

DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

The Barn and Its Surroundings.

"The shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass." Luke 2:25.

ONE thousand years of the world's existence rolled painfully and wearily along, and no Christ. Two thousand years, and no Christ. Three thousand years, and no Christ. Four thousand years, and no Christ.

GIVE US A CHRIST.

had cried Assyrian and Persian and Chaldean and Egyptian civilizations, but the lips of the earth and the lips of the sky made no answer. The world had already been affluent of genius. Among poets had appeared Homer and Theophrastus and Aristophanes and Sophocles and Euripides and Alexis and Aeschylus; yet no Christ to be the most poetic figure of the centuries.

But the slow century and the slow year, and the slow month and the slow hour at last arrived. The world had had matins or concerts in the morning and vespers or concerts in the evening, but now it is to have a concert at midnight. The black window shutters of a December night were thrown open, and some of the best singers of a world where they all sing, stood there, and putting back the drapery of cloud, chanted a peace anthem, until all the echoes of hill and valley applauded and encircled the Hallelujah Chorus.

A MADONNA WORTH LOOKING AT.

I wonder not that the most frequent name in all lands and in all Christian centuries is Mary. And there are Marys in palaces and Marys in cabins, and though German and French and Italian and Spanish and English pronounce it differently, they are all namesakes of the one whom we find on a bed of straw, with her pale face against the soft cheek of Christ in the night of the Nativity. All the great painters have tried, on canvas, to present Mary and her child and the incidents of that most famous night of the world's history. Raphael, in three different masterpieces, celebrated them. Tintoret and Guirlandajo surpassed themselves in the Adoration of the Magi. Correggio needed to do nothing more than his Madonna to become immortal. The Madonna of the Lily, by Leonardo da Vinci, will kindle the admiration of all ages. But all the galleries of Dresden are forgotten, when I think of the small room of that gallery containing the Sistine Madonna. Yet all of them were copies of St. Mathew's Madonna, and Luke's Madonna, the inspired Madonna of the Old Book, which we had put into our hands when we were infants, and that we hope to have under our heads when we die.

Behold, in the first place, that on the first night of Christ's life God honored the brute creation. You cannot get into that Bethlehem barn without going past the camels, the mules, the dogs, the oxen.

THE BRUTES OF THAT STABLE.

heard the first cry of the infant Lord. Some of the old painters represent the oxen and camels kneeling that night before the new-born babe. And well might they kneel! Have you ever thought that Christ came, among other things, to alleviate the sufferings of the brute creation? Was it not appropriate that He should, during the first few days and nights of His life on earth, be surrounded by the dumb beasts, whose moan and plaint and bellowing have for ages been a prayer to God for the arresting of their tortures and the righting of their wrongs? It did not merely "happen so" that the unintelligent creatures of God should have been that night in close neighborhood.

Not a kennel in all the centuries, not a bird's nest, not a worn-out horse on a tow-path, not a herd freezing in the poorly-built cow-pen, not a freight car in summer time bringing the bees to market without water through a thousand miles of agony, not a surgeon's room witnessing the struggles of fox, or rabbit, or pigeon, or dog, in the horrors of vivisection, but has an interest in the fact that Christ was born in a stable, surrounded by brutes. He remembers that night, and the prayer he heard in their pitiful moan.

He will answer in the punishment of those who maltreat the dumb brutes. They surely have as much right in this world as we have. In the first chapter of Genesis you may see that they were placed on the earth before man was, and the fish and fowl created the fifth day, and the quadrupeds the morning of the sixth day, and man not until the afternoon of that day. The whale, the eagle, the lion, and all the lesser creatures of their kind were predecessors of the human family. They have the world by right of possession. They have also paid rent for the places they occupied. What an army of defense all over the world are the faithful watch dogs. And who can tell what the world owes to the horse, and camel, and ox, for transportation? And robin and lark have, by the cantatas with which they have filled orchard and forest, more than paid for the few grains they have picked up for their sustenance. When you abuse any creature of God you strike His Creator, and you insult the Christ who, though He might have been welcomed into life by princes, and taken his first infantile slumber amid Tyrian plush and canopied couches, and rippling waters from royal aqueducts dripping into basins of ivory and pearl, chose to be born on the level with a cow's horn, or a camel's hoof, or a dog's nostril, that he might be the alleviation of animal suffering as well as the Redeemer of man.

