

TALE THAT IS TOLD.

Some Practical Thoughts on the Closing Year.

A Good Story or a Bad Story—Rev. Dr. Talmage Makes Some Suggestions as to Right Living.

Experiences of the Past as Guides for the Future Years of Our Lives.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 31, 1899.—In this holiday discourse Dr. Talmage takes the opportunity of offering some practical and useful suggestions; text, Psalms xc, "We spend our years as a tale that is told."

The Parables were 40 years in the wilderness, and during 38 years of the 40 nothing is recorded of them, and I suppose, 10 other emigrants had a duller or more uninteresting time than they had. So they got to telling stories to each other at night; and the best to guide them at night; stories of tribes destroying the reptiles of the wilderness; stories of personal encounter; it must have been an awful time to have had nothing to do for 38 years except to escape from the wilderness. So they whiled away the time in story telling. Indeed there were persons whose one business was to narrate stories, and they were paid by such tribes as they could pick up from the "surrounding country." To such instances our text refers when it says, "We spend our years as a tale that is told."

At this tremendous passage from the year 1899 to the year 1900 it will do us all good to consider that the whole life is a story—a good story or a bad story—a tragic story or a faithful story; a wise story or a foolish story; a clean story or a filthy story; a story of success or a story of failure. "We spend our years as a tale that is told."

In the first place I remark that every person's life is a very interesting story. My text does not depreciate "a tale that is told." We have all of us been entertained by the story teller when snow bound in the rail train; or in the group gathered around a blazing hearth, with some hunters at the mountain inn. Indeed it is a praiseworthy art to impersonate a good story-teller. If you doubt the practical and healthful and inspiring use of such a story, take down from the library Washington Irving's "Tales of a Traveller," or Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Twice Told Tales." But as interesting as any of these would be the story of many an obscure life, if the tale were as well told. Why do we all like biographies and autobiographies? Because they are stories of eminent human lives. But the story of the life of a backwoodsman, of a man who locks stupid, of one about whom you never heard, a life the most real and the most unpretending life there has been a compelling gladness and gloom of triumph and despair. Nothing that David Garrick ever enacted at Drury Lane Theatre in the way of tragedy or Charles Matthews ever played in Covent Garden in the way of comedy excelled things which are fit to be heard in the life of obscure men and women. Many a profound and learned sermon has put the audience to sleep, while some man whose phraseology could not be parsed and whose style was as flat as the highway made up by the plainest housewife has told the story of his life in a way that melted the prayer cloth into tears as easily as a warm April sun dissolves the snow of the previous night.

Oh, yes, while "we spend our years as a tale that is told" it is an interesting story. It is the story of an immortal, and that makes it interesting. He is launched on an ocean of eternal years, in a voyage that will never terminate. He is too late to repent of an action, or a dirge that will never come to its last bar. That is what makes the devotional meetings of modern times so much more interesting than they used to be. They are filled not with discourses, but with the subject of justification and sanctification, but with stories of what God has done for the soul—how everything suddenly changed; how the promises became balsamic in times of laceration; how the life was personally helped out and helped up and helped on. Nothing can stand before such a story of personal rescue, personal transformation, personal illumination. The mightiest and most skillful argument against Christianity collapses under the ungrammatical but sincere statement. The athletic professor of natural philosophy goes down under the story of that backwoodsman's conversion.

The New Testament suggests the power of the "tale that is told." Christ was the most effective story teller of all the ages. The parables are only tales well told. Matchless stories: That of the traveller cut up by the thieves and the Samaritan paying his board bill at the tavern; that of the big owner, to which the invited guests sent in fictitious regrets; that of the shepherd answering the bleat of the lost sheep and all the rural neighbors that might help him catch the thief that it was safe in the barnyard; that of the bad boy, reduced

to the swine, through spending home with such banqueting and jewelry that it stuffed the older son with jealousy and discontent; that of the Pharisee full of brass knobs and the publican smiting his breast with a stroke that brought down the heavens in commiseration; stories about leprosy, about paralysis, about catalepsy, about drowsy, about ophthalmia—stories that he so well told that they have melted away to the present and will roll down through the entire future.

