

REV. DR. TALMAGE.

THE BROOKLYN DIVINE'S SUNDAY SERMON.

Subject: "The Lessons of Winter."

TEXT: "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?" Job xxxviii, 22.

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, had more enemies than friends.

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 liads and Odysseys of the wintry tempest, I turn to the pages of my Bible and find that most of it was written in a clime where snow seldom or never fell.

The first time we find a deep fall of snow in the Bible is where Samuel describes a fight between Benaiah 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.

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.

Four hundred years before Christ, in the stores at Athens, were sold powerful glasses called "burning spheres," and Laysan, the explorer, found a magnifying glass amid the ruins of Nineveh and in the palace of Nimrod. Whether through magnifying instrument or without aided eye 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, theologes, majestic, infinities walking up and down its corridors, as a result of the question which the Lord had asked him.

Oh, it is a wonderful meteor. Membold 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 snowflakes amid the arctic wastes. 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, Tuilleries, Windsor castles, St. Pauls, St. Peters, St. Marks, cathedrals, Alhambars and Sydenham 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 lady warmly clothed looking out of the door upon the first flurry of snow, and his mind no doubt filled with the thought of the morning of October 19, when they start for home, is bright and beautiful. The air is tonic, and although this Russian winter is as harsh as the winter of Napoleon, it is in some other direction with his host of brave surviving Frenchmen.

But a cloud comes on the sky and the air gets chill, and one of the soldiers feels on his chest a snowflake, and then there is a sudden change, and the march begins to fall under the fatigue, and many not able to take another step lie down in the drifts never 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 a hundred and a hundred 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, surrounded and now himself surrenders to the snowflakes.

Historians do not seem to recognize that the tide in that man's life turned from Dec. 16, 1809, when he banished by hideous discords his wife Josephine from the palace, and the challenge of the Almighty, and the Lord charged upon him from the fortress of the sky with ammunition of crystal. Snowed under! Billions, trillions, quadrillions, quintillions of flakes did the work. And what suggestion of accumulative power, and what cause we cannot do much, and therefore do nothing!

"Oh," says some one, "I would like to stop the forces of sin and crime that are marching for the conquest of the nation, 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 a word because they are not eloquent, because they cannot be an avalanche! In earthly wars the generals get about all the credit, but in the war for God and righteousness and heaven all the private soldiers will get crowns of victory uniting.

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 research 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 must ask, "Is Isaac 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 squessed 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."

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 omniscience. To refuse you His protection would be to deny 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 snowflakes, 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, a sapphire, and a host of other precious stones.

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 over the window and let one flake 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 the opposite of the flakes of snow that break down, a few days ago, in sight of my house, six telegraph poles, made helpless poles and fire departments and halted rail trains with two thundering 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 the wire and let 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. Your boasted electric lights adorning your cities with blazes of fire, I will put out as easily as your fingers 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, 1888, the snow swept four miles. 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 speckler most of this nation. "Come, I will take you to the mountain, and there I will stop them. 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 floes on the top of a mountain. One day a gust of wind, or even the voice of a mountaineer, sets the frozen vapors into action, and by awful deserts they sweep everything in their course—trees, rocks, villages—as when in 1827 the town of Aletsch, in Valais, was buried, and in 1824, 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! For ages have the dogs been bent in exercising bawled 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 Gloucester and Glencoran one February in Scotland, where Ronald Cameron comes forth to bring to his father's house his cousin Flora McDonald for the celebration of a birthday, and the calm day turns to 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!

In the winter of 1812, by a similar force, the death 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 overhead that host. Napoleon's great army of snow with about two hundred thousand men, a mighty nucleus for another campaign after he got back to Paris. The morning of October 19, when they start for home, is bright and beautiful. The air is tonic, and although this Russian winter is as harsh as the winter of Napoleon, it is in some other direction with his host of brave surviving Frenchmen.