Standing then, as I imagine now I do, in that Bethlehem night with an infant Christ on the one side and the SPEECHLESS CREATURES OF GOD on the other, I cry, Look out, how you strike the rowel into that horse's side. Take off that curb and that saddle from that bleeding mouth. Remove that saddle from that raw back. Shoot not for fun that bird that is too small for food. Forget not to put water into the cage of that canary. Throw out some crumbs to those birds caught too far north in the winter's inclemency. Arrest that man who is making that one horse draw a load heavy enough for three. Rush in upon that scene where boys are torturing a cat, or transfixing butterfly and grasshopper. Drive not off that old robin, for her nest is a mother's cradle, and under her wing there may be three or four prime dome of the sky in training.

In your families and in your schools, teach the coming generation more mercy than the present generation has ever shown, and in this marvelous Bible picture of the Nativity, while you point out to them the angel, show them also the celestial chant, let them also hear the cow's moan. No more did Christ show interest in the botanical world, when He said, "Consider the lilies," than He showed sympathy for the ornithological when He said, "Behold, the fowls of the air," and the quadrupedal world when He allowed Himself to be called in one place a lion, and in another place a lamb. Meanwhile, may the Christ of the Bethlehem cattle-men have mercy on the suffering stock yards, that are preparing diseased and fevered meat for our American households.

GOD HONORED CHILDHOOD.

Behold, also, in this Bible scene, how, on that Christmas night, Christ might have made His first visit to our world in a cloud, as He will descend on His next visit in a cloud. In what a chariot of illumined vapor He might have rolled down the sky, escorted by mounted cavalry, with lightning of drawn sword. Elijah had a carriage of fire to take him up; why not Jesus a carriage of fire to fetch Him down? Or, over the arched bridge of a rainbow the Lord might have descended. Or Christ might have had His mortality built up on earth out of the dust of a garden, as was Adam, in full manhood at the start, without the introductory feebleness of infancy. No, no! Childhood was to be honored by that advent. He must have a child's light limbs, and a child's dimpled hand, and a child's beaming eyes, and a child's flaxen hair, and babyhood was to be honored for all time to come, and a cradle was to mean more than a grave. Mighty God! May the reflection of that one child's face be seen in all infantile faces.

A MASTERPIECE OF JEHOVAH.

It is only a being that shall outlive sun and moon and stars, and ages quadrilennial. God has infinite resources, and He can give presents of great value, but when He wants to give the richest possible gift to the household, He looks around all the worlds and all the universe and then gives a child. The greatest present that God ever gave our world, He gave about 1887 years ago, and it was of such value that heaven adjourned for a recess and came down and broke through the clouds to look at it. Yes, in all ages God has honored childhood. He makes almost every picture a failure unless there be a child either playing on the floor, or looking through the window, or seated on the lap, gazing into the face of the mother.

is the college that does not have morning prayers, thus bowing at the manger? Who have been the greatest physicians? Omitting the names of the living, lest we should be invidious, have we not had among them Christian men like our own Joseph C. Hutchinson and Rush and Valentine Mott and Abercrombie and Abeneethy? Who have been our greatest scientists? Joseph Henry, who lived and died in the faith of the Gospels and Agassiz, who, standing with his students among the hills, took off his hat and said, "Young gentlemen, let us study these rocks, let us pray for wisdom to the God who made the rocks." To day the greatest doctors and lawyers, of Brooklyn and New York and of all this land and of all lands, revere the Christian religion, and are not ashamed to say so before juries and legislatures and senates.

