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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

ELOQUENT DISCOURSE ON THE MISSION OF THE FROST.

A Sermon Appropriate to the Cold Weather.—The Frost as a Painter, a Jeweler and an Evangelist.—The Lesson and the Illustration.

The Divine Breath.

Before the usual throngs that for nearly 25 years have gathered in the first, second, and third Brooklyn Tabernacles successively, Dr. Talmage Sunday forenoon preached this gospel sermon, after commenting upon an appropriate Scripture lesson and giving out the most inspiring hymns. The subject was "The Mission of the Frost." Text—Job xxxvii, 10. "By the breath of God frost is given."

Nothing is more embarrassing to an organist or pianist than to put his finger on a key of the instrument and have it make no response. Though all the other keys are in full play, that one silence destroys the music. So in the great cathedral of nature, if one part fails to praise the Lord the harmony is halted and lost. While fire and hail, snow and vapor, respond to the touch of inspiration, if the frost made no utterance the orchestral rendering would be hopelessly damaged and the harmony forever incomplete. I am more glad than I can tell that the white key of frost sounds forth as mightily as any of the keys, and when David touches it in the Psalms, it sounds forth the words, "Hecattereth the hear frost like ashes," and when Job touches it in my text it resounds with the words, "By the breath of God frost is given."

As no one seems disposed to discuss the mission of frost, depending on divine help I undertake it. This is the first Sabbath of winter. The leaves are down. The warmth has gone out of the air. The birds have made their winged march southward. The landscape has been scorched by the autumnal equinox. The huskers have riddled the cornshocks. The night sky has shown the usual meteoric restlessness of November. Three seasons of the year are past, and the fourth and last has entered. Another element now comes in to bless and adorn and instruct the world. It is the frost. The palaces of this king are far up in the arctic. Their walls are glittering with congelation. Windsor castles and Tuilleries and winter palaces and Kenilworths and Alhambras of ice, temples with pendant chandeliers of ice, thrones of iceberg on which eternal silence reigns, theaters on whose stage eternal cold dramatizes eternal winter, pillars of ice, arches of ice, crowns of ice, chariots of ice, palaces of ice, mountains of ice, dominions of ice—eternal frigidity! From those hard, white, burnished portals King Frost descends and waves his silvery scepter over our temperate zone. You will soon hear his heel on the skating pond. You already feel his breath in the night wind. By most considered an enemy coming here to benumb and hinder and slay, I shall show you that the frost is a friend, with benediction divinely pronounced, and charged and surcharged with letters potent, beneficent, and tremendous. The Bible seven times alludes to the frost, and we must not ignore it. "By the breath of God frost is given."

First I think of frost as a painter. He begins his work on the leaves and continues it on the window panes. With palette covered with all manner of colors in his left hand and pencil of crystal in his right hand, he sits down before the humblest bush in the latter part of September and begins the sketching of the leaves. Now he puts upon the foliage a faint color, and then a touch of brown, and then a hue of orange, and last a flame of fire. The beech and ash and oak are turned first into sunrises and then into sunsets of vividness and splendor. All the leaves are penciled one by one, but sometimes a whole forest in the course of a few days shows great velocity of work.

Tired of working on the leaves, the frost will soon turn to the window panes. You will soon waken on a cold morning and find that the windows of your home have during the night been adorned with curves, with coronets, with exquisite, with pomp, with almost supernatural spectacle. Then you will appreciate what my text says as it declares, "By the breath of God frost is given." You will see on the window pane, traced there by the frost, whole gardens of beauty—ferns, orchids, daffodils, heliotropes, china asters, fountains, statues, fountains on the chase, roobucks plunging into the stream, battle scenes with dying and dead, catafalques of kings, triumphal processions—and as the morning sun breaks through you will see cities of fire, and bombardment with bursting shell, and illuminations as for some great victory, coronations, and angels on the wing.

Standing here between the closed doors of the pictured woods and the opening doors of the transfigured window glass, I want to cure my folk and your folk of longing for glorious things in the distance, while we neglect appreciation of glorious things close by. "Oh, if I could only go and see the factories of lace at Brussels!" says some one. Why, within twenty feet of where you awaken some December morning you will see rich lace interwoven for your window panes by divine fingers. "Oh, if I could see the factories of silk at Lyons!" says some one. Why, without leaving your own house on Christmas morning you may see where the Lord has spun silken threads about your windows this way and that—embroideries such as no one but God can work.

