious matters. At every service now men and women rise in all parts of the house to estimate their desire that the Christians present would pray for their conversion, and after the regular service, they speedily occupy the orchestra chairs while Dr. Talmage and the large corps of workers who are helping him listen to their difficulties and give them advice. Tearful eyes and convulsive sobs bear testimony to the earnestness of the seekers. The New York Herald estimates that during January alone over a thousand persons declared their resolve to live Christian lives. Dr. Talmage's sermon this evening, which he also preached in the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the morning, was from Job xxxviii. 22. "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?"

Grossly maligned is the season of winter. The spring and summer and autumn have had many admirers, but winter, hoary headed and white bearded winter, hath had more enemies than friends. Yet without winter the human race would be insane and effortless. You might speak of the winter as the mother of temperance. I take it as the father of a whole family of Christian mental and spiritual energies. The most people that I know are strong in proportion to the number of snow banks they had to climb over or push through in childhood, while their fathers drove the sled loaded with logs through the crunching drifts high as the fences.

At this season of the year, when we are so familiar with the snow, those frozen vapors, those falling blossoms of the sky, those white angels of the atmosphere, those poems of the storm, those Iliads and Odysseys of the wintry tempest, I turn over the leaves of my Bible and—though most of it was written in a clime where snow seldom or never fell—I find many of these beautiful congelations. Though the writers may seldom or never have felt the cold touch of the snowflake on their cheek, they had in sight two mountains, the tops of which were as—aggressive. Other kings sometimes take off their crowns, but Lebanon and Mount Hermon all the year round and through the ages never lift the coronets of crystal from their foreheads.

The first time we find a deep fall of snow in the Bible is where Samuel describes a fight between Beniah and a lion in a pit, and though the snow may have crimsoned under the wounds of both man and brute, the shaggy monster rolled over dead, and the giant was victor. But the snow is not fully recognized in the Bible until God interrogates Job, the scientist, concerning his wisdom, saying, "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?"

JOE, THE LEARNED SCIENTIST. I rather think that Job may have examined the snowflake with a microscope; for, although it is supposed that the microscope was invented long after Job's time, there had been wonders of glass long before the microscope and telescope of later day were thought of. So long ago as when the Coliseum was in its full splendor, Nero sat in the emperor's box of the Coliseum, and there, which held a hundred thousand people and looked at the combatants through a gem in his finger ring which brought everything close up to his eye.

Four hundred years before Christ, in the stores at Athens, were sold powerful glasses called "burning spheres," and Lazard, the explorer, found a magnifying glass amid the ruins of Nineveh and in the palace of Nimrod. Whether through magnifying instrument, or through the eyes, I cannot say, but I am sure that Job somehow went through the galleries of the snowflake and counted its pillars and found wonders, raptures, mysteries, theology, majesties, infinities walking up and down its corridors, as a result of the question which the Lord had asked him, "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?"

Oh, it is a wondrous meteor! Humboldt studied it in the Andes, twelve thousand feet above the level of the sea. De Saussure revealed among these meteors in the Alps, and Dr. Scoresby counted ninety-six varieties of snowflake amid the arctic. They are in shape of stars, in shape of coronets, in shape of cylinders, are globular, are hexagonal, are pyramidal, are castellated. After a fresh fall of snow, in one walk you crush under your feet Tullerites, Windsor castles, St. Pauls, St. Peters, St. Marks, cathedrals, Alhambra and Elyndham palaces innumerable. I know it depends much on our own condition what impression these flying meteors of the snow make.

I shall not forget two rough and unpretending wood cuts which I saw in my boyhood side by side: one a picture of a prosperous farmhouse, with all signs of comfort, and a lad warmly clothed looking out of the door upon the first flurry of snow, and his mind no doubt filled with the sound of jingling sleigh bells and the frolic with playfellows in the deep banks, and he, clapping his hands and shouting, "It snows! it snows!" The other sketch was of a boy, haggard and hollow eyed with hunger, looking from the broken door of a wretched home, and seeing in the falling flakes prophecy of more cold and less bread and greater privation, wringing his hands and with tears rolling down his wan cheeks, crying, "Oh, my God! it snows! it snows!" Out of the abundance that characterizes most of our homes may there go speedily relief to all whom this winter finds in want and exposure.

GOD IN THE SNOWFLAKE.

