THE EASTER SERMON.

"SURELY THE BITTERNESS OF DEATH IS PAST," CRIED AGAG.

Dr. Talmage Says the Only Objection to This Text Is That a Bad Man Uttered It—Nevertheless It Carries a Useful Lesson.

BROOKLYN, April 17.—Being Easter morning, the Brooklyn Tabernacle congregation had been invited to bring flowers the night before, and a bank of them was on the front of the pulpit and wreaths of them over the pulpit. The word "Resurrection" was spelled out in letters of white lilies. Especial music was added to the great congregational singing. Text, I Samuel xv, 32, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

So cried Agag, and the only objection I have to this text is that a bad man uttered it. Nevertheless it is true, and in a higher and better sense than that in which it was originally uttered. Years ago a legend something like this was told me: In a hut lived a very poor woman by the name of Misery. In front of her door was a pear tree, which was her only resource for a living. Christ, the Lord, in poor garb was walking through the earth and no one would entertain him. In vain he knocked at the door of palaces and of humble dwellings. Cold and hungry and insufficiently clad, as he was, none received him. But coming one day to the hut of this woman, whose name was Misery, she received him, and offered him a few crusts and asked him to warm himself at the handful of coals, and she sat up all night that the wayfarer might have a pillow to rest on.

In the morning this divine being asked her as he departed what she would have him do in the way of reward, and told her that he owned the universe and would give her what she asked. All she asked was that her pear tree might be protected, and that the boys who stole her fruit, once climbing the tree, might not be able to get down without her consent. So it was granted, and all who climbed the tree were compelled to stay there. After awhile Death came along and told the poor woman she must go with him. But she did not want to go, for, however poor one's lot is, no one wants to go with Death. Then she said to Death, "I will go with you if you will first climb up into my pear tree and bring me down a few pears before I start." This he consented to do, but having climbed into the tree he could not again come down.

Then the troubles of the world began, for Death did not come. The physicians had no patients, the undertakers no business, lawyers no wills to make, the people who waited for inheritances could not get them, the old men staid in all the professions and occupations so that there was no room for the young who were coming on, and the earth got overcrowded, and from all the earth the cry went up: "Oh, for Death! Where is Death?" Then the people came to the poor woman and begged her to let Death descend from the tree. In sympathy for the world, she consented to let Death come down on one condition, and that was that he should never molest or take her away, and on that condition Death was allowed to come down, and he kept his word and never removed her, and for that reason we always have Misery with us.

THE RESURRECTION.

In that allegory some one has set forth the truth that I mean to present on this Easter morning, which celebrates the resurrection of Christ and our coming resurrection—that one of the grandest and mightiest mercies of the earth is our divine permission to quit it. Sixty-four persons every minute step off this planet. Thirty million people every year board this planet. As a steamer must unload before it takes another cargo, and as the passengers of a rail train must leave it in order to have another company of passengers enter it, so with this world.

What would happen to an ocean steamer if a man, taking a stateroom, should stay in it forever? What would happen to a rail train if one who purchases a ticket should always occupy the seat assigned him? And what would happen to this world if all who came into it never departed from it? The grave is as much a benediction as the cradle. What sunk that ship in the Black sea a few days ago? Too many passengers. What was the matter with that steamer on the Thames which, a few years ago, went down with 600 lives? Too many passengers. Now this world is only a ship, which was launched some six thousand years ago. It is sailing at the rate of many thousand miles an hour. It is freighted with mountains and cities, and has in its staterooms and steerage about sixteen hundred million passengers. So many are coming aboard, it is necessary that a good many disembark.

Suppose that all the people that have lived since the days of Adam and Eve were still alive. What a cluttered up place this world would be—no elbow room—no place to walk—no privacy—nothing to eat or wear, or if anything were left the human race would, like a shipwrecked crew, have to be put on small rations, each of us having perhaps only a biscuit a day. And what chance would there be for the rising generations? The men and women who started when the world started would keep the modern people back and down, saying: "We are six thousand years old. Bow down. History is nothing, for we are older than history." What a mercy for the human race was death! Within a few years you can get from this world all there is in it.