Alas, for this glorification of the distant and this belittling of the close by! This crossing of oceans and paying a high admission in expenses to look at that which is not half as well done as something we can see by crossing our own rooms, and free of charge. This

praising of Raphaels, hundreds of years gone, when the greater Raphael, the frost, will soon be busy at the entrance to your own home.

Next I speak of the frost as a physician. Standing at the gates of New York harbor autumn before last, the frost drove back the choir, saying, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther." From Memphis and New Orleans and Jacksonville he smote the fever plague till it recoiled back and departed. The frost is a physician that doctors cities, nations, and continents. He medicines the world. Quinine for malaria, antifebrile for typhoids, sulphonal for sleeplessness, antispasmodic for disturbed nerves, but in all therapeutics there is no remedy like the small pellets prepared by the cold, and no physician so skillful or so mighty as the frost.

But I must go farther and speak of the frost as a jeweler. As the snow is frozen rain, so the frost is frozen dew. God transforms it from a liquid into a crystal. It is the dew glorified. In the thirty-eighth chapter of that inspired drama, the book of Job, God says to the inspired dramatist with ecstatic interrogation, "The hoary frost of heaven, who hath generated it?" God there asks Job if he knows the parentage of the frost. He inquires about its pedigree. He suggests that Job study up the frost's genealogical line. A minute before God had asked about the parentage of a raindrop in words that years ago gave me a suggestive text for a sermon, "Hath the rain a father?" But now the Lord Almighty is catechising Job about the frost. He practically says: "Do you know its father? Do you know its mother? In what cradle of the leaves did the wind rock it? The hoary frost of Heaven, who hath generated it?"

He is a staid Christian who thinks so much of the printed and bound Bible that he neglects the Old Testament of the fields nor reads the wisdom and kindness and beauty of God written in blossoms on the orchard, in sparkles on the lake, in stars in the sky, in frost on the meadows. The greatest jeweler of all the earth is the frost. There is nothing more wonderful in all crystallography. Some morning in December a whole continent is found besprinkled with diamonds, the result of one night's work by this jeweler.

Do you make the depreciatory remark that the frost is impermanent and will last only two or three hours? What of that? We go into London Tower and look at the crown jewels of England, but we are in a procession that the guards keep moving on, and five minutes or less are your only opportunity of looking at those crown jewels, but at the crown jewels be starr'd of the frost in parks and fields you may stand to look deliberately and for hours, and no one to tell you to move on.

The imperial household of Louis XVI. could not afford the diamond necklace which had been ordered for Queen Marie Antoinette, and it was stolen and taken apart and lost, but the necklace that the frost puts on the wintry morning, though made of as many brilliants as the withered grass blades, is easily afforded by divine opulence and is never lost, but after its use in the coronation of the fields is taken back to Heaven. O men and women, accustomed to go into ecstasy when in foreign travel you come upon the historical gems of nations, whether the jewel be called the Mountain of Glory, or the Sea of Light, or the Crown of the Moon, or the Eye of Allah, or the Star of Saravak, or the Koh-i-noor, I implead you study the jewels strewn all round your wintry home and realize that "by the breath of God frost is given."

But I go a step farther and speak of the frost as an evangelist, and a text of Scripture is not of much use to me unless I can find the gospel in it. The Israelites in the wilderness breakfasted on something that looked like frozen dew. The manna fell on the dew, and the dew evaporated and left a pulverized material, white and looking like frost, but it was manna, and of that they ate. So now this morning mixed with the frozen dew of my text, there is a manna on which we may breakfast our souls. You say the frost kills. Yes, it kills some things, but we have already seen that it gives health and life to others. This gospel is the savor of life unto life or of death unto death. As the frost is mighty, the gospel is mighty. As the frost descends from heaven, the gospel descends from heaven. By the breath of God the gospel is given. As the frost purifies, so the grace of God purifies. As the frost bestars the earth, so grace bejewels the soul. As the frost prepares for food many things that otherwise would be inedible, so the frost of trial ripens and prepares food for the soul. In the tight grip of the frost the hard shells of walnut and chestnut and hickory open, and the luxuries of the woods come into our laps or upon our tables; so the frost of trial takes many a hard and prickly shell and crushes it until that which stung the soul now feeds it.

