

CHRIST'S GARDEN.

He Bought It, Planted It, and He Shall Have It.

There are Many Bright Flowers There—Jesus Plucks the Sweet Blossoms When He Chooses and Takes Them to His Home—They are His Own.

Rev. Dr. Talmage's latest sermon was a very timely one. He compared the church of Christ to a beautiful garden, filled with the choicest blossoms and fruits, and he urged his hearers to enter it.

The Bible is a great poem. We have in it faultless rhythm and bold imagery and startling antithesis and rapturous lyric and sweet pastoral and instructive narrative and devotional psalm; thoughts expressed in style more solemn than that of Milton, more terrible than that of Dante, more natural than that of Wordsworth, more impassioned than that of Pollock, more tender than that of Cowper, more weird than that of Spenser.

This great poem brings all the genius of the earth into its coronet, and it weaves the flames of judgment into its garlands, and pours eternal harmonies into its rhythm. Everything in this book touches it makes beautiful, from the plain stones of the summer threshing floor to the daughters of Nahor sipping the trough for the camels; from the fish pools of Heshbon up to the Psalmist praising God with the diapason of storm and whirlwind and Job's imagery of Orion, Arcturus, and the Pleiades.

My text leads us into a scene of summer tenderness. The world has had a great many beautiful gardens. Charlemagne added to the glory of his reign by decreeing that they be established all through the realm—deciding even the names of the flowers to be planted there. Henry IV., at Montpelier, established gardens of bewitching beauty and luxuriance, gathering into them Alpine, Pyrenean, and French plants. One of the sweetest spots on earth was the garden of Shenstone, the poet. His writings have made but little impression on the world, but his garden, "The Leasowes," will be immortal. To the natural advantages of that place was brought the perfection of art. Arbor and terrace and slope and rustic temple and reservoir and urn and fountain here had their crowning. Oak and yew and hazel put forth their richest foliage.

There was no life more diligent, no soul more ingenious, than that of Shenstone, and all that diligence and genius he brought to the adornment of that one treasured spot. He gave £300 for it; he sold it for £17,000. And yet I am to tell you to-day of a richer garden than any I have mentioned. It is the garden spoken of in my text, the garden of the church, which belongs to Christ. He bought it, planted it, He owns it, and He shall have it. Walter Scott, in his outlay at Abbotsford, ruined his fortune; and now, in the crimson flowers of those gardens, you can almost think or imagine that you see the blood of that old man's broken heart. The payment of the last £100,000 sacrificed him. But I have to tell you that Christ's life and Christ's death were the outlay of this beautiful garden of the church, of which my text speaks. Oh, how many sighs and tears and pangs and agonies! Tell me, ye women who saw Him hang! Tell me, ye executioners who lifted Him and let Him down! Tell me, thou sun that didst hide; ye rocks that told Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. If the garden of the church belongs to Christ, certainly He has a right to walk in it. Come, then, O blessed Jesus, to-day; walk up and down these aisles, and pluck what Thou wilt of sweetness for Thyself.

The church, in my text is appropriately compared to a garden, because it is the place of choice, of select fruits and of choicest irrigation. That would be a strange garden in which there were no flowers. If nowhere else, they would be along the borders or at the gateway. The homeliest taste will dictate something, if it be only the old-fashioned hollyhock, or dahlia, or daffodil; but if there be larger means, then you will find the Mexican cactus, and blazing azaleas, and clustering oleander. Well, now, Christ comes to His garden, and He plants there some of the brightest spirits that ever flowered upon the world. Some of them are violets, inconspicuous, but sweet as Heaven. You have to search and find them. You do not see them very often, perhaps, but you find where they have been by the brightened face of the invalid, and the sprig of geranium on the stand, and the new window curtains keeping out the glare of the sunlight.

They are, perhaps, more like the ranunculus, creeping sweetly along amid the thorns and briars of life, giving kiss for sting; and many a man who has had in his way some great black rock of trouble, has found that they have covered it all over with flowery jasmine, running in and out amid the crevices. These flowers in Christ's garden are not, like the sunflower, gaudy in the light, but wherever darkness hovers over a soul that needs to be comforted, there they stand, night-blooming cereuses.