After you have had fifty or sixty or seventy springtimes, you have seen enough blossoms. After fifty or sixty or seventy autumns you have seen enough of gorgeous foliage. After fifty or sixty or seventy winters, you have seen enough snowstorms and felt enough chills and wrapped yourself in enough blankets. In the ordinary length of human life you have carried enough burdens, and shed enough tears, and suffered enough injustices, and felt enough pangs, and been clouded by enough doubts, and surrounded by enough mysteries. We talk about the shortness of life, but if we exercised good sense we would realize that life is quite long enough.

If we are the children of God we are at a banquet, and this world is only the first course of the food, and we ought to be glad that there are other and better and richer courses of food to be handed on. We are here in one room of our Father's house, but there are rooms up stairs. They are better pictured, better upholstered, better furnished. Why do we want to stay in the anteroom forever, when there are palatial apartments waiting for our occupancy? What a mercy that there is a limitation to earthly environments!

PHYSICAL FRAILTIES.

Death also makes room for improved physical machinery. Our bodies have wondrous powers, but they are very limited. There are beasts that can outrun us, outlift us, outcarry us. The birds have both the earth and air for travel, yet we must stick to the one. In this world, which the human race takes for its own, there are creatures of God that can far surpass us in some things. Death removes this slower and less adroit machinery and makes room for something better. These eyes that can see half a mile will be removed for those that can see from world to world. These ears, which can hear a sound a few feet off, will be removed for ears that can hear from zone to zone. These feet will be removed for powers of locomotion swifter than the reindeer's hoof or eagle's plume or lightning's flash.

Then we have only five senses, and to these we are shut up. Why only five senses? Why not fifty; why not one hundred; why not a thousand? We can have, and we will have them, but not until this present physical machinery is put out of the way. Do not think that this body is the best that God can do for us. God did not half try when he contrived your bodily mechanism. Mind you, I believe with all anatomists and with all physiologists and with all scientists and with the psalmist that "we are fearfully and wonderfully made." But I believe and I know that God can and will get us better physical equipment.

Is it possible for man to make improvement in almost anything and God not be able to make improvements in man's physical machinery? Shall canal boat give way to limited express train? Shall slow letter give place to telegraphy, that places San Francisco and New York within a minute of communication? Shall the telephone take the sound of a voice sixty miles and instantly bring back another voice, and God, who made the man who does these things, not be able to improve the man himself with infinite velocities and infinite multiplication? Beneficent Death comes in and makes the necessary removal to make way for these supernatural improvements. So also our slow process of getting information must have a substitute.

Through prolonged study we learned the alphabet, and then we learned to spell, and then we learned to read. Then the book is put before us and the eye travels from word to word and from page to page, and we take whole days to read the book, and if from that book of four or five hundred pages we have gained one or two profitable ideas we feel we have done well. There must be some swifter way and more satisfactory way of taking in God's universe of thoughts and facts and emotions and information. But this cannot be done with your brain in its present state. Many a brain gives way under the present facility. This whitish mass in the upper cavity of the skull and at the extremity of the nervous system—this center of perception and sensation cannot endure more than it now endures.

But God can make a better brain, and he sends Death to remove this inferior brain that he may put in a superior brain. "Well," you say, "does not that destroy the idea of a resurrection of the present body?" Oh, no. It will be the old factory with new machinery—new driving wheel, new bands, new levers and new power. Don't you see? So I suppose the dullest human brain after the resurrectionary process will have more knowledge, more acuteness, more brilliancy, more breadth of swing than any Sir William Hamilton or Herschel or Isaac Newton or Faraday or Agassiz ever had in the mortal state or all their intellectual powers combined. You see God has only just begun to build you. The palace of your nature has only the foundation laid and part of the lower story, and only part of one window, but the great architect has made his draft of what you will be when the Alhambra is completed.

John was right when he said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Blessed be death! for it removes all the hindrances. And who has not all his life run against hindrances? We cannot go far up or far down. If we go far up we get dizzy, and if we go far down we get suffocated. If men would go high up they ascend the Matterhorn or Mont Blanc or Himalaya, but what disasters have been reported as they came tumbling down. Or if they went down too far, hark to the explosion of the firedamps, and see the disfigured bodies of the poor miners at the bottom of the coal shaft.

AN END OF EARTHLY VICISSITUDES.