All geology will yet bow before the Rock of Ages. All botany will yet worship the Rose of Sharon. All astronomy will yet recognize the Star of Bethlehem. And physiology and anatomy will join hands and say, "We must, by the help of God, get the human race up to the perfect nerve, and perfect muscle, and perfect brain, and perfect form of that perfect child, before whom, nigh twenty hundred years ago, the wise men bent their tired knees in worship."

GOD HONORED THE FIELDS.

Come in, shepherd boys, to Bethlehem and see the child. "No," they say; "we are not dressed good enough to come in." "Yes, you are; come in." Sure enough, the storms and the night dew and the brambles have made rough work with their apparel, but none have a better right to come in. They were the first to hear the music of that Christmas night. The first announcement of a Saviour's birth was made to those men in the fields. There were Jerusalem soring in deep sleep, and there were salaried officers of Government, who, hearing of it afterward, may have thought that they ought to have had the first news of such a great event, some one dismounting from a swift camel at their door and knocking till at some sentinel's question, "Who comes there?" the great ones of the palace might have been told of the celestial arrival. No; the shepherds heard the first two bars of the music, the first in the major key and the last in the subdued minor; "Gloria to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." Ah, yes; the fields were honored.

FOLLOW THE SHEPHERDS.

The old shepherds with plaid and crook have for the most part vanished, but we have grazing—our United States pasture fields and prairie about forty-five million sheep—and all their keepers ought to

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M.—Matt. 14: 22-26. The King's followers afflicted. T.—Mark 6: 45-56. Mark's parallel narrative. W.—John 6: 15-21. John's parallel narrative. T.—Mark 4: 35-41. Stilling a storm. F.—Psa. 65: 1-13. God's control in nature. S.—Psa. 46: 1-11. Confidence in God. S.—Psa. 107: 23-31. Praise to the Lord.

LESSON ANALYSIS.

I. THE TROUBLED CREW.

I. The Storm: The boat was... distressed by the waves; for the wind was contrary (24). All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me (Psa. 42: 7). The boat was covered with the waves (Matt. 8: 24). A great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat (Mark 4: 37). The stern began to break up by the violence of the waves (Acts 27: 41).

II. THE APPARITION.

They were troubled, saying, It is an apparition (26). I see a god coming up out of the earth (1 Sam. 28: 13). Then a spirit passed before my face (Job 4: 15). They entered into the holy city and appeared unto many (Matt. 27: 53). They supposed that it was an apparition, and cried out (Mark 6: 49).

III. THE OUTCRY.

They cried out for fear (26). In my distress I... cried unto my God (Psa. 18: 8). They cried unto thee and were delivered (Psa. 22: 5). This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him (Psa. 34: 6). Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord (Psa. 130: 1).

1. "He went up into the mountain apart to pray." (1) Prayer desired; (2) Privacy sought.—(1) The Lord's need of prayer; (2) The Lord's privacy in prayer.

2. "He was there alone." (1) Who? (2) Where? (3) When? (4) How? (5) Why?

3. "The wind was contrary." (1) Obeying the Lord, yet buffeted; (2) Brought into peril, yet delivered.—(1) Opposing influences; (2) Overruling providences; (3) Glorious deliverances.

II. THE TROUBLED DISCIPLE.

I. His Forwardness: Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters (28). The counsel of the froward is carried headlong (Job 5: 13). Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward (Prov. 22: 5). Peter took him, and began to rebuke him (Matt. 16: 22). If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be (Matt. 26: 33).

II. His Peril:

He was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out (30). Save me... the waters are come in unto my soul (Psa. 69: 1). Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble (Psa. 107: 28). Save, Lord; we perish (Matt. 8: 25). Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you (Luke 22: 31).

III. His Deliverance:

Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him (31).