And now I propose, for your spiritual and everlasting profit, if you will accept my guidance, to take you through some of these wonders of crystallization. And notice first God in the littles. You may take alpenstock and cross the Mer de Glace, the sea of ice, and ascend Mont Blanc, which rises into the clouds like a pillar of the great white Throne; or with arctic explorer ascend the mountains around the north pole, and see glaciers a thousand feet high grinding against glaciers three thousand feet high. But I will take you on a less pretentious journey and show you God in the snowflakes. There is room enough between the pillars of the great Jehovah to stand. In that one frozen drop on the tip of your finger you may find the throne room of the Almighty. I take up the snow in my hand and see the courses of celestial dominion paving these crystal pavements.

The telescope is grand, but I must confess that I am quite as much interested in

the microscope. The one reveals the universe above us, the other just as great a universe beneath us. But the telescope overhelms me, while the microscope comforts me. What you want and I want is especially a God in littles. If we were seraphic or archangelic in our natures we would want to study God in the great; but such small, weak, short-lived beings as you and I are want to find God in the littles.

When I see the Maker of the universe giving himself to the architecture of a snowflake, and making its shafts, its domes, its curves, its irradiations so perfect I conclude he will look after our insignificant affairs. And if we are of more value than a sparrow, most certainly we are of more value than an inanimate snowflake. So the Bible would chiefly impress us with God in the littles. It does not say, "Consider the clouds," but it says, "Consider the lilies." It does not say, "Behold the tempests!" but "Behold the fowls!" and it applauds a cup of cold water and the widow's two mites, and says the hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear, therefore, that you are going to be lost in the crowd. Do not think that because you estimate yourself as only one snowflake among a three days' January snow storm that you will be forgotten. The birth and death of a drop of chilled vapor is as certainly regarded by the Lord as the creation and demolition of a planet. Nothing is big to God and nothing is small.

What makes the honey industries of South Carolina such a source of livelihood and wealth? It is because God teaches the ladybug to make an opening in the rind of the apricot for the bee, who cannot otherwise get at the juices of the fruit. So God sends the ladybug ahead to prepare the way for the honey bee. He teaches the ant to bite each grain of corn that she puts in the ground for winter food in order that it may not take root and so ruin the little granary. He teaches the raven in dry weather to throw pebbles into a hollow tree, that the water far down and out of reach may come up within the reach of the bird's beak. What a comfort that he is a God in littles! The emperor of all the Russias in olden time was looking at a map that spread before him his vast dominions, and he could not find Great Britain on the map, and he called in his secretary and said, "Where is Great Britain, that I hear so much about? It is under your thumb," said the secretary; and the emperor raised his hand from the map and saw the country he was looking for.

THE INFINITE REALM OF GOD.

And it is high time that we find this mighty realm of God close by and under our own little finger. To drop you out of his memory would be to resign his omnipotence. To refuse you his protection would be to abdicate his omnipotence. When you tell me that he is the God of Jupiter, and the God of Mercury, and the God of Saturn, you tell me something so vast that I cannot comprehend it. But if you tell me he is the God of the snowflake, you tell me something I can hold and measure and realize. Thus the smallest snowflake contains a jewel case of comfort. Here is an opal, an amethyst, a diamond. Here is one of the treasures of the snow. Take it for your present and everlasting comfort.

Behold, also, in the snow the treasure of accumulated power. During a snow storm let an apothecary, accustomed to weigh most delicate quantities, hold his weighing scales out of the window and let one fall on the surface of the scales, and it will not even make it tremble. When you want to express extreme triviality of weight you say, "Light as a feather," but a snowflake is much lighter. It is just twenty-four times lighter than water. And yet the accumulation of these flakes broke down, a few days ago, in sight of my house, six telegraph poles, made helpless police and fire departments, and halted rail trains with two hundred locomotives.

We have already learned so much of the power of electricity that we have become careful how we touch the electric wire, and in many a case a touch has been death. But a few days ago the snow put its hand on most of these wires, and tore them down as though they were cobwebs. The snow said: "You seem afraid of the thunderbolt; I will catch it and hurl it to the ground. I will connect the lightning rods of your cities with bubbles of fire, I will put out as easily as your ancestors snuffed out a tallow candle." The snow put its finger on the lip of our cities that were talking with each other and they went into silence, uttering not a word. The snow mightier than the lightning.