Then there are the climatological hindrances. We run against unpropitious weather of all sorts. Winter blizzard and summer scorch, and each season seems to hatch a brood of its own disorders. The summer spreads its wings and hatches out fevers and sunstrokes, and spring and autumn spread their wings and hatch out malarias, and winter spreads its wings and hatches out pneumonias and Russian grippes, and the climate of this world is a hindrance which every man and woman and child has felt. Death is to the good transference to superior weather—weather never fickle, and never too cold, and never too hot, and never too light, and never too dark. Have you any doubt that God can make better weather than is characteristic of this planet? Blessed is death! for it prepares the way for change of zones, yea, it clears the path to a semiomnipresence.

How often we want to be in different places at the same time! How perplexed we get being compelled to choose between invitations, between weddings, between friendly groups, between three or four places we would like to be in the same morning or the same noon or the same evening. While death may not open opportunity to be in many places at the same time, so easy and so quick and so instantaneous will be the transference that it will amount to about the same thing. Quicker than I can speak this sentence you will be among your glorious kindred, among the martyrs, among the apostles, in the gate, on the battlements, at the temple, and now from world to world as soon as a robin hops from one tree branch to another tree branch. Distance no hindrance. Immensity easily compassed. Semiomnipresence!

"But," says some one, "I cannot see how God is going to reconstruct my body in the resurrection." Oh, that will be very easy as compared with what he has already done with your body four or six or ten times. All scientists tell us that the human body changes entirely once in seven years, so that if you are twenty-eight years of age you have now your fourth body. If you are forty-two years of age you have had six bodies. If you are seventy years of age you have had ten bodies. Do you not, my unbelieving friend, think if God could build for you four or five or ten bodies he could really build for you one more to be called the resurrection body. Aye! to make that resurrection body will not require half as much ingenuity and power as those other bodies you have had. Is it not easier for a sculptor to make a statue out of silent clay than it would be to make a statue out of some material that is alive and moving, and running hither and thither?

Will it not be easier for God to make the resurrection body out of the silent dust of the crumbled body than it was to make your body over five or six or eight times while it was in motion, walking, climbing, falling or rising? God has already on your four or five bodies bestowed ten times more omnipotence than he will put upon the resurrection body. Yea, we have the foundation for the resurrection body in us now. Surgeons and physiologists say there are parts of the human body the uses of which they cannot understand. They are searching what these parts were made, for but have not found out. I can tell them. They are the preliminaries of the resurrection body. God does not make anything for nothing. The uses of those now surplus parts of the body will be demonstrated when the glorified form is constructed.

DEATH CLEARS THE WAY.

Now, if Death clears the way for all this, why paint him as a hobgoblin? Why call him the king of terrors? Why think of him as a great spook? Why sketch him with skeleton and arrows, and standing on a bank of dark waters? Why have children so frightened at his name that they dare not go to bed alone, and old men have their teeth chatter lest some shortness of breath hand them over to the monster? All the ages have been busy in maligning Death, hurling repulsive metaphors at Death, slandering Death. Oh, for the sweet breath of Easter to come down on the earth. Right after the vernal equinox, and when the flowers are beginning to bloom, well may all nations with song and congratulation and garlands celebrate the resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection when the time is gone by, and the trumpets pour through the flying clouds the harmonies that shall wake the dead.

By the empty niche of Joseph's mausoleum, by the rocks that parted to let the Lord come through, let our ideas of changing worlds be forever revolutionized. If what I have been saying is true, how differently we ought to think of our friends departed. The body they have put off is only as, when entering a hall lighted and resounding with musical bands, you leave your hat and cloak in the cloakroom. What would a banqueter do if he had to carry those encumbrances of apparel with him into the brilliant reception? What would your departed do with their bodies if they had to be encumbered with them in the king's drawing room? Gone into the light! Gone into the music! Gone into the festivity! Gone among kings and queens and conquerors! Gone to meet Elijah and hear him tell of the chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire and the sensation of mounting the sapphire steeps! Gone to meet with Moses and hear him describe the pile of black basalt that shook when the law was given! Gone to meet Paul and hear him tell how Felix trembled, and how the ship went to pieces in the breakers, and how thick was the darkness in the Mamertine dungeon! Gone to meet John Knox and John Wesley and Hannah More and Frances Havergal. Gone to meet the kindred who preceded them!

Why I should not wonder if they had a larger family group there than they ever had here. Oh, how many of them have got together again! Your father and mother went years apart, but they have got together, and their children that went years ago got together again. Gone where they have more room! Gone where they have more jubilant society! Gone where they have mightier capacity to love you than when they were here! Gone out of hindrances into unbounded liberty! Gone out of January into June! Gone where they talk about you as we always talk about absent friends and say: "I wonder when they will come up here to join us. Hark! the outside door of heaven swings open. Hark! there are feet on the golden stairs. Perhaps they are coming!"

