

SATURDAY NIGHT TALKS

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Rutland, Vt.

A MESSAGE FOR TO-DAY

International Bible Lesson for
Dec. 19, '09.



We have never been fond of the company of the pessimist and the croaker, but we must confess that such men have their uses, and there are signs abroad which point to the fact that America needs the voice of a modern Paul, sounding through the palaces of the rich, the huts of the poor, the sacred aisles of the church, the courts of law, the marts of trade, and the halls of pleasure.

For although this nation never stood at such an altitude of prosperity as it does to-day, there are numberless foes to her perpetuity that need to be watched and exterminated. What are some of our perils?

Present Day Perils.

Materialism is the Moloch to which this age is offering sacrifice.

Sunday is becoming a social day in an unheard of measure to a past generation. We are gradually but certainly opening the doors of traffic and amusement on Sunday, our railroads being the leaders in this regard.

Drunkenness among women is increasing.

The laxity of the marriage relation is a nation-wide peril.

There is a large infusion of the gambling spirit in our commercial life. There is a race to get rich at all hazards. The increase in social extravagance is noticeable everywhere.

Nine-tenths of the law-breaking in America is hatched in the saloon. The liquor counter is the block on which hundreds of our beautiful American things are annually assassinated.

Spirituality is freezing to death in the church.

The gulf between the masses and the classes is growing wider, in the church and in the State.

This is a dark picture, but it is the consensus of opinion of the wisest thinkers in our land, men who see the perils, and are lifting up warning voices everywhere.

Does it foreshadow our doom as a nation? God forbid. The fact that the peril is so widely recognized is our safety. We have grappled with and settled many great issues in this country, and what the fathers have done the sons can do. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Criticism Easy.

A person could go into a watch factory and from the standpoint of a complete watch find something to criticize in every direction. It takes time and skill and patience to make a watch. And it takes time and skill and infinite patience to make what the world will acknowledge as a representative man. Character is a thing of growth, not of bestowment.

Of course, there are people in the church who ought not to be there. But when a fisherman sweeps his net around, and then pulling it into his boat finds that he has a great haul of mackerel, he does not pitch the whole lot overboard because he has taken a few lamp-eels and snapping turtles. No. He rows ashore, after he gets through fishing, and sorts his catch afterwards. So the church in this world is set to catch men, not sort them. On the beach of eternity they will be sorted out by One who is unerring in His judgment.

Church a Factory.

Is not the criticism largely due to the fact that the objector fails to realize that no one church can be expected to reconstruct the world. In this great mission there is work for each denomination. It is like a great factory where many hands are employed. It is the business of the Methodists, warm hearted and fiery, to stir the blaze. It is the business of the Congregationalists, sturdy and logical, to hammer the rivets. It is the business of the Episcopalians, to whom the beauty of piety appeals, to make the exquisite case. It is the business of the Baptists, having strong predilections for water, to wash off the works. So that, after awhile, this whole world disordered, run down, and out of gear, will become a perfect timepiece, ticking away the centuries of millennial joy. How inconsistent is that critic who takes a single wheel or rivet or case of a watch and finds fault because it is not a perfect piece of mechanism.

It is all very well to criticize the church for its coldness and indifference, and aloofness from the lives of men, but I notice that when scarlet fever puts its hot hands into the home nest, and the roses in the child's cheeks turn into the white lilies of death, no one wants to put away the sacred dust without the consolations of the church, and the benedictions of piety. No carping then! No secular songs! No acrimonious criticism! Then we turn instinctively to the only organization which stands pointing through the open portals, with the emblems of piety in her hands and the light of eternity in her eyes.

UNSOCIABLE NEW YORK.

An Indiana Woman's Impressions—
Nobody Knows Anybody Else.

"What impresses me most in New York is the fact that nobody seems to know anybody else," the Indiana woman wrote home. "When I came to visit Kate I expected to meet a number of pleasant people and be entertained by them, as she is when she visits me.

As a matter of fact I have met nobody. The only woman acquaintance of hers I have seen was one we happened to meet in a shop. Then Kate hurried me around the other way, because, she said, she only happened to know her because they sat at the next table in the apartment hotel where they used to live, and she did not care to keep up the acquaintance.

"The reason for this seemed to be the fact that the woman always seemed to have got all her clothes last year.

"I have been in every shop of any size in the city, and in nearly every department of each one. When interest flags Kate takes me to have my hair marcel waved, to the manure, or even, as a last resort, to a Turkish bath. She is taking lessons in physical culture to keep down her flesh and studying theology under the most fashionable Swami in town.

"She has bridge lessons and attends a series of morning lectures upon the art of the fourteenth century and another on the true ideals of Bach. At each of them ethereal sandwiches and nanaemic tea are served in china which looks as if it would crumble in your hand. But none of the women present betrays by the flicker of an eyelid her consciousness of the fact that there are others in the room.

"We lunch at restaurants in which we read in society novels in Indiana and take tea at places which have no sign above the door, are located in out of the way side streets and never seem to lose the odor of violets worn by their patrons. Kate never, by any chance, knows any one personally; but sometimes in an excited whisper she points out a woman whose name is written among the first ten of the Four Hundred.

"That evening at dinner she tells her husband about it and says what a lovely day we have had.

"Sometimes we dine at restaurants defensed by shrill music, where the only person to whom we can speak is the velvet shod waiter, who politely snubs us. There a noted divorcee or a leading man in society drama with his next wife is pointed out to me with exaltation.

"Kate seems perfectly happy and her husband apparently enjoys it as much as she does. She wonders repeatedly whether the woman at the table back of us is or is not the beauty whose portrait is frequently printed. She also decides that her new hat with the huge rose in front and a little to the left is already out of style.

"Her husband's contribution to the gaiety of the evening is the pointing out of a fat man whose business methods are about to be investigated. As for me I am so homesick that I almost weep into my demitasse when I remember the jolly little chafing dish parties for ten after the Tuesday lecture on art which we give by turns at home in Indiana.

"Once we went to the opera, and Kate was well nigh hysterical with delight when she was able to fit na-vas to half a dozen women in the boxes. "There, when you go back to Indiana, you can tell them that you saw Mrs. Wastor and two of the Gouldorbits," she triumphed.

"Yesterday we were invited to lunch with a woman we used to know in Indiana, who had heard of my presence in the city through letters. I expected a nice, homey time, talking of people we all knew; but I was disappointed.

"We lunched in the public dining room of the apartment hotel, on made over dishes with French names. While we ate it our hostess and Kate discussed the trousseau of a bride whom Kate thought she had once seen.

"After that they told each other how often they dined at fashionable restaurants and how particular each one was to have a particular table engaged for her each time. When we went up stairs they compared all the new plays until it was time for us to go home.

"Once or twice I have gone with Kate to her dressmaker, who brags about her fashionable patrons and tells Kate her figure is exactly like that of Mrs. Farriman. Then there is the beauty doctor who waxes eloquent and persuasive over the newest shade of hair.

"To-morrow I return to Indiana. Kate pities me; she says she would rather die than go back, and wants me to induce my husband to sell out his business and come to New York. As for me, I am counting the hours to train time.

"Not because I do not like New York, but because I want to get back among people who know each other. Yes, I am going home, and the very first thing I do after I kiss my husband will be to telephone to every woman I know to run over and have a nice, comfy talk."

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