The most of the Old Testament is made up of inspired anecdotes about Adam and Eve, about Jacob, about Esau, about Abraham and Isaac, about Joseph, about Daniel, about Deborah, about Yashai, about men and women of whom the story gave an accurate photograph long before human photography was born. Let all Christian workers, prayer meeting talkers, Sunday school teachers and preachers know the power of that which my text calls the "tale that is told."

IN WHAT WAY could the fact that industry will not help any one die well be so powerfully presented as by the incident concerning a man falling ill in Paris just after the death of Voltaire, and a professional nurse was called in and she asked, "Is the gentleman well?" and she said to the spectator, "Bill, your brother is down there," then the spectator threw off his coat and went to work with an agony of earnestness to fetch up his brother. What course of argument could be so well as that incident set forth when we tell for the salvation of a soul it is a brother whom we are trying to save?

A second reading of my text reminds me that life is not only a story told, but that it is a brief story. A long narrative stretched out on inches loses its interest. It is generally the story that takes only a minute or half a minute to rehearse that arrests the attention. And that gives additional interest to the story of our life. It is a brief story. Subtract from our life all the hours necessary to sleep, all the hours of incapacity through fatigue or illness, all the hours of childhood and youth before we get fairly to work, and you have abbreviated the story of life so much that you can appreciate the psalmist's remark, "Christian, take down from the library Washington Irving's 'Tales of a Traveller,' or Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'Twice Told Tales.'"

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SUNDAY SCHOOL.

THE INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

LESSON II—January 14.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.—Luke 2: 52.

THE SCENARIO.

Includes the story of the childhood and youth of Jesus, till He was ready to enter upon His ministry. (Luke 2: 21-52; Matt. 2: 13-23).

PLACE IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

Childhood and youth up to 30 years of age. His training. The silent years at Nazareth.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Jesus lived in Nazareth from B. C. 3 or 4 to A. D. 26. The visit to Jerusalem was April, A. D. 9. The Passover was that year March 29 (Lew. Passover). Jesus was 12 years old December, D. 8, and this time in the spring.

Place.—Nazareth and Jerusalem.

Jesus.—Between 12 and 15 years old, living in Nazareth.

Rulers.—Augustus, Caesar, emperor of Rome, lived in the city of Rome.

THE CHILD JESUS VISITS JERUSALEM.—Luke 2: 41-52.

Read Matthew 2: 1-23. Commit verses 41-52.

41. (a) Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

42. And when He was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they (c) returned, the (d) child Jesus tarried in Jerusalem; and (e) Joseph and His mother knew not of it.

44. But they, supposing Him to (f) have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they (g) sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances.

45. And when they found Him not, they (h) turned back again to Jerusalem, (i) seeking Him.

46. And it came to pass, (j) that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47. And all that heard Him were (k) astonished at His understanding (l) and answers.

48. And when they saw Him, they were (m) amazed; and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I (n) have sought thee sorrowing.

49. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be (o) about My Father's business?

50. And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them.

51. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them; (p) but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52. And Jesus (q) increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and (r) man.

REVISION CHANGES.

Ver. 41. (a) And.

Ver. 42. (b) Omit to Jerusalem.

Ver. 43. (c) Were returning. (d) The boy. (e) And His parents knew it not.

Ver. 44. (f) To be. (g) Sought for Him.

Ver. 45. (h) They returned. (i) Seeking for.

Ver. 46. (j) Omit that.

Ver. 47. (k) Amazed. (l) And His.

Ver. 48. (m) Astonished. (n) Omit have.

Ver. 49. (o) In my Father's house.

Ver. 51. (p) And.

Ver. 52. (q) Advanced. (r) Men.

LIGHT ON THE TEXT.