THE TYPE OF MARY.

the mother of Christ. When you hear some one, in sermon or oration, speak in the abstract of some good, faithful, honest mother, your eyes fill up with tears, while you say to yourself, that was my mother. The first word a child utters is apt to be "Mother," and the old man, in his dying dream, calls, "Mother! mother!" It matters not whether she was brought up in the surroundings of a city, and in affluent home, and was dressed appropriately, with reference to the demands of modern life, or whether she wore the

old-time cap, and great round spectacles, and apron of her own make, and knit your socks with her own needles, seated by the broad fireplace, with great black-bag ablaze, on a winter night. It matters not how many wrinkles crossed and re-crossed her face, or how much her shoulders stooped with the burdens of a long life, if you painted a Madonna, hers would be the face.

What a gentle hand she had when we were sick, and what a voice to soothe pain, and was there anyone who could so fill up a room with peace, and purity, and light? And what a sad day that was when we came home and she could greet us not, for her lips were forever still.

COME BACK, MOTHER.

this Christmas day, and take your old place, and as ten, or twenty, or fifty years ago, come and open the old Bible you used to; read and kneel in the same place where you used to pray, and look upon us as of old when you wished us a Merry Christmas or a Happy New Year. But, no! That would not be fair to call you back. You had troubles enough, and aches enough, and bereavements enough, while you were here. Tarry by the throne, mother, till we join you there, your prayers all answered, and in the eternal home of our God we shall again keep Christmas jubilee together. But speak from your thrones, all you glorified mothers, and say to all these, your sons and daughters, words of love, words of warning, words of cheer. They need your voice, for they have travelled far and with many a heart-break since you left them, and you do well to call from the heights of heaven to the valleys of earth. Hail, enthroned ancestry! We are coming. Keep a place right beside you at the banquet.

"How sweet years! More swiftly run into the gold of that unsetting sun. Home'sick we are for thee, Calm land beyond the sea."

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

SUNDAY, JAN. 15, 1888.

Jesus Walking on the Sea.

LESSON TEXT.

(Matt. 14: 22-36. Memory verses, 25-27.)

LESSON PLAN.

TOPIC OF THE QUARTER: Jesus the King in Zion.

GOLDEN TEXT FOR THE QUARTER: He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.—Rev. 17: 14.

LESSON TOPIC: The King's Followers Affrighted.

Lesson 1. The Troubled Crew, vs. 22-31. Outline: 2. The Royal Master, vs. 32-34.

GOLDEN TEXT: Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.—Matt. 14: 27.

He drew me out of many waters (2 Sam. 22: 17). Above... the mighty breakers of the sea, the Lord is mighty (Psa. 93: 4). Through the waters, I will be with thee (Isa. 43: 2). Yet hast thou brought us my life from the pit (Jonah 2: 6).

1. "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." (1) Jesus present; (2) Fears dismissed; (3) Cheer recurred.—A present Jesus (1) Dispel fears; (2) Secure cheer.

III. THE ROYAL MASTER.

I. Quieting the Winds:

When they were gone up into the boat, the wind ceased (32). A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind (Isa. 32: 2). Even the winds and the sea obey him (Matt. 8: 27). The wind ceased: and they were sore amazed (Mark 6: 51). Who then is this, that he commandeth even the winds? (Luke 8: 25).

II. Healing the Sick:

As many as were touched were made whole (36). If I do but touch his garment, I shall be made whole (Matt. 9: 21). Manv... pressed upon him that they might touch him (Mark 3: 10). Power came forth from him, and healed them all (Luke 6: 19). Unto these he carried away from his body handkerchiefs (Acts 19: 12).

III. Receiving Worship:

They that were in the boat worshipped him (33). We saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him (Matt. 2: 2). There came to him a leper and worshipped him (Matt. 8: 2). When they saw him, they worshipped him (Matt. 28: 17). Let all the angels of God worship him (Heb. 1: 6).

1. "Of a truth thou art the Son of God." (1) The scope of their confession; (2) The basis of their confession.

2. "When the men... knew him, they sent... and brought... all that were sick." (1) The Lord recognized; (2) The people active; (3) The sick helped.