But in Christ's garden there are plants that may be better compared to the Mexican cactus—thorns without, loveliness within; men with sharp points of character. They would almost every one that touches them. They are hard to handle. Men pronounce them nothing but thorns, but Christ loves them notwithstanding all their sharpness. Many a man has had a very hard ground to cultivate, and it has only been through severe trial he has raised even the smallest crop of grace. A very harsh minister was talking to a very placid elder, and the placid elder said to the harsh minister: "Doctor, I do wish you would control your temper." "Ah," said the minister to the elder: "I control more temper in five minutes than you do in five years."

It is harder for some men to do right than for other men to do right. The grace that would elevate you to the seventh heaven might not keep your brother from knocking a man down. I had a friend who came to me, and said, "I dare not join the church." I said, "Why?" "Oh," he said, "I have such a violent temper. Yesterday morning I was crossing very early at the Jersey City ferry, and I saw a milkman pour a large quantity of water into the milk can, and I said to him, 'I think that will do,' and he insulted me and I knocked him down. Do you think I ought to join the church?" Nevertheless, that very same man who was so harsh in his behavior, loved Christ and could not speak of sacred things without tears of emotion and affection. Thorns without, sweetness within—the best specimen of the Mexican cactus I ever saw.

There are others planted in Christ's garden who are always radiant, always impressive—more like the roses of deep hue that we occasionally find, called "Giants of Battle," the Martin Luthers, St. Pauls, Chrysostoms, Wickliffes, Latimers, and Samuel Rutherford. What in other men is a spark, in them a conflagration. When they sweat, they sweat great drops of blood. When they pray, their prayer takes fire. When they preach, it is a Pentecost. When they fight, it is a Thermopylae. When they die, it is a martyrdom. You find a great many roses in the gardens, but only a few "Giants of Battle." Men say: "Why don't you have more of them in the church?" I say: "Why don't you have in the world more Humboldts and Wellingtons?" God gives to some ten talents; to another one.

In this garden of the church which Christ has planted I also find the snowdrops, beautiful, but cold-looking, seemingly another phase of winter. I mean those Christians who are precise in their tastes, unimpassioned, pure as snowdrops, and as cold. They never shed any tears, they never get excited, they never say anything rashly, they never do anything precipitately. Their pulses never flutter, their nerves never twitch, their indignation never boils over. They live longer than most people, but their life is in a minor key. They never run up to "C" above the staff. In their music of life they have no staccato passages. Christ planted them in the church, and they must be of some service or they would not be there; snowdrops—always snowdrops.

But I have not told you of the most beautiful flower of all this garden spoken of in the text. If you see a century plant your emotions are started. You say: "Why, this flower has been a hundred years gathering up for one bloom, and it will be a hundred years more before other petals will come out." But I have to tell you of a plant that was gathered up from all eternity, and that 1900 years ago put forth its bloom never to wither. It is the passion plant of the cross. Prophets foretold it; Bethlehem shepherds looked upon it in the bud; the rocks shook at its bursting, and the dead got up in their winding-sheets to see its full bloom. It is a crimson flower—blood at the roots, blood on the branches, blood on all the leaves. Its breath is Heaven. Come, oh winds from the north and winds from the south and winds from the east and winds from the west and bear to all the earth the sweet-smelling savor of Christ, my Lord!

His worth if all the nations knew, Sure the whole earth would love Him, too. Again, the church may be appropriately compared to a garden, because it is a place of fruits. That would be a strange garden which had in it no berries, no plums, or peaches, or apricots. The coarser fruits are planted in the orchard, or they are set out on the sunny hillside; but the choicest fruits are kept in the garden. So in the world outside the church, Christ has planted a great many beautiful things—patience, charity, generosity, integrity; but He intends the choicest fruits to be in the garden, and if they are not there, then shame on the church.