Lord Nelson's coffin was made out of the masts of the ship "Orient" in which he had fought so bravely. Snow, which is a blessing to us, is a curse to the sailors. A 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 the painter, Hans Holbein, the title of "Salute 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 the faith? The persecution that he suffered. Persecution that carried and assailed him all up and down England, and dead vermin thrown in his face when he was preaching.

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"When she gave her charity her left hand knew not what her right hand did. She was mighty in secret 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, God and helping others, and the Lord is making up for her earthly privation by special raptures here, and the King of this country had that place built especially for her. The walls began to go up when she was 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, and that is mighty up here. These she comes now out of her palace grounds in her chariot borne by two white horses to ride on the canals of the river that doles 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?' 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 great men, and great warriors, and when I express my surprise about their going to the dragoman says: 'In this country people are rewarded not according to the number of their earthly talents, but according to the way they made of them here.' '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 dragoman, 'many of these pearls that you find on the forehead of the righteous, and many of the gems in the jewel case of prince and princess, are only the petrified snowflakes of earthly temptations, for God does not forget the promise, 'The Lord shall be Mine, and 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 into the snowflake. The snowflake is the aggregation of the many smalls 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 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 gradually to go down. Called by a trivial name, the Russian 'grip,' it was an international plague. Centuries of snow means public health. There is no medicine that so soon cures the world's malaria as these white pellets that the clouds administer—pellets small enough to be housepaths, but in such large numbers as to be a pestilence, and making snow enough to be hydrostatic. 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 greatest of the world's doctors. Now, 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 it. In such a case, the snow is a great blessing to the farmer, 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 snow, and may those of February be as plentiful as the snows of December.

The strongest Christians, without any exception, are those who were by bereavements or sickness or poverty or persecution, or all of them together, as snowed under. These snow storms of trouble! They kill the malaria of the soul. They drive us out of worldly dependence to God. Call the roll of all the eminent pious of all ages, and you will find them all snowed under. The Marquis says 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 way better to receive the snow and bear up under it, and I know by much observation that the highest cedars of Christendom lift their higher branches toward God when the snows of trouble are coming.

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water, and make my hands ever so clean, yet shall 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, right, and whose actions are always right, 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 Nevada and splendor fit to enthrone an archangel.

In the time of Graham, the essayist, in one mountain district of Scotland an average of ten snowflakes perished every winter in the snow drifts, and so low as proposed that at the summit of every mile a pole fifteen feet high and with two cross pieces 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 mountain would hear the sound and take the direction given by this pole with the cross pieces and give 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!"

The fact that the electric light has inflicted a severe blow at the occupation of the "midnight marauder" is now a familiar one, and a recent expression of opinion on the subject of protecting houses against the depredations of house-breakers has called special attention to the means which are now available for that purpose. The task of the cracksmen is becoming a weary and comparatively profitless one, and it is easy to believe that the lament which is occasionally wafted from his lips into the columns of the daily paper, that "there is now nothing in it," is uttered with the utmost sincerity. At one time it was a very easy matter for a burglar to saw through a bar or cut a pane of glass, but with the electrical appliances now being used in many houses, and which are so easily adjusted and so reliable in operation, it is only a question of time when all houses will be provided with them. The slightest movement of door or window after the alarm has been set will form a connection and start a gong in a distant part of the house. The alarm is thus given to the inmates, while the man, unconscious of the fact, is busily occupied in looking after the family silver. The same connection that alarms the sleeper may convey the alarm to the nearest police station, so that by the time the burglar gets through with his engrossing work he may find a couple of policemen outside patiently waiting his pleasure. Not long ago an enthusiastic merchant in Paris was so delighted with the working of this form of burglar alarm that he became enamored of thief-catching as a sport. He cleverly spread stories of the boards of jewelry and valuable bric-a-brac that were to be found in certain rooms of his house, and the bait was an irresistible one for the master cracksmen of the city. The merchant bagged his game very neatly several times, but at last the story crept out, and his unique sporting career came to a sudden end. Screen doors as well as windows can be provided with the alarm fittings so that the least attempt to make a hole will close the circuit and let the inmates of the house know of the advent of their unwelcome visitor.—Chicago News.

