

DAYS OF FESTIVITY.

Sunshine and Shadow on the Cradle of the Saviour.

THE STORY OF THE INCARNATION

Dr. Talmage Takes His Text From What Many Consider the Dullest and Most Unimportant Chapter in the New Testament, But He Finds It Full of Practical, Startling and Eternal Interest.

Washington, Dec. 24.—The story of the incarnation is here told by Dr. Talmage in a new way, and practical use is made of these days of festivity; text, Matthew i, 17, "So all the generations from Abraham to David are 14 generations, and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are 14 generations, and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are 14 generations."

From what many consider the dullest and most unimportant chapter of the New Testament I take my text, and find it full of practical, startling and eternal interest. This chapter is the front door of the New Testament, through which all the splendors of evangelism and apostolicity enter. Three times 14 generations are spoken of in my text—that is, 42 generations, reaching down to Christ. They all had relation to him. And at least 42 generations past affect us. If they were good, we feel the result of the goodness. If they were bad, we feel the results of their wickedness. If some were good and some were bad, it is an interesting influence that puts its mighty hand upon us. And as we feel the effect of at least 42 generations past we will in turn influence at least 42 generations to come. If the world shall last 1,000 years. So you see the cradle is more important than the grave.

I propose to show you some of the shadows upon the Christic cradle of Bethlehem and then the sunshine that poured in upon the pillow of straw. Notice among the shadows on that infant's bed that there was here and there a specimen of dissolute ancestry. Beautiful Ruth his ancestress? Oh, yes! David's Asa one of his forefathers? Oh, yes! Honest Joseph his father? Oh, yes! Holy Mary his mother? Oh, yes! But in that genealogical table were idolatrous and cruel Ammon and oppressive Rehoboam and some men whose abominations may not be particularized. So you see bad men may have good descendants. One of the most consecrated men I ever knew was the son of a man who lived and died a blasphemer. In the line of an oppressive Rehoboam comes a gracious and merciful and glorious Christ. Great encouragement for those who had in the 42 generations that preceded them, however close by or however far back, some instances of pernicious and baleful and corrupt ancestry.

To my amazement I found in those parts of Australia to which many years ago felons were transported from England that the percentage of crime was less than in those parts of Australia originally settled by honest men and good women. Some who are now on judicial benches in Australia and in high governmental position and in learned and useful professions and leaders in social life are the grandsons and granddaughters of men and women who were exiled from Great Britain to Australia for arson and theft and assault and fraud and murder.

Since we are all more or less affected by our ancestry we ought to be patient with those who go wrong, remembering that they may be the victims of unhappy antecedents. How lenient it ought to make us in our judgments of the fallen! Perhaps they had 42 generations back of them pushing them the wrong way. Five hundred years before they were born there may have been a percentage of iniquity augmented by a corrupt parentage 200 years ago. Do not blame a man because he cannot swim, up the rapids of Niagara. Do not blame a ship captain because he cannot outride a Caribbean whirlwind. The father of this man who does wrong may have been all right and his mother all right, but away back in the centuries there may have started a bad propensity which he now feels. One of the Ten Commandments given on Mount Sinai recognizes the fact that evil may skip a generation. When the commandment speaks of visiting "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation," but says nothing about the second generation; and if evil may skip one generation why not two and three and four and five generations, making a mighty leap and alighting very hard upon the head and the heart of some poor victim? Better be a little merciful to war's culprit lest after awhile some hereditary evil born in the year 1600 or 1700, having skipped the centuries, alight just as heavy upon you.

Another shadow on the Christic cradle was that it stood under a deprivileged king. Herod was at that time ruler and the complete impersonation of all despotisms. It was an unfavorable time for innocence to expect good treatment.

Historians say that it was at a time of peace that Christ was born, but his birth aroused an antagonism of which the Bethlehem massacre was only a feeble expression. War of the mightiest nation of the earth opened

against that cradle! The influence that came forth that night from that surrounding of camels and sheep and oxen challenged the iniquities of all the centuries and will not cease until it has destroyed them. What a pronouncement went forth from that black and barbarian throne, practically saying, "Slay all the babes under 2 years of age, and that wide slaughter will surely include the death of the one child that most threatens my dominion!" Awful time was it for the occupant of that cradle! If he escape the knife of the assassin, then the wild beast's paw, or the bandit's clutch, or the midnight chill between Bethlehem of Judaea and Cairo, will secure his destruction. All the powers of earth and all the demons of hell bombarded that cradle.