In March, 1858, the snow stopped America. It said to Brooklyn, "Stay home!" to New York, "Stay home!" to Philadelphia, "Stay home!" to Washington, "Stay home!" to Richmond, "Stay home!" It put into a white sepulcher most of this nation. Commerce, whose wheels never stopped before, stopped then. What was the matter? Power of accumulated snowflakes. On the top of the Apennines one flake falls, and others fall, and they pile up, and they make a mountain of flake on the top of a mountain of flake, until one day a gust of wind, or even the voice of a mountain, sets the frozen snow down into action, and by awful descent they sweep everything in their course—trees, rocks, villages—as when in 1827 the town of Briol, in Valais, was buried, and in 1634, in Switzerland, three hundred soldiers were entombed. These avalanches were made up of single snowflakes.

What tragedies of the snow have been witnessed by the monks of St. Bernard, who for ages have with the dogs been busy in extricating bewildered and overwhelmed travelers in Alpine storms, the dogs with blankets fastened to their backs and flasks of spirits fastened to their necks to resuscitate helpless travelers, one of these dogs decorated with a medal for having saved the lives of twenty-two persons, the brave beast himself slain of the snow on that day when accompanying a Piedmontese courier on the way to his anxious household down the mountain, the wife and children of the Piedmontese courier coming up the mountain in search of him, an avalanche covered all under pyramids higher than those under which the Egyptian monarchs sleep their sleep of the ages!

What an illustration of the tragedies of the snow is found in that scene between Glencoe and Glencairn one February in Scotland, where Ronald Cameron comes forth to bring to his father's house his cousin Flora MacDonald for the celebration of a birthday, and the calm day turns into a hurricane of white fury that leaves Ronald and Flora as dead, to be resuscitated by the shepherd! What an exciting struggle had Bayard Taylor among the wintry Apennines!

RUSSIAN SNOWS AVENGED JOSEPHINE. In the winter of 1812, by a similar force, the destiny of Europe was decided. The French army marched up toward Moscow five hundred thousand men. What can resist them? Not bayonets, but the dumb elements overwhelm that host. Napoleon retreats from Moscow with about two hundred thousand men, a mighty nucleus for another campaign after he gets back to Paris. The morning of Oct. 19, when they start for home, is bright and beautiful. The air is tonic, and although this Russian

campaign has been a failure Napoleon will try again in some other direction with his host of brave surviving Frenchmen.

But a cloud comes from the sky and the snow falls, and one of the soldiers feels on his cheek a snowflake, and then there is a multiplication of these wintry messages, and soon the plumes of the officers are decked with another style of plume, and then all the skies let loose upon the warriors a hurricane of snow, and the march becomes difficult, and the horses find it hard to pull the supply train, and the men begin to fall under the fatigue, and many not able to take another step lie down in the drifts unable to rise, and the cavalry horses stumble and fall, and one thousand of the army fall, and ten thousand perish, and twenty thousand go down, and fifty thousand, and a hundred thousand, and a hundred and twenty thousand and a hundred and thirty-two thousand die, and the victor of Jena and bridge of Lodi and Eylau and Austerlitz, where three great armies, commanded by three emperors, crowded to rise, and the snow surrenders to the snowflakes.

Historians do not seem to recognize that the tide in that man's life turned from Dec. 16, 1800, when he banished by hideous divorce his wife Josephine from the palace, and so challenged the Almighty, and the Lord charged upon him from the fortresses of the sky with ammunition of crystal. Snowed under! Billions, trillions, quadrillions, quintillions of flakes did the work. And what a suggestion of accountability and rebuke to all of us who get discouraged because we cannot do much, and therefore do nothing!

DO YOUR SHARE FOR GOD.

"Oh," says some one, "I would like to stop the forces of sin and crime that are marching for the conquests of the nations, but I am nobody; I have neither wealth nor eloquence nor social power. What can I do?" My brother, how much do you weigh? As much as a snowflake? "Oh, yes." Then do your share. It is an aggregation of small influences that will yet put this lost world back into the bosom of a pardoning God. Alas that there are so many men and women who will not use the one talent because they have not ten, and will not give a penny because they cannot give a dollar, and will not speak as well as they can because they are not eloquent, and will not be a snowflake because they cannot be an avalanche! In earthly was the general get about all the credit, but in the soul or home or heaven all the private soldiers will get crowns of victory unending.

When we reach heaven—by the grace of God may we all arrive there—I do not think we will be able to begin the new song right away because of the surprise we shall feel at the comparative rewards given. As we are being conducted along the street to our celestial residence we will begin to ask where live some of those who were mighty on earth. We will ask, "Is so-and-so here?" And the answer will be: "Yes, I think he is in the city, but we don't hear much of him; he was good and he got in, but he took most of his pay in earthly applause; he had enough grace to get through the gate, but just where he lives I know not. He squeezed through somehow, although I think the gates took the skirts of his garments. I think he lives in one of those back streets in one of the plainer residences."

