

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1904.

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

REV. DR. TALMAGE HOLDS OUT HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

GOOD CAPITAL IS OPTIMISM

It is especially necessary to those who are striving for the world's betterment—contrasts drawn between the modern and the old-fashioned methods of New Year's time-work for the year.

Resolved according to Act of Parliament of Canada in the year 1904, by William Hall, of Toronto, as the Dep't of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., Jan. 1.—In this sermon the preacher brings to all, and especially to those who are striving for the world's betterment, a New Year's message of hope and encouragement. The text is Ecclesiastes xi., 4, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow."

What a change there is in our way of keeping the holidays from that of olden times! The old-fashioned New Year's and the old-fashioned Christmas, the old-fashioned Thanksgiving Day were as different from their successors as the poke bonnets and hoop-skirts and powdered curls of colonial days were different from the masterpieces of the milliners and dressmakers and hairdressers of modern times. We take the telegraph in the locomotive and the telegraph in annihilating distance, but I am not sure that they have not done more to separate the members of families. The greeting that now comes by wire from a son on the other side of the world in former times was brought by the son himself, who seldom went more than a day's coach ride from the old homestead. Then fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, cousins and grandchildren could all gather under the same roof. Then presents did not have to be done up in packages and sent days ahead across the continents or seas in time for the annual holidays. But each brother and sister, each child and parent, could deliver their Christmas gifts with a smile and seal their holiday good wishes with a loving kiss.

Some of us can remember the good old times when New Year's day was a day of hospitality, dedicated to the renewal of old acquaintanceships by a custom now almost fallen into desuetude. The good spirit of the new year seemed to say to all fathers and husbands and brothers and sons: "Go forth and find out how many friends you have in the world, and renew your old acquaintances. Go forth and encourage each home for the coming struggle of the new year." Then wives and mothers and daughters, in the early eighties kept open house. Every dining-room was filled with tempting viands. Everywhere on every street went the men folks calling, "Happy New Year!" Thus in many a town, faith in God and man on account of these friendly New Year salutations, a New Year's greeting is the sermon of this morning. With the same kindly spirit in which friends used to come to my mother's home and wish her a "Happy New Year" and with tender reminiscences of the past and cheerful wishes for the future make the day a joyous and hopeful one, I come to you this New Year Sabbath day. But instead of wishing you a "Happy New Year" in the brusque, happy-go-lucky way in which friend used to salute friend upon the street I am going, as your pastor, to have a heart to heart talk with you all your troubles and fears, and then I shall say: "Friend, for the past twelve months you have been looking on the dark side of life. You have been indulging too much in gloomy anticipations and anxieties. You do not seem to be willing to enter the battle of 1905 with a brave heart and a cheerful countenance. What is the matter? Then you will point out to me all the dark clouds that are hanging upon the edge of your horizon, and you will tell me why this New Year's day is to you a "blue Sunday." Then I shall try, by the help of God, to scatter those dark clouds and change your new year timidities of doubt into new year certainties of gospel hope.

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"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" "First," you answer, "because I have been defeated so often in the struggle of life that my backbone is gone. I have been like a sea captain who has been wrecked again and again until at last he feels that every threatening storm means a foundered ship. I am like a merchant who has been caught in a three or four great panics and again and again, through no fault of his own, has had his fortune swept away. He is timid about making a new venture. I am like a mother who has buried four or five of her babies, and has only one left. Each time the baby coughs or catches cold or has a fever the mother is almost beside herself with fear lest she might lose her only remaining child. It is well enough for some people with bright eyes to anticipate the joys of a coming year. But as for me, I have had so many misfortunes that I have only half a heart for my struggle which is ahead during the next twelve months."

When the great philosopher wrote the words of my text he was expressing a negative truth. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow," and the converse of that fact is that if a man will only go forth with a brave heart, if he will only plant and sow his seed faithfully and conscientiously, God will give him a large harvest. "The apostolic shall be a sure reward." Will you not believe this? Oh, man, will you not go forth to your coming year's work with a brave and a hopeful spirit for a coming conquest?

When there are some whose apprehensions of coming trial are based on facts of a different kind. "My trouble," says one, "is not due to a lack of faith in God or in my own ability, but to the loyalty of others. The apostolic advice not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers extends further than the marriage relation. I am finding that out in a broader sense of business. It is also mothers, brothers and sisters, cousins and grandchildren could all gather under the same roof. Then presents did not have to be done up in packages and sent days ahead across the continents or seas in time for the annual holidays. But each brother and sister, each child and parent, could deliver their Christmas gifts with a smile and seal their holiday good wishes with a loving kiss.

Why don't you help that young man who has just landed in town and is stranded? I grant that he has been a wayward boy; that his life is not what it ought to be, but in spite of that, why don't you help him? You know you can give him a position if you will. "Oh, you answer, "what is the use? I have tried to be a friend to young men of that past, but I am done now with turning my business house into a Christian mission. I draw the line sharply between business and philanthropy. I do my Christian work in church, but not in the store. I run the latter on business principles. When a man comes to me for work he has to have good recommendations or I will not employ him. Why, sir, I have befriended four young men in the past! I even went so far as to try to find one of those young men through college because he was the son of an old chum of mine who is now dead. All four turned out badly. They were ungrateful dogs at that! You cannot make something out of nothing."