Another shadow upon that Christic cradle was the obscurity of the place of birth. Bethlehem was an obscure village. David, the shepherd boy, had been born there, but after he became general and king he gave it no significance. I think never mentioning it but to ask for a drink of water out of the old well to which he used to go in childhood—the village so small and unimportant that it had to be separated in mind from another Bethlehem then existing and so was called Bethlehem of Judaea. There was a great capital of Jerusalem; there were the 15 beautiful cities on the beach of Galilee, any of them a good place to be born in; there were great towns famous at that time, but the nativity we today celebrate was in a village which Christ intimated had been called by some "the least among the princes of Juda." Christ himself was to make the town famous for all time and all eternity. So heroes in later days by their deeds have given celebrity to neighborhoods that would never otherwise have been heard of beyond the radius of a few hundred miles. What a place for Christ to arrive at and to start from! The hero of the eternities!

O men and women of Messianic opportunity, why do you not make the place of your nativity memorable for your philanthropies?—by the churches you build, the free libraries you open, the college you endow? Go back to the village where you were born, as George Peabody went back to Danvers, Mass., and with your wealth bless the neighborhood where in childhood you played and near by where your father and mother sleep the last sleep. By some such charity invite the Bethlehem angels to come back again, and over the plain house of your nativity ring out the old anthem of "Good will to men." Christ, born in an obscure place, made it so widely known by his self-sacrifices and divine charity that all around the earth the village of Bethlehem has its name woven in garlands and chanted in "Te Deums" and built in houses of prayer.

It was while the peasant and his wife were on a visit for purposes of enrollment that Jesus was born. The Bible translators got the wrong word when they said that Joseph and Mary had gone to Bethlehem to be "taxed." People went no farther then to get taxed than they do now. The effort of most people always has been to escape taxation. Besides that, these two humble folk had nothing to tax. The man's turban that protected his head from the sun was not worth taxing; the woman's sandals which kept her feet from being cut by the limestone rock, of which Bethlehem is mostly made up, were not worth taxing. No; the fact is that a proclamation had been made by the emperor that all the people between Great Britain and Parthia and of those lands included should go to some appointed place and give their names in, be registered and announce their loyalty to the Roman emperor. During that patriotic and loyal visit the first cry of the Divine Boy was heard.

They had walked 80 miles over a rough road to give in their names and take the oath of allegiance. Would we walk 80 miles to announce our allegiance to our king, one Jesus? Caesar Augustus wanted to know by the record on which that man and that woman wrote their names, or had them written, just how many people in his empire he could depend on in case of exigency.

In all our churches there are so many half and half disciples, so many one-third espousers. They rather think the Bible is true, at any rate parts of it, and they hope that somehow Christianity will disenthrall the nations. They stay away from church on communion days and hope when they have lived as long as they can in this world they can somehow sneak into heaven. Oh, give in your names! Be registered on the church record down here and in the Lamb's Book of Life up there. Let all the world know where you stand, if you have to go as far as Joseph and Mary walked, if you have to go 80 miles before you find just the right form of worship and just the right creed, start in this modern December, as those villagers started in an ancient December, and amid the congratulations of church militant and church triumphant give in your names. It was while Joseph and Mary were on a visit of duty and obeying a reasonable command of Emperor Augustus that the star pointed to the place of nativity.

Another gleam of sunshine striking through the shadows above that Christic cradle was the fact of a special divine protection. Herod was determined upon the child's destruction. The monster put all his wits together in stratagem for the stopping of that young life just started. He dramatized piety. He suddenly got religious. He would leave his

palace and take, chariot and have steeds whipped up so that he could kneel at that cradle. We have to smile at what the imperial villain said when he ordered, "Go and search diligently for the young child, and when ye have found him bring me word, that I may go and worship him also." All the detectives he sent out failed in the search. You cannot reasonably account for that unhurt cradle except on the theory of a special divine protection. And most cradles are likewise defended. Can you understand why so many children, with all the epidemics that assail them and all their climbing to dangerous heights and all their perilous experiments with explosives and their running against horses' hoofs and darning of trolleys and carts fast driven, yet somehow get through, especially boys of high spirit and that are going to amount to much? I account for their coming through all right, with only a few wounds and bruises, by the fact that they are divinely protected. All your charges of "Don't do this" and "Don't, do that" and "Don't go there" seem to amount to nothing. They are the same reckless creatures about whom you are constantly anxious and wondering what is the matter now. Divinely protected! The most of your children would have been dead long ago but for that.