Religion is not a mere sentimentality. It is a practical, life-giving healthful fruit—not posies, but apples. "Oh," says somebody, "I don't see what your garden of the church has yielded." In reply I ask where would your asylums come from? and your hospitals? and your institutions of mercy? Christ planted every one of them; He planted them in his garden. When Christ gave sight to Bartimeus he laid the cornerstone to every blind asylum that has ever been built. When Christ soothed the demoniac of Galilee He laid the cornerstone of every lunatic asylum that has ever been established. When Christ said to the sick man, "Take up thy bed and walk," He laid the cornerstone of every hospital the world has ever seen. When Christ said, "I was in prison and ye visited Me," He laid the cornerstone of every prison-reform association that has ever been organized. The church of Christ is a glorious garden, and it is full of fruit.

I know there is some poor fruit in it. I know there are some weeds that ought to be thrown over the fence. I know there are some crab-apple trees that ought to be cut down. I know there are some wild grapes that ought to be uprooted; but are you going to destroy the whole garden because of a little marbled fruit? You will find worm-eaten leaves in Fontainebleau, and insects that sting in the fairy groves of the Champs Elysees. You do not tear down and destroy the whole garden because there are a few specimens of marbled fruit. I admit there are men and women in the church who ought not to be there; but let us be just as frank and admit the fact that there are hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands of glorious Christian men and women—holy, blessed, useful, consecrated, and triumphant. There is no grander, nobler collection in all the earth than the collection of Christians.

Again, the church in my text is appropriately called a garden, because it is thoroughly irrigated. No garden could prosper long without plenty of water. I have seen a garden in the midst of a desert, yet blooming and luxuriant. All around us was death and barrenness; but there were pipes,

aqueducts, reaching from this garden up to the mountains, and through those aqueducts the water came streaming down and tossing up into beautiful fountains until every root and leaf and flower was saturated. That is like the church. The church is a garden in the midst of a great desert of sin and suffering; but it is well irrigated; for "our eyes are unto the hills from whence cometh our help." From the mountains of God's strength there flow down rivers of gladness. "There is a river the stream whereof shall make glad the city of our God." Preaching the gospel is one of the aqueducts. The Bible is another. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are aqueducts. Water to slake the thirst, water to wash the unclean, water tossed high up in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, showing us the rainbow around the throne. Oh, was there ever a garden so thoroughly irrigated? You know that the beauty of Versailles and Chatsworth depends very much upon the great supply of water. I came to the latter place, Chatsworth, one day when strangers are not to be admitted, but with an inducement which always seemed as potent with an Englishman as an American, I got in, and then the gardener went far up above the stairs of stone and turned on the water. I saw it gleaming on the dry pavement, coming down near I could hear the musical rush, and all over the high, broad stairs it came foaming, flashing, roaring down, until sunlight and wave in gleesome wrestle tumbled at my feet. So it is with the church of God. Everything comes from above; pardon from above, joy from above, adoption from above, sanctification from above.

Hark! I hear the larch of the garden gate, and I look to see who is coming. I hear the voice of Christ: "I am come into my garden." I say: "Come in, O Jesus, we have been waiting for thee; walk all through the paths. Look at the flowers; look at the fruit; pluck that which thou wilt for thyself." Jesus comes into the garden and up to that old man, and touches him, and says: "Almost home, father; not many more aches for thee; I will never leave thee; take courage a little longer and I will steady thy tottering steps, and I will soothe thy troubles and give thee rest. Courage, old man." Then Christ goes up another garden path, and he comes to a soul in trouble and says: "Peace! all is well. I have seen thy tears. I have heard thy prayer. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he will preserve thy soul. Courage, oh, troubled spirit!"

Then I see Jesus going up another garden path, and I see great excitement among the leaves, and I hasten up that garden path to see what Jesus is doing there, and lo! He is breaking off flowers, sharp and clean from the stem, and I say: "Stop, Jesus, don't kill those beautiful flowers." He turns to me and says: "I have come into my garden to gather lilies, and I mean to take these up to a higher terrace, for the garden around My palace, and there I will plant them; and in better soil and in better air they shall put forth brighter leaves and sweeter tenderness, and no frost shall touch them forever." And I looked up into His face and said: "Well, it is His garden, and He has a right to do what He will with it. Thy will be done!" the hardest prayer ever man made.