Yes, I grant that your good seed in the case of these four young men may have been thrown away. But would it not be worth while to have four, five or even ten such good seed plantings amount to naught if only the eleventh "seed" took root in some young man's heart and saved just one young man? Would not the satisfaction you get from having led one young man to be saved for Christ compensate you for all your wasted labor upon nineteen young men who were not saved? God will not reward you according to the success of your labors, but according to the efforts you have honestly made, whether they have succeeded or failed. Do your duty and leave the result to God.

Oh, missionary worker in the New York slums, what is the good of your rescue missions and your testimonial meetings night after night? You know just as well as I know that nine-tenths of all your proselyted converts will become backsliders. That young woman who now arises with tears in her eyes and says, "Thank God, I have been saved from sin," may to-morrow be treading again the old path of wickedness. That man who signs the pledge to-night may be drunk again next week. That penitent gambler is only penitent until you give him a start in life again, and then he will gamble away his substance just the same as he has done in the past. Mrs. M. Bellington, South lately wrote a book entitled "After Prison, What?" After prison for most ex-convicts is prison again. Two-thirds of the inmates of the penitentiary serve more than one term each. Once a thief for many of them is always a thief. "All that you state is true," answers the missionary of the New York slums. "One-third, one-half, one, perhaps three-fourths of all our reformed cases may become backsliders. But if one out of every ten be saved, is not the tenth man worth all the effort we have bestowed on the other nine? All the seed the farmer plants does not fall on good soil. Shall the farmer cease to plant? All our labors for Christ may not bring in a gospel harvest, but are not the rewards we receive a multipotent blessing for our labors, no matter how great they may be? The New York missionary is right. "Yes," some one says, "that is very pretty talk, but it does not bear well the test of logic. If while I sow one good seed and other men are sowing acres, will not the acres

increase just as rapidly as the one seed? In time will not the earth instead of being covered with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea, be covered with the blood of a destroyed world? Instead of the world being better, as we would wish, is it not morally and spiritually becoming more and more depraved? Have I not a right, then, to my new year timidities? No, my brother! The reports of the gospel meteorologists do not bear out your theories.

Meteorology is as rational a science as chemistry, geology, biology, physics or any other science. Like a guarding general, the Government, against surprise, has organized its weather bureau and planted outposts stations everywhere. Thus no sooner does a storm start out on its mission of destruction than the weather bureau hits its signals of warning. The sailors run to cover, and fruit growers hold back their shipments, and railroad officials get out their snow plows and anticipate the attacks of the storm.

That the superintendent of the weather bureau can do in reading the positions of the atmospheric storm clouds the gospel meteorologist can do in telling us about the storm to do for the lost and the needy. I am not an angel. I make no pretense of being a perfect man, but I do try to do some good in the world. All most all my good intentions have failed for want of men who have made honest but futile attempts to help people, for the more you do for some people the less those people seem to be willing to be helped.

I do not want to lead a purposeless life, but I do not intend to be led for nothing. The desire not to throw away our good works is rational. When we plant seed we certainly want to reap the harvest. What would you think of a farmer who should say to you, "I will not plant a kernel of corn unless I am positively sure that from this kernel will grow a stubble of corn, or a grain of wheat, barley or buckwheat unless from this very kernel shall grow my thirty or a hundredfold return." Why, you would laugh such a farmer to scorn. You would say to him: "You do not know the first A B C of agriculture. A planter can afford to lose a thousand seeds if he can get a harvest from the remaining few that he plants." Yet all through life you can find men who estimate their successes and failures not by the glorious returns they receive from a few good seeds well planted, but by the failure of the many that have fallen in bad soil.

Why don't you help that young man who has just landed in town and is stranded? I grant that he has been a wayward boy; that his life is not what it ought to be, but in spite of that, why don't you help him? You know you can give him a position if you will. "Oh, you answer, "what is the use? I have tried to be a friend to young men of that past, but I am done now with turning my business house into a Christian mission. I draw the line sharply between business and philanthropy. I do my Christian work in church, but not in the store. I run the latter on business principles. When a man comes to me for work he has to have good recommendations or I will not employ him. Why, sir, I have befriended four young men in the past! I even went so far as to try to find one of those young men through college because he was the son of an old chum of mine who is now dead. All four turned out badly. They were ungrateful dogs at that! You cannot make something out of nothing."

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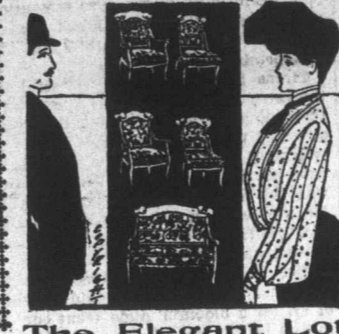
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