Then we shall see a palace, the doorsteps of gold, and the windows of agate, and the tower like the sun for brilliance, and chariots before the door, and people who look like princes and princesses going up and down the steps, and we shall say, "What one of the hierarchs lives here?" That must be the residence of a Paul or a Milton, or some one whose name resounds through all the planet from which we have just ascended. "No, no," says our celestial dragoman; "that is the residence of a soul whom I never heard of in the dead."

"When she gave a charity her left hand knew not what her right hand did. She was mighty in secret prayer, and no one but God and her own soul knew it. She had more trouble than anybody in all the land where she lived, and without complaining she bore it, and though her talents were never great, what she had was all consecrated to God and helping others, and the Lord is making up for her earthly privation by giving her a heavenly crown, and the king of this country had that place built especially for her. The walls began to go up when her troubles and privations and consecrations began on earth, and it so happened—that a heavenly coincidence—that the last stroke of the trowel of amethyst on those walls was given the hour she entered heaven."

"You know nothing of her. On earth her name was only once in the newspapers, but that among the columns of the dead, but she is mighty up here. There she comes now out of her palace grounds in her chariot behind those two white horses for a ride on the banks of the river that flows from under the throne of God. Let me see. Did you not have in your world below an old classic which says something about 'these are they who come out of great tribulation, and they shall reign for ever and ever?'"

PEARLS ON THE FOREHEADS OF THE RIGHTeous.

As we pass up the street I find a good many on foot, and I say to the dragoman, "Who are these?" And when their name is announced I recognize that some of them were on earth great poets, and great orators, and great merchants, and great warriors, and when I express my surprise about their going afoot the dragoman says, "In this country people are rewarded not according to the number of their earthly talents, but according to the use they made of what they had." And then I thought to myself: "Why, that theory would make a snowflake that falls cheerfully and in the right place, and does all the work assigned it, as honorable as a whole Mont Blanc of snowflakes."

"Yes, yes," says the celestial dragoman, "many of these pearls that you find on the foreheads of the righteous, and many of the gems in the jewel case of prince and princess are only the petrified snowflakes of earthly tempest, for God does not forget the promise made in regard to them, 'They shall be mine, said the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels.'" Accumulated power! All the prayers and charities and kindnesses and talents of all the good concentrated and compacted will be the world's evangelization. This thought of the aggregation of the many enters into that one mighty is another treasure of the snow.

Another treasure of the snow is the suggestion of the usefulness of sorrow. Absence of snow last winter made all nations sick. That snowless winter has not yet ended its disasters. Within a few weeks it put tens of thousands into the grave, and left others in homes and hospitals generally to go down. Called by a trivial name, the Russian "grip," it was an international plague. Plenty of snow means public health. There is no medicine that so soon cures the world's malarias as these white pellets that the clouds administer—pellets small enough to be homeopathic, but in such large doses as to be allopathic, and melting soon enough to be hydropathic.

Like a sponge, every flake absorbs unhealthy gases. The tables of mortality in New York and Brooklyn immediately lessened when the snows of last December began to fall. The snow is one of the grandest and best of the world's doctors.

THE BLESSINGS OF WINTER.

Yes, it is necessary for the land's productivity. Great snows in winter are generally followed by great harvests next summer. Scientific analysis has shown that snow contains a larger percentage of ammonia than the rain, and hence its greater power of enrichment. And besides that, it is a white blanket to keep the earth warm. An examination of snow in Siberia showed that it was a hundred degrees warmer under the snow than above the snow. Alpine plants perished in the mild winter of England for lack of enough snow to keep them warm. Snow strikes back the rich gases which otherwise would escape in the air and be lost. Thank God for the snows, and may those of February be as plentiful as those of December and January have been, high and deep and wide and enriching; then the harvests next July will embroider with gold this entire American continent. But who with any anatomical faculty can notice that out of such chill as the snow comes the wheat, without realizing that chilling sorrows produce harvests of grace!

The strongest Christians without any exception are those who were by bereavements or sickness or poverty or persecution, or all of them together, snowed under, and again and again snowed under. These snow storms of trouble! They kill the malarial of the soul. They drive us out of worldly dependence to God. Call the roll of all the eminently pious of all the ages and you will find them the sons and daughters of sorrow. The Maronites say that one characteristic of the cedar tree is that when the air is full of snow and it begins to descend the tree lifts its branches in a wail to receive the snow and bend up under it, and it is by much observation that the grandest cedar of Christian character lift higher their branches toward God when the snows of trouble are coming.