Another gleam of light scattering some of the gloom of that Christic pillow in Bethlehem was the fact that it was the starting place of the most wonderful of all careers. Looking at Christ's life from mere worldly standpoints, it was amazingly beyond all capacity of pen or tongue or canvas to express. Without taking a year's curriculum in any college or even a day at any school, yet saying things that the mightiest intellects of subsequent days have quoted and tried to expound. Great literary works have for the most part been the result of much elaboration. Edmund Burke rewrote the conclusion of his speech against Warren Hastings 16 times. Lord Brougham rewrote his speech in behalf of Queen Caroline 20 times, but the sermon on the mount seemed extemporaneous. Christ was eloquent without ever having studied one of the laws of oratory. He was the greatest orator that ever lived. It was not an eloquence Demosthenic or Ciceronic or like that of Jean Baptiste Massillon or like that which William Wirt, himself a great orator, was overcome with in log cabin meeting houses of Virginia when the blind preacher cried out in his sermon, "Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ died like a God."

Christ's oratory was unlike anything that went before or came after. Even the criticism of the world said, "Never man spake like this man." Dramatic? Why he took up a child out of the audience and set him on a table and by the embarrassed look of the child taught humility. He sent the prosecutors of a poor, sinful woman, blushing and confounded, out of the room by one sentence of sarcasm. Notice his power of emphasis and enunciation when he revealed himself after his resurrection by the peculiar way he pronounced the one word "Mary." His power of look shown by the way Peter, the great apostle, wilted under it. The book says, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." It was an omnipotent facial expression.

His power of hyperbole: A camel trying to crowd its hump through the eye of a sewing woman's needle and all that learned talk about a gate called the "needle's eye," only belittling the hyperbole. Power of sarcasm: The hypocrite styled by him "the whole who need not a physician." His power of peroration: The crashing of the timbers of the poorly built house on the beach of the Mediterranean. Power to take advantage of circumstances: When an auditor asked him whether they ought to pay taxes to Caesar, Christ practically said, "If any gentleman in this audience has in his pocket a Roman penny, I wish he would just hand it up to me." And someone handed him a penny, and then came the overwhelming answer of Christ, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

But the shadows have their uses. There must be a background to every good picture. Turner always put at least one fleck of cloud on his canvases, and the clouds of earth will be the background to bring out more mightily the brightness of heaven. And will it not be glorious if after all this scene of earthly vicissitudes we meet again in our Father's house and talk over the past in an everlasting holiday. But meanwhile look out for the cradles. How much they decide for this world and the next! When Christ was born at Bethlehem, that decided the redemption of the world. Oh, look out for the cradles! May a Bethlehem star of hope point down to each one of them and every hovering cloud be filled with chanting angels of mercy.

Just Like Boys.

You may see young gar-fish playing a game of leap-frog, just as you have seen the big boys at it.

A floating hawk-bill turtle just now is the under boy, and again and again the gar-fish leap over him.

Sometimes in the game the gar-fish lands squarely on the sleeper's back, when the indignant turtle takes a long breath and dashes away, scattering the various little fishes that have assembled to see the fun.

If you have ever had an aquarium be sure and have some gar-fish in it and the turtle, and you can see the sport for yourselves.

MAINE HOSPITAL SHIP.

The Gift of an American to the British Government.

Will Cost the Owner Several Thousand Dollars a Month.

All the world has been astonished by the generosity of Mr. B. N. Baker, of Baltimore, who has lent the American owned steamship Maine to the British Government as a hospital ship in the South African war. The use of the steamship has not only been offered, but all operating expenses will be paid by Mr. Baker as long as we need the vessel. We may also make any alterations in the construction for hospital service.

The wages of the Captain of the Maine are about \$100, the three mates and three engineers average \$60 each, and the crew of thirty-two seamen and firemen get \$25 a month each, making a total of \$1,500. Mr. Baker will pay the officers and men every thirty days. The Maine burns twenty-two tons of coal daily, and, calculating this at three dollars a ton, the coal bill each month will be \$1,980.

Stores for the ship's operation and foods will amount to \$1,000 every thirty days. Then there is an insurance premium of six or seven percent on the ship's valuation of \$200,000 to be carried. It will be seen that it will cost between \$4,000 and \$5,000 a month to operate the Maine. At the same time the ship is losing her monthly earnings of from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The Maine belongs to the fleet of twenty-five vessels owned by the Atlantic Transport line, which operates between New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and London. Mr. Baker is president of the company. The ships are owned by Americans, but are sailed under the British flag, because they can be constructed and operated more cheaply than under the Stars and Stripes. The head office of the company is at Baltimore. Shortly after war was declared Mr. Baker sent the following cablegram to the company's agents in London:

"Offer Her Majesty's Government the choice of steamers Maine, Maryland and Montana as hospital ship during the continuance of the war, fully manned; absolutely free, with permission to make any alterations necessary."