The Sap-Sucker. A great many useful birds have been destroyed on the erroneous charge that they are in some way wholly detrimental to the farmers' interests with no compensating habits, and twice as many more that are admitted to be useful in some degree, in the mistaken belief that on the whole they are the authors of more harm than good. In the first category may be named the sap-sucker that is commonly considered a fair target for everybody's gun, on the plea that he is continually injuring young fruit trees for the purpose of feeding on the tender bark or sucking the sap, as popularly supposed. This is the head and front of his offending, for it is never pretended that he seriously injures fruit or grains. Close observers, however, are fully convinced, that the little bird in question does not make original holes in the bark of the tree at which it is pecking, but that all its efforts are directed to destroying and devouring the borers that are concealed in holes already existing, which the birds have not made. At the very worst the bird does no more than in some cases to widen the hole enough to allow its beak to reach the worm. As good an authority as Cassius M. Clay is on record as saying, from his own study of its habits, that the sap-sucker is the deadliest foe of the vermin which destroy our trees, and that every one should encourage the multiplication of sap-suckers.—St. Louis Republic.

Weight of Ice on Tree Branches. A gentleman of Brookline has sent to the Listener an account of a very interesting experiment in taking the weight of the ice upon tree branches during an ice-storm, when the ice on the trees was at its maximum. This gentleman thus describes the result of his experiment: "A branch of the syringa which weighed one pound had five pounds of ice on it, and a branch of pine needles weighing one pound had twelve pounds of ice on it. I got these weights by taking the wood with the ice on it at first, and then taking weight of wood after the ice had melted. This does not represent correctly the enormous strain or actual pressure exerted on the branches of trees by these ice-storms, but will easily account for the sad breakage of trees so common the past few days, and the dangers from these ice-storms on both trees and wires." It was surely a most fortunate thing that, during the days when the ice remained on the trees, we had no high winds. There must have been in that case, much more damage than was inflicted.—Boston Transcript.

The German Emperor's Toast.

The Emperor of Germany drank the following toast at the marriage of his sister Victoria: "I stand here in place of my father, now resting in God, who did not grant that he should live to see this day. May the blessing of our departed father and our beloved mother, and of your parents (turning to the bridegroom) rest upon you. I stand here also as the head of the royal house. You may always rely upon my protection and my paternal friendship. I think the health of the bridal pair."

Who? Bobbin's Electric Soap was first made in 1861 it cost 25 cents a bar. It is precisely the same ingredients and quality now and doesn't cost half. Buy it of your grocer and preserve your clothes. If he hasn't it, he will get it.

NINE-TENTHS of the raisins sold in this country are grown in California.

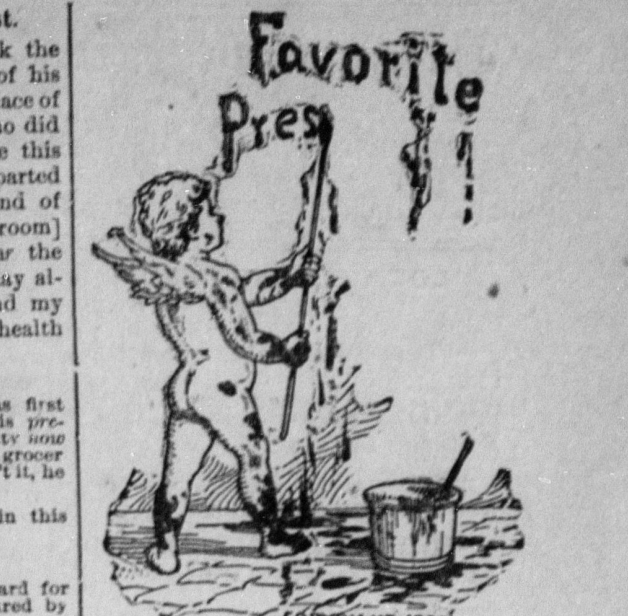
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