Lord Nelson's coffin was made out of the masts of the ship L'Orient in which he had fought so bravely, and your throne in heaven, O suffering child of God, will be built out of conquered earthly disasters. What gave John Bunyan such a wondrous dream of the celestial city? The Bedford penitentiary. What gave Richard Baxter such power to tell of the "Saints' Everlasting Rest," and to give his immortal "Call to the Unconverted?" Physical disease which racked every nerve of his body. What made George Whitefield so mighty in saving souls, bringing ten thousand to God when others brought a hundred? Persecution that caricatured and assailed him all up and down England, and dead vermin thrashed him when he was preaching. What mellowed and glorified Wilberforce's Christian character? A financial misfortune that led him to write, "I know not why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be as happy without a fortune as with one." What gave John Milton such keen spiritual eyesight that he could see the battle of the angels? Extinguishment of physical eyesight. What is the highest observatory for studying the stars of hope and faith and spiritual promise? The believer's sick bed. What proclaims the richest and most golden harvest that wave on all the hills of heavenly rapture? The snows, the deep snows, the awful snows of earthly calamity. And that comforting thought is one of the treasures of the snow.

THE IMAGE OF PURITY.

Another treasure of the snow is the suggestion that this mantle covering the earth is like the soul after it is forgiven. "Wash me," said the Psalmist, "and shall be clean from all unrighteousness." My dear friend Gasherie De Witt went over to Geneva, Switzerland, for the recovery of his health, but the Lord had something better for him than earthly recovery. Little did I think when I bade him good-by one lovely afternoon on the other side of the sea to return to America, that we would not meet again till we meet in heaven. As he lay one Sabbath morning on his dying pillow in Switzerland, the window open, he was looking out upon Monte Blanc. The snow was clear. That great mountain stood in its robe of snow, glittering in the morning light, and my friend said to his wife: "Jennie, do you know what that snow on Mont Blanc makes me think of? It makes me think that the righteousness of Christ and the pardon of God cover all the sins and imperfections of my life, as that snow covers up that mountain, for the promise is that though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Was not that glorious!

I do not care who you are, or where you are, you need as much as I do that cleansing which made Gasherie De Witt good while he lived and glorious when he died. Do not take it as the tenet of an obsolete theology that our nature is corrupt. We must be changed. We must be made over again. The ancients thought that snow water had especial power to wash out deep stains. All other water might fall, but melted snow would make them clean. Well, Job had great admiration for snow, but he declares in substance that if he should wash his soul in melted snow he would still be covered with mud like a man down in a ditch (Job ix. 30). "If I wash myself in snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch and mine own clothes shall abhor me." We must be washed in the fountain of God's mercy before we can be whiter than snow. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Oh, for the cleansing power!

If there be in all this audience one man or woman whose thoughts have always been right, and whose actions are always right, let such a one rise, or if already standing, lift the right hand. Not one! All we, like sheep, have gone astray. Unclean! unclean! And yet we may be made whiter than snow—whiter than that which, on a cold winter's morning, after a night of storm, clothes the tree from bottom of trunk to top of highest branch; whiter than that which this hour makes the Adirondacks, and the Sierra Nevada and Mount Washington heights of pomp and splendor fit to enthrone an archangel.

In the time of Graham, the essayist, in one mountain district of Scotland, a decrease of ten shepherds perished every winter in the snow drifts, and so he proposed that at the distance of every mile a pole fifteen feet high and with two cross pieces be erected, showing the points of the compass, and a bell hung at the top, so that every breeze would ring it, and so the lost one on the mountains would hear the sound and take the direction given by this pole with the cross pieces and get safely home. Whether that proposed plan was adopted or not I do not know, but I declare to all you who are in the heavy and blinding drifts of sin and sorrow that there is a cross near by that can direct you to home and peace and God; and hear you not the ringing of the gospel bell hanging to that cross, saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it!"

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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 proceedeth 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, canibacks, Mum's extra dry, English plum pudding, fruits, nuts, ices, 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 occurth to the wise man that the country through which he journeyeth 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. Verily, it afforded a view of Elysium.

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 scalper. 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 seltheth him a paper of an uncertain date.

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

Five minutes for refreshments. While he russeth to the lunch counter some one stealeth 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 becometh his ill luck.

He getteth a cinder in his eye, and verily he sweareth and cusseth full free. He exchangeth 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 straightaway 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 lifteth up his voice in great lamentation, for lo and behold, the tavern is away but half a block.

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

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