3. "As many as touched were made whole." (1) Touching Jesus; (2) Receiving wholeness.—(1) The touch of faith; (2) The gift of wholeness.

LESSON BIBLE READING.

SYMBOLISM OF THE SEA.

Raging of hostile armies (Isa. 5: 30; Jer. 6: 23). Inrush of enemies (Jer. 51: 42). Devastations of war (Ezek. 26: 3, 4). Unrest of the wicked (Isa. 57: 20; Jude 13). Wavering believers (Jas. 1: 6). Burial-place of sins (Micah 7: 19). Abundance of righteousness (Isa. 48: 18). Prevalence of knowledge (Isa. 11: 9; Hab. 2: 14). Abode of the dead (Rev. 20: 13). Heaven's expanded area (Rev. 4: 6; 15: 2).

LESSON SURROUNDINGS.

The connection of this lesson with the last is immediate; but we are indebted to the evangelist John for a fact omitted by Matthew and Mark; namely, that Jesus perceived the intention of the multitude to "take him by force, to make him king" (John 6: 15). This acquaints us with the motive for sending the multitudes away. Mark (Mark 6: 46) more accurately intimates that he withdrew to the mountain "after he had taken leave" of the multitude.

The time was, as before, immediately preceding the third Passover (John 6: 4) year of Rome 782.—A. D. 29.

The place from which the disciples started was on the eastern side of the lake, not far from Bethsaida Julias (Luke 9: 10); the boat landed in Genesaret, on the western shore, near or at Capernaum (John 6: 17, 59). Mark (Mark 6: 45) names Bethsaida as the point which they were attempting to reach; but it is disputed which place of that name he refers to.

The parallel passages are Mark 6: 45-56; John 6: 15-21.

He Knew His Business.

M. Gravey was pale. He was sweating blood. M. Floquet was with him. He was with him in person, but not otherwise. "Let go," said M. Floquet's counsel. "Let go and give me a chance to catch on."

The canoe had swept down the Boulevard des Capucins and now surged through the Place de la Mayonnaise. The canoe was sweating, too; but not blood.

"Vive la republique! vive l'empereur!" cried the canoe. It was like the hoarse muttering of a lioness at bay. They had done this before. History is full of it. In 1875, when Louis Leblanc inflamed the proletariat. In 1891, when Jean Marie Brisobry crimsoned the pathway to the guillotine. In 1823, in 1851, in 1872, the same. It was now 1887. Act 7 of the ghastly comedy! Irony of fate!

In the Rue de Normandie the canoe passed. Upon this street faces the Hotel de Veal. Its front was somber. The curtains were drawn. A man—a baker wearing a red ribbon—tried the door. It was locked.

"Death to M. Gravey! Vive la republique!" Suddenly a face appeared at a window. It was a pale face. It was the face of M. Gravey, but it looked like the fifth act of "La Dame aux Camelias."

"Vive la republique! Vive les Bourbons! Vive la monarchie! Vive la everything!" So spoke the people. Then M. Gravey spoke. He knew his business, and he said:

Work the root crops until the tops are in the way.

I woke up on that particular morning in a particularly delightful frame of mind. I know I sang so loudly that Tompkins, who occupied the next room in the barracks to mine, flung his shoes at the walls and waxed very profane, as I continued to vocalize.

The reason of my hilarity may be stated in a few words. I had fallen desperately in love with Nora O'Creagan, the belle of that military town, and I expected to find out her opinion of me that very day at the picnic some of the boys had arranged.

I need not state here that Miss O'Creagan would attract attention anywhere, and that she is the most delightful little lady in the world. You may imagine that I dressed myself very carefully that day, not omitting a rosebud in my coat.

That odious Tompkins, my rival, was one of the party of course, but the sight of Nora under the trees made me disregard the silly jokes he was trying to crack at my expense, and I felt very happy.