There are passages of scripture that once were enigmas, puzzles, riddles and impossible for you to understand, but the frosts of trouble after awhile exposed the full meaning to your soul. You said, "I do not see why David keeps rolling over in his Psalms the story of how he was pursued and persecuted." He describes himself as surrounded by bees. He says, "They compassed me about like bees; yea, they compassed me about like bees." You think what an exaggerating thing for him to exclaim, "Out of the depths of hell have I cried unto thee, O Lord!" And there is so much of that style of lamentation in his writings you think he overdoes it, but after awhile a frost comes upon you in the shape of persecution, and you are stuck with that

censure, and stuck with that defamation, and stuck with some falsehood, and lies in swarms are buzzing, buzzing about your ears, and at last you understand what David meant when he said, "They compassed me about like bees," and you go down under nervous prostration and feel that you are as far down as David when he cried, "Out of the depths of hell!"

What opened all those chapters that hitherto had no appropriateness? Frost! For a long while the Bible seemed lopsided and a disproportionate amount of it given up to the consolatory. Why page after page and chapter after chapter and book after book in the Bible taken up with alleviations, with pacifications, with condolences? The book seems like an apothecary store with one-half of the shelves occupied with balsams. Why such a superfluity of balsams? But after awhile the membranous croup carries off your child, or your health gives way under the grip, or your property is swept off by a bad investment, or perhaps all three evils come at once—bankruptcy, sickness, and bereavement. Now the consolatory parts of the Bible do not seem to be disproportionate. You want something off almost all the shelves of that sacred dispensary. What has uncovered and exposed to you the usefulness of so much of the Bible that was before hidden? The frosts have been fulfilling their mission.

Put down all the promises of the Bible on a table for study, and put on one side the table a man who has never had any trouble, or very little of it, but pile upon the table beside him all encyclopedias, and all dictionaries, and all arithmetics, and all commentaries, and on the other side of the table put a man who has had trial upon trial, disaster upon disaster, and let him begin the study of the promises, without any book to explain or help, and this latter man will understand far more of the height and depth and length and breadth of those promises than the learned exegete, altho' almost submerged in sacred literature. The one has the advantage over the other because he has felt the mission of the frosts. O, take the consolation of this theme, ye to whom life is a struggle, and a disappointment, and a gantlet, and a pang. That is a beautiful proverb among the Hebrews which says, "When the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses comes."

Mild doses of medicine will do for mild sickness, but violent pains need strong doses, and so I stand over you and count out some drops that will alleviate your worst troubles if you will only take the medicine, and here it is: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Thank God for frosts! What helped make Milton the greatest of poets? The frost of blindness. What helped to make Washington the greatest of generals? The frost of Valley Forge. What made it appropriate for one passing John Bunyan's grave to exclaim, "Sleep on, thou prince of dreamers?" The frosts of imprisonment.

The greatest college from which we can graduate is the college of frosts. Special trial fits for special work. Just now watch, and you will see that trouble is preparative and educational. That is the grindstone on which battle axes are sharpened. I have always noticed in my own case that when I had some special work for me to do it was preceded by special attack upon me. This is so proverbial in my own house that if for something I say or do I get poured upon me a volley of censure and anathema, my wife always asks: "I wonder what opportunity of usefulness is about to open? Something good and grand is surely coming!"

What is true in my case is true on a larger or smaller scale in the history of every man and woman who wants to serve the Lord. Without complaint take the hard knocks. You will see after awhile, though you may not appreciate it now, that by the breath of a good and loving God frost is given. Let the corners of your mouth, so long drawn down in complaint, be drawn up in smiles of content.

For many years poets and essayists have celebrated the grace and swiftness of the Arabian horses. The most wonderful exhibition of horsemanship that I ever witnessed was just outside of the city of Jerusalem—an Arabian steed mounted by an Arab. Do you know where these Arabian horses got their fleetness and poetry of motion? Long centuries ago Mohammed, with 30,000 cavalry on the march, could find for them not a drop of water for three days. Coming to the top of a hill a river was in sight. With wild dash the 30,000 horses started for the stream. A minute after an armed host was seen advancing, and at Mohammed's command 100 bugles blew for the horses to fall in line, but all the 30,000 continued the wild gallop to the river, except five, and they almost dead with thirst, wheeled into line of battle.

Nothing in human bravery and self-sacrifice excels that bravery and self-sacrifice of those five Arabian war-horses. Those five splendid steeds Mohammed chose for his own use, and from those five came that race of Arabian horses for ages the glory of the equestrian world. And let me say that in this great war of truth against error, of holiness against sin and Heaven against hell, the best war-horses are descended from those who under pang and self-denial and trouble answered the gospel trumpet and wheeled into line. Out of the great tribulation, out of great fires, out of great frosts, they came.