41. Went . . . every year.—As was required by the Jewish law. Passover.—The great feast of the Jews, lasting seven days, in commemoration of the saving of their fleshborn, and escape from Egypt (Ex. 12: 1-16).

42. Twelve years old.—The age when the Jewish children were to go to the feasts.

43. Three days.—One in going toward home, one in returning, the third in searching for Him in the city. Temple.—Not the temple proper, but a room in one of the temple buildings. Doctors.—Teachers. Hearing . . . and asking.—The way they taught—a kind of Bible class.

44. How is it that ye sought me?—Why did you not at once think that I would be here in the temple, and not spend long hours searching elsewhere? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?—The expression may, according to Greek usage, have either a local meaning, the house of, or a moral, the affairs of. The former sense is required by the idea of seeking; and if, nevertheless, we are disposed to adopt the latter as wider, the first must be included in it. "Where My Father's affairs are carried on, where you are sure to find me."—Geddes.

45. Jesus increased.—Advanced, grew. He was a human child, as well as divine, and must grow up as other children do. In wisdom.—Jesus was wise every direction.—In His common sense as applied to daily life, in mental studies and opinions, and in His moral decisions. And this wisdom was one great source of His strength. The bad habits which weaken boys—the idleness, gluttony, waste of nerve power in smoking, drinking and other bad habits—are all the fruit of folly. In favor with God.—Favor is the same word as grace in v. 40. He was such a boy as God was pleased with. He was religious. And more than this Jesus being such a boy as made good use of all God gave Him. God favored Him, aided Him, helped Him, in a way and degree it is not possible to favor a bad boy. Favor with man.—So long as religion does not bring its possessor into conflict with the customs, pleasures or sins of men, it is very beautiful and attractive, even to worldly people. In its reality it is far more attractive than vice.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS.

(For written and oral answers.) Subject.—Message of the Youth of Jesus to the Young People of Today.

I. The Early Experiences of Jesus.—Where did Jesus spend most of His youth? (Matt. 2: 23). Where was Jesus taken soon after the visit of the wise men? What was the occasion of this journey?

II. The Boy Jesus Goes to a Great Religious Meeting (vs. 41, 42).—Where did the parents of Jesus go every year, and why? How far was it? What does this teach us?

III. In His Father's House; about His Father's Business (vs. 43-50).—How old was Jesus when He first went to Jerusalem? What are the first recorded words of Jesus? What was Jesus doing in His Father's house? What is our Father's business for us to be about? What should we do in our Father's house?

IV. His Life at Nazareth (v. 51).—How long did Jesus live at Nazareth? (Luke 2: 23). What is said of His life there? What promise to obedient children? (Ex. 20: 12; Eph. 6: 1-3; Prov. 6: 20-22). What can you tell about His studies, His surroundings, etc.

V. The Portrait of a Perfect Child (v. 52).—Write out the different qualities you find not only in this verse, but in all the description of His early life. Note how attractive He was; how to obtain the favor of God and man; and that Jesus was tempted just as children are today.

BIRTHS.

COLPITTS—At Little River, Coverdale, N. B., on Dec. 23th, to the wife of Lemuel C. Colpitts, a son.

CURRY—On Jan. 2nd, to Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Curry, a son.

MARRIAGES.

ALLEN-BOLDS—At Houlton, on Dec. 23th, Thomas A. Allen of Fredrickton, Me., and Georgia A. Bolds of Amity, Maine, by Rev. C. H. Owens.

WILSON—At the residence of the bride's father, Marvill, York Co., N. B., Dec. 27th, by Rev. J. T. Parsons, George A. Bradley of Gibson and Elizabeth Jane, eldest daughter of T. Aaron Bradley of Marvill.

BUBA-GRACE—At the residence of the bride's father, on Jan. 1st, by Rev. G. Campbell, Chas. F. Buba of Bath, Me., to Ella F., youngest daughter of Henry Grace.