I suggested to her that the rest of the party were going to visit the ruins and asked if she cared to follow. "I want to put some cattle in this sketch first," she answered. "I see some fine oxen near if you will show me the way."

It was a group of four ferocious-looking beasts, one standing, the rest lying in various attitudes around. One, a great black animal, eyed us steadily, and slightly altered his position the better to see us.

"I think, Mr. Maurice," she said, I could manage better if you would not mind going on the other side of the bullocks, and attracting the notice of that black one in the other direction. They are all looking the same way, and it looks so stiff. If you held out some grass to him, or switched your stick about, it might keep his attention fixed."

I rose slowly, and cautiously found my way to the other side.

It was quite needless to do anything to attract that monster's attention; his eye was on me. As I moved, so did he; and, as I sat down, he turned his head right round, the better to watch me. I was turning hot and cold by turns.

"That will do nicely; thanks. Keep him in that position for a few minutes," called Nora.

Then came a silence, broken only by the beating of my heart. The suspense grew unbearable, and the perspiration began to pour down my face. I drew out my handkerchief to wipe my heated brow, when, with an angry grunt, the animal began to rise. I saw my fatal error; the handkerchief was red!

Rapidly the brute gained his feet, and with head bent low, advanced toward me. It was too much. All, as I was forgotten but the fate that seemed before me. I sprang up—I blush to own it—I turned round, and I ran? I made straight for a fence just in front of me, which having vaulted, I found myself safe at last.

The whole absurdity of my position burst upon me. The ridiculous figure I must have cut before Nora, the contempt she must feel for my cowardice! Oh, what would I not have given to be able to wipe the last half hour out of my life!

I knew I had lost Nora O'Creagan. How could she ever care for a man whose conduct must have appeared so contemptible?

My life after this incident was not a happy one. As far as I could, I passed the time alone, pondering how to retrieve the lost ground, and hailing with delight an opportunity which soon after offered itself of changing into another regiment, which was ordered abroad on immediate active service.

Time passed, and once more I was on my native soil. We received a perfect ovation when we landed in dear old England.

Tel-el-Kahir was the subject of everyone's thoughts and, sick and ill as I was, my cheek flushed with pleasure as handkerchiefs were waved and welcomes shouted.

I was faint and dizzy. My arm had been amputated at the shoulder and I suffered acute pain, but it was a proud moment for me all the same.

I was invalidated directly after, and weeks were passed in the sick ward of Brighton barracks.

One day the door was suddenly thrown open and some of our fellows burst in.

"Cheer up, cheer up, old man!" cried one. "Hear this," skimming through a paper he held in his hand. "Conspicuous bravery, V. C. Why, it's worth dying for!"

And as their cheery congratulations poured in upon me I felt it was worth living for.

I began to bend rapidly after this and was soon able to go down to the sea in a chair.

One morning as I was lazily lying back drinking in the fresh air I became conscious of a figure standing by my chair. I opened my eyes.

"Nora!" I cried—"Nora!" Neither of us spoke for a few moments as I gazed fondly on her blushing face.

At last she said: "Oh, I am so sorry, and yet so very glad, so very proud!" "Then tell me you do not think me a coward now!" I cried, eagerly.

"How could I? Oh, do not ask me such a cruel question!" she faltered.

And as her eyes rested on the empty sleeve that was pinned across my breast I saw they were full of tears; and so were mine, but they were tears of joy, for as my hand closed on hers, I knew that for all time Nora was my own.

HE CHOSE THE WRONG PROFESSION.

—New York Sun; City Editor (to reporter)—How thick is the ice on the mill pond, Robinson?

Reporter—About an inch.

City editor—Well, I saw a little boy going in that direction with a pair of skates slung over his shoulder. You had better shunt down that way.

Reporter—Saunter I stop him from going on the ice?

City editor (with intense scorn)—Stop him—from—going—on—the—ice! (Turning to speaking tube)—Cashier, pay off Robinson and discharge him.

Four thousand muscles have been counted in a caterpillar.