And let me say it will not take long for God to make up to you in the next world for all you have suffered in this. As you enter Heaven He may say: "Give this man one of those towered and colonnaded palaces on the ridge of gold overlooking the sea of glass. Give this woman a home among those amazing rainbow blooms, and between those fountains flowing in the everlasting sunlight. Give her a couch canopied

with rainbows to pay her for all the fatigues of wifehood and motherhood and housekeeping, from which she had no rest for forty years.

"Cupbearers of Heaven, give these newly arrived souls from earth the costliest beverages and roll to their door the grandest chariots, and hang on their walls the sweetest harps that ever thrummed to fingers seraphic. Give to them rapture on rapture, celebration on celebration, jubilee on jubilee, heaven on heaven. They had a hard time on earth earning a livelihood, or nursing sick children, or waiting on querulous old age, or battling falsehoods that were told about them, or were compelled to work after they got short breathed and rheumatic and dim sighted.

"Chamberlains of Heaven! Keepers of the king's robes! Banqueters of eternal royalty! Make up to them a hundredfold, a thousandfold, a millionfold for all they suffered from swaddling clothes to shroud, and let all those who, whether on the hills, or in the temples, or on the thrones, or on the jasper wall, were helped and sanctified and prepared for this heavenly realm by the mission of the frosts, stand up and wave their scepters." And I looked, and behold, nine-tenths of the ransomed rose to their feet and nine-tenths of the scepters swayed to and fro in the light of the sun that never sets, and then I understood, far better than I ever did before, that trouble comes for beneficent purpose, and that on the coldest nights the aurora is brightest in the northern heavens, and that "by the breath of God frost is given."

Highest Overflow Dam.

Stanislaus County, Cal., will have the highest overflow dam in the world in about sixty days. It is called the La Grange dam, and is being constructed for the Modesto and Turlock irrigation districts. Its location is in the canyon of the Tuolumne River, three miles from the town of La Grange. Work on the project was commenced in June, 1891, and has been prosecuted continuously since. A force of 200 men has been employed on the work, the total cost of which will be \$600,000.

The LaGrange will be 360 feet long on top, the plan being curved on a radius of 320 feet. Its maximum height, about the foundation will be 127 feet 9 inches. The front face of the wall is made to conform to the curve described by the water in overflowing, and to deflect it into the basin in front of the dam.

The dam is built of cyclopean rubble, and is a model of solidity. High rocks, weighing from six to ten tons, were first laid on the bottom. All their projecting pieces were cut off, and a flat but rough surface was prepared for the lower bed. Before being placed in the bottom all stones, whatever their size, were scrubbed and subjected to the action of numerous jets of water under the pressure of 75 feet.

The dam will distribute water over a territory embracing 270,000 acres. The Turlock District comprises about 198,000 and the Modesta District 78,000 acres. The water will flow over the dam into two ditches. One will be thirty miles long and 100 feet wide, the other twenty-eight miles long and eighty feet wide. The water of the Tuolumne River will be banked up by the dam in the Rocky Canyon. A lake will thus be formed four miles long and a half mile wide.—San Francisco Call.

The Taste Was Better.

"Mistah Bronson," said a colored man to a grocer on Beaubien street, "was you gwine to keep watermill-yons dis sezun?"

"Of course."

"Was you gwine to keep some on ice?"

"Oh, yes."

"Was de price goin' ter be about fo' bits?"

"I presume so."

"Mistah Bronson, was you gwine ter hev a few green watermill-yons dis sezun?" continued the man.

"Well, there are always some green ones, you know."

"Sartin. Was you gwine ter take a big green one an' pour in a quart of kerosene ole an' leave it out-doans for somebody to kerry off?"

"I may—why?"

"Bekase, Mistah Bronson, I got hold of one of dem watermill-yons you fixed last year, an' it was so much mo' beautifuller dan any of your ripe ones dat I wanted to speak for de fust one you put out. Doan' forgit me, Mistah Bronson; my cognomen was Git Dar Jones."—Eree Press.

An Optimistic View of It.

When, during the present month, three or four times as many people are killed in a single explosion of dynamite as have been killed on all the railroads of the United States during the entire year, that may well be spoken of as appalling. But, after all, with deaths from accidents by high explosives, by steam, by electricity and by all other dangerous agencies of civilization, we have an always lessening risk. Of course this cannot be demonstrated by figures, to convince anyone who knows something of history that the ordinary citizen of America has ten chances of living his life out to one chance enjoyed by anyone of his ancestors in Europe five centuries ago. Civilization has its disadvantages but its risks are not appalling at all when compared with the risks of not becoming as civilized as possible.—St. Louis Populic.

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