COMFORT FROM THE JOHNSTOWN FLOOD.

I was told at Johnstown after the flood that many people who had been for months and years bereft for the first time got comfort when the awful flood came to think that their departed ones were not present to see the catastrophe. As the people were floating down on the housetops they said, "Oh, how glad I am that father and mother are not here," or "How glad I am that the children are not alive to see this horror!" And ought not we who are down here amid the upturnings of this life be glad that none of the troubles which submerge us can ever affright our friends ascended?

Before this I warrant our departed ones have been introduced to all the celebrities of heaven. Some one has said to them: "Let me introduce you to Joshua, the man who by prayer stopped two worlds for several hours. Let me make you acquainted with this group of three heroes—John Huss, Philip Melancthon and Martin Luther. Aha! here is Fenelon! Here is Archbishop Leighton! Here are Latimer and Ridley! Here is Matthew Simpson! Here is poet's row—James Montgomery and Anna Barbauld and Horatius Bonar and Phœbe Palmer and Lowell Mason."

Were your departed ones fond of music? What oratorios led on by Handel and Hayden. Were they fond of pictures? What Raphaels pointing out skies with all colors wrought into chariot wheels, wings of seraphim and coronations. Were they fond of poetry? What eternal rhythms led on by John Milton. Shall we pity our glorified kindred? No, they had better pity us. We, the shipwrecked and on a raft in the hurricane, looking up at them sailing on over calm seas, under skies that never frowned with tempests, we hoppled with chains; they lifted by wings. "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

Further, if what I have been saying is true, we should trust the Lord and be thrilled with the fact that our own day of escape cometh. If our lives were going to end when our heart ceased to pulsate and our lungs to breathe, I would want to take ten million years of life here for the first installment. But, my Christian friends, we cannot afford always to stay down in the cellar of our Father's house. We cannot always be postponing the best things. We cannot always be tuning our violins for the celestial orchestra. We must get our wings out. We must mount. We cannot afford always to stand out here in the vestibule of the house of many mansions, while the windows are illuminated with the levee angelic, and we can hear the laughter of those forever free, and the ground quakes with the bounding feet of those who have entered upon eternal play. Ushers of heaven! Open the gates! Swing them clear back on their pearly hinges! Let the celestial music rain on us its cadences. Let the hanging gardens of the king breathe on us their aromatics. Let our redeemed ones just look out and give us one glance of their glorified faces. Yes, there they are now! I see them. But I cannot stand the vision. Close the gate, or our eyes will be quenched with the overpowering brightness. Hold back the song or our ears will never again care for earthly anthem. Withdraw the perfume or we shall swoon in the fragrance that human nostril was never made to breathe.

THE TOMB OF TOMBS.

All these thoughts are suggested as we stand this Easter morn amid the broken rocks of the Saviour's tomb. Indeed, I know that tomb has not been rebuilt, for I stood in December of 1889 amid the ruins of that, the most famous sepulcher of all time. There are thousands of tombs in our Greenwood and Laurel Hill and Mount Auburn with more polished stone and more elaborate masonry and more foliage surroundings, but as I went down the steps of the supposed tomb of Christ on my return from Mount Calvary, I said to myself: "This is the tomb of all tombs. Around this stand more stupendous incidents than around any grave of all the world since death entered it."

I could not breathe easily for overmastering emotion as I walked down the four crumbling steps till we came abreast of the niche in which I think Christ was buried. I measured the sepulcher and found it fourteen and a half feet long, eight feet high, nine feet wide. It is a family tomb and seems to have been built to hold five bodies. But I rejoice to say that the tomb was empty, and the door of the rock was gone, and the sunlight streamed in. The day that Christ rose and came forth the sepulcher was demolished forever, and no trowel of earthly masonry can ever rebuild it.

And the rupture of those rocks, and the snap of that governmental seal, and the crash of those walls of limestone, and the step of the lacerated but triumphant foot of the risen Jesus we today celebrate with acclaim of worshiping thousands, while with all the nations of Christendom, and all the shining hosts of heaven we chant, "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."

Oh, weep no more your comforts slain,
The Lord is risen, he lives again.