The Heaven of your little ones will not be fairly begun until you get there. All the kindnesses shown them by immortals will not make them forget you. There they are, the radiant throngs that went out from your homes. I throw a kiss to the sweet darlings. They are all well now in the palace. The crippled child has a sound foot now. A little lame child says: "Ma, will I be lame in Heaven?" "No, my dear, you won't be lame in Heaven." A little blind child says: "Ma, will I be blind in Heaven?" "No, my dear, you won't be blind in Heaven. They are all well there."

Oh, ye weary souls! come into Christ's garden to-day and pluck a little heart-ease. Christ is the only rest and the only pardon for a perturbed spirit. Do you not think your chance has almost come? You men and women who have been waiting year after year for some good opportunity in which to accept Christ, but have postponed it five, ten, twenty, thirty years—do you not feel as if now your hour of deliverance and pardon and salvation had come? Oh man, what grudge hast thou against thy poor soul that thou wilt not let it be saved? I feel as if salvation must come to-day in some of your hearts.

Some years ago a vessel struck on the rocks. They had only one lifeboat. In that lifeboat the passengers and crew were getting ashore. The vessel was foundered, and was sinking deeper and deeper, and that one boat could not take the passengers very swiftly. A little girl stood on the deck waiting for her turn to get into the boat. The boat came and went, but her turn did not seem to come. After a while she could wait no longer, and she leaped on the sea, crying to the boatman, "Save me next! Save me next!" Oh, how many have gone ashore into God's mercy, and yet you are clinging to the wreck of sin! Others have accepted the pardon of Christ, but you are in peril. Why not, this moment, make a rush for your immortal rescue, crying until Jesus shall hear you, and Heaven and earth ring with the cry, "Save me next! Save me next!" Now is the day of salvation! Now! Now!

This Sabbath is the last for some of you. It is about to sail for ever. Her bell tolls. The planks thunder back in the gangway. She shoves off. She floats out toward the great ocean of eternity. Wave farewell to your last chance for Heaven. "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Invited to revel in a garden, you die in a desert. May God Almighty, before it is too late, break that infatuation.

ITEMS OF STATE NEWS.

BETHLEHEM, Pa., May 2.—The 2-year-old son of Charles Deitzel was terribly burned in a brush fire yesterday afternoon and died soon afterwards. The child's mother was badly burned in trying to save him.

ERIE, Pa., May 4.—The Populists of Erie county held a convention on Saturday and elected delegates to the national and state conventions. Mrs. Helen Johnson was elected a delegate to the national convention in St. Louis.

WILKESBARRE, Pa., May 4.—While Rev. D. M. George, pastor of the Congregational church, Pittston, was in the act of giving the benediction yesterday Mrs. Richard Jeffries, who occupied a seat in the front pew, dropped dead.

PITTSBURG, May 4.—Benjamin Greusek, a 3-year-old boy, was on Saturday given a verdict of \$9,023 against the Pittsburgh, Allegheny and Manchester Street railway for the loss of a leg. This is the second heavy damage verdict against the company in one week, Martin Julius obtaining \$4,000 damages a few days ago.

SUBURBANIA, Pa., May 5.—Robert Barnard, a prominent farmer of Harford, this county, was killed by one of his horses yesterday in a horrible manner. Barnard had gone to the stable to look after an animal, and while he was patting it on the nose the horse suddenly leaped upon him and buried its teeth in his throat, causing almost instant death. The animal will probably be killed.

ALTOONA, Pa., May 5.—Friends of H. A. Gardner, the cashier of the Second National bank, who ran away two years ago after looting the institution, are responsible for the statement that he is about to return and stand trial. The institution is put forth that he was not altogether responsible for the bank's condition, and that he did not profit by the crooked transactions that wrecked the institution.

NEW YORK, May 4.—Ex-Senator Wallace, of Pennsylvania, is still lying at the point of death at his rooms in this city. Mr. Wallace took some nourishment today. Early last evening he appeared to be sinking, but he afterwards rallied, and at midnight showed more vitality than for some time past. Three of the ex-senator's children arrived yesterday to be present at the bedside of their dying parent.