The reply read: "The government accepts offer, Maine will be accepted."

The Maine is now at London, and the daily press despatches tell how the American women of London are raising thousands of dollars to fit out the ship, and firms are falling over one another to supply free everything needed from the ships washing to docking the Maine.

Mr. Baker states that he offered the vessel through an appreciation of the protection offered his ships while under the British flag.

The Maine is a steel steamer, 316 feet long, 40 feet wide, and 29½ feet depth of hold. She registers 2,780 tons gross, and was built in West Hartlepool, England, in 1887. She has triple expansion engines and six bulkheads. Captain Frederick Stone is her master.

Mr. Baker is one of the first citizens in the business and social life of Baltimore, and he is described as not only a great financier, but a "hustler." He received the news of the loss of the steamship Mohegan on the Manacles in the English Channel by long distance telephone at midnight at his country home in Catonsville, a suburb ten miles from Baltimore. He deemed it his duty to go at once to the scene of the great wreck. He hastily packed up a few valises, ordered out his team and drove to Baltimore, reaching the city about two in the morning. He chartered a special locomotive and car to carry him to New York. He reached there at eight in the morning, and at nine was on the deck of a six day steamer which was pulling out from her pier and headed for Europe.

When Spain and the United States began hostilities Mr. Baker lent the

Missouri to the U. S. Government under the same conditions on which the Maine has been lent to Great Britain. She was operated by her regular officers and crew at an expense of thousands of dollars every month for nine months. Between August, 1898, and May, 1899, she carried 1,566 wounded and sick soldiers from Cuba and Porto Rico to the United States. Twenty-seven died during the voyages and twelve were buried at sea, but hundreds were saved.

The Navy Department having made a regular hospital ship of the Missouri, the U. S. Government purchased her last June, and she is now on her way to Manila to bring home the ill and injured.

What Must Be Taken Away.

The people of these islands know that Lord Salisbury is speaking the rigid truth when he says that we have not engaged in this war, as a nation, from any craving for gold fields or for territory. But since it is abundantly clear that no paper guarantees will bind the Boers, it is impossible to carry on the task we have set before us—the attainment of equal right for all—without taking away the territorial power and the military privileges that have been abused to the injury of our peaceable and law-abiding fellow subjects and to the danger of the Empire.—The Times.

COULD NOT DRESS ALONE.

A Nova Scotian Farmer Tells of His Intense Suffering From Rheumatism and How He Found Relief.

From the Bridgewater, N. S., Enterprise.

Such suffering as rheumatism causes the victim upon whom it fastens itself is almost unendurable. Only those who writhe under its pangs can imagine the joy of one who has been freed from its terrors. Mr. J. W. Folkenham, of New Elm, N. S., is one of those who have been released from pain, and who believes it his duty to let others know how a cure can be found. Mr. Folkenham is a farmer, and like all who follow this arduous but honorable calling, is subject to much exposure. It was this exposure that brought on his trouble and caused him so much suffering before he was rid of it. He says:—"In the spring of 1897 I contracted rheumatism. Throughout the whole summer I suffered from it, and about the first of October it became so bad that I could not get out of the house. The pains were located in my hip and back, and what I suffered can hardly be expressed. I became so helpless I could not dress myself without aid. Eventually the trouble spread to my hands and arms, and at times these would lose all feeling and become useless. In November I began using Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and after taking four boxes began to improve. After using six boxes the pains and soreness had all gone and I was able to do a hard day's work. I intend using a few more boxes as a precautionary measure, and I would earnestly advise those suffering from this painful trouble to give Dr. Williams' Pink Pills a fair trial and be made well."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure by going to the root of the disease. They renew and build up the blood, and strengthen the nerves, thus driving disease from the system. Avoid imitations by insisting that every box you purchase is enclosed in a wrapper bearing the full trade mark, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People.

Getting Even With Him.

"Money, money, money all the time," he growled when she said she needed a new bonnet. "Do you know how much it cost to keep you in the country this summer?"

"No," she replied, "I don't know, but I know it didn't cost so much as it did to keep you in the city."—Chicago Post.

How to Get On.

Blinkers—How did that fool De Chappie get into the Four Hundred? Winkers—His valet used to serve some one in the Prince of Wales' set. The Four Hundred admitted the valet, and then he introduced De Chappie.—New York Weekly.

Blue Ribbon Tea
Thanks its Millions of Consumers,
and wishes them all
Many Happy Returns of the Season.