"And now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect in every good word and work." Hallelujah! Amen!

Two Female Doctors in New York.

Mulberry street is not exactly a picturesque locality. One would scarcely select its squalor as the birthplace of romance or the inspiration of poetry. Yet one of its tall, forbidding old tenements has been selected by mysterious destiny as the environment of as fair an idyl as ever the days of romance knew of knightly searcher for the Grail or penitent pilgrim to the Holy Land. There is nothing to distinguish this house from its less honored comrades, so far as externals are concerned. The entrance is as mean and uninviting, the halls as dark and dirty, narrowing to apparent solidity in the dusky extremities.

The little suite of apartments contain three rooms—a parlor with windows opening to the light, a kitchen facing the air shaft, where, when your eyes get accustomed to the darkness, you can in the very middle of the day distinuish a nail in the wall, and an inner room where there is no light at all. If you open the dirty doors you will see scenes of squalor, wretchedness, misery and most appalling dirt.

Right in the midst of all these is a door precisely like all the others, save that it is freshly painted and clean, opening into one of the little parlors where bright rugs and soft carpets cover the floor; the daylight streams in gayly through the polished window panes over exquisite pictures—reproductions of rare old masters hang against neatly papered walls. In one corner is a cabinet crowded with beautiful china. Everywhere an air of most cultured refinement pervades the room. Out of this room, which is parlor and office and bedroom, opens the little dining room, with its dainty table service, and then the kitchen, with all its convenient appurtenances.

And here two young college women, physicians, have founded their little home, and hope to establish a practice among the poor people of the neighborhood.

Their remuneration? Whatever the people can pay, from one dollar a visit down. Their purpose? Simply to put into actual practice a little bit of the doctrine that was delivered on the Mount nearly 2,000 years ago.

Their names? Ah! that is their secret.—New York Sun.

Women and Their Pennies.

"The women seem to have their purses full of pennies," remarked a car conductor a little grimly as one of his passengers, a woman, of course, was counting out fifteen of them into his waiting hand. "I don't get many from men, but the women load me up with them."

"And you don't like it?" questioned the woman who had just seriously contributed to his present load.

"Well, you see, ma'am, it's very tiresome to count them over. It shouldn't make much difference, but it does when a man is in a hurry at the end of his trip. And it is easy to drop one or two, and then we have to make them up. We like nickels better."

Then the second woman of the trio whose fare had produced the pennies spoke up:

"But we have the pennies, and car fare is one of our ways to get rid of them. Men buy papers and cigars, you know, to use up loose change. We don't."

The conductor smiled, and so did several in the car. A big man opposite joined in. "Excuse me, madam," he said, addressing the last speaker, "but if you'll save your pennies for your marketman you'll be doing him a favor, and you'll likely have nickels for your car fare. I'm a butcher, and I know how glad we are to get pennies."

The woman thanked him and said civilly that she should remember, and the "penny" question was dropped.

There is a hint in this to other women. Use your pennies for your grocer and butcher and baker, who will welcome them, and ease the car conductor's lot with nickels.—Her Point of View in New York Times.

A Lesson for a Careless Woman.

The pious Philip Neri was once visited by a lady who accused herself of slander. He bade her go to the market, buy a chicken just killed and still covered with feathers, and walk a certain distance, plucking the bird as she went. The woman did as she was directed and returned, anxious to know the meaning of the injunction. "Retrace your steps," said Philip, "and gather up, one by one, all the feathers you have scattered."

"I cast the feathers carelessly away," said the woman, "and the wind carried them in all directions." "Well, my child," replied Philip, "so it is with slanders. Like the feathers which the wind has scattered, they have been wafted in many directions. Call them back now, if you can."—San Francisco Argonaut.

A Big Pension.

One of the largest pensions ever granted to a private soldier of the war of the rebellion was recently awarded to Charles Glengold, of the town of Wawarsing, Ulster county, N. Y. He is and has been for some time a lunatic. He and his father were in the same company, and during a battle the father was shot down. This so affected the son as to cause mental disorder. He has been granted back pay to the amount of $10,770.40 and a pension of seventy-two dollars per month.—Philadelphia Ledger.

Whippoorwill Superstition.

There is a superstition in Iowa, Illinois and Missouri, which says that the person who hears the whippoorwill's call in daytime will die before the end of the year.—American Notes and Queries.