CHESTER, Pa., May 4.—James S. Post is under arrest here, charged with forgery. It is alleged he forged a \$52 check on Thomas L. Briggs and attempted to have it cashed at Taylor & Wright's hotel. The forgery was discovered when Mr. Wright asked if it was good. When searched Post had a note in his pocket signed by Thomas Swanger, with whom he lately worked, for \$52 on the Chester National bank. This is also said to be a forgery.

PHILADELPHIA, May 5.—H. H. Holmes, the convicted murderer, has now less than two days to live, as Sheriff Clement says the execution will occur about 10 o'clock Thursday morning. The sheriff asserts that there will be no sensational scene on the gallows. If Holmes has anything to say it must be said from his cell, before the march to the scaffold. About fifty persons, including officials and newspaper men, will witness the hanging.

WILKESBARRE, Pa., May 5.—Michael Gilinsky went to work in the Nottingham mine yesterday for the first time, and in trying to find the Ross vein he lost his way. Entering an abandoned opening with a naked lamp he set fire to an old feeder of gas, and an explosion followed. Gilinsky was badly burned and the other miners became panic stricken. Great excitement prevailed as the report was heard throughout the workings, but there was little damage done to the mine.

WILKESBARRE, Pa., May 4.—John Cawley and Thomas Reynolds, young men of Broderick, near here, were arrested on Saturday for attempted highway robbery. Cawley was jailed, but Reynolds, who is probably fatally wounded, is at home. The men are thought to be guilty of a number of highway robberies and burglaries that have been committed of late. Wednesday night they held up John Leary, who drew his revolver and shot Reynolds. Cawley then fled. Leary reported to the police, who advised him to say nothing until they could locate the highwaymen.

HARRISBURG, May 5.—Benjamin J. Haywood yesterday took the oath of office as state treasurer. Major James E. Barnett, deputy secretary of the commonwealth, administered the oath. Mr. Haywood succeeds Colonel Samuel M. Jackson, under whom he has served as cashier the past two years. Governor Hastings gave a dinner at the executive mansion last evening in honor of the retiring state treasurer. Mr. Haywood has appointed Major Henry C. Greenawald, of Franklin county, cashier of the state treasury. Mr. Greenawald now holds the position of assistant cashier.

EASTON, Pa., May 6.—William H. Dickey, of Phillipsburg, ex-commissioner of streets, was yesterday admitted to the Easton hospital suffering from a fractured skull, the result of being struck on the head with a stove shaker by his wife, Dickey and his wife had a quarrel, and in her anger she struck him twice with the shaker, knocking him unconscious. His condition is critical, and owing to his advanced age his recovery is doubted. Dickey was married for a second time less than a year ago, and ever since he and his wife have lived unhappily. Mrs. Dickey is 65 years old and her husband 68.

SUNBURY, Pa., May 5.—William S. Kerstetter, a young farmer, shot and killed his wife, Caroline, yesterday afternoon. Kerstetter's mother was so shocked by the tragedy that she fell dead of heart failure while running to a neighbor's house for help. The Kerstetters lived on a farm near the village of Seven Points, four miles from here. The murderer shot his wife as she stepped out of the kitchen door to a side porch. A full charge of buckshot entered her brain, and she died an hour afterward. Coroner Shindel arrested Kerstetter and brought him to the county prison here. Kerstetter was ill with the grip several months ago, and his mind was affected. There was no motive for the crime.

PITTSBURG, May 4.—Lorin Chambers, who is charged with being instrumental in swindling thousands of people in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia within the past few years, is in a cell at the county jail. His arrest ends a long chase. Lorin Chambers is the oldest son of a good old Philadelphia family. In the summer of 1894 Chambers came to Pittsburgh, accompanied by his brother, W. D. Chambers, and R. H. Black and N. H. Miller. They opened an office on Fourth avenue under the name of the Commercial Loan and Trust company. The plan of this institution was the sale of bonds, the par value of which was alleged to be \$500, to poor people. The scheme was new then, and hundreds of people invested. Subsequently the quartette disappeared without redeeming any of the bonds.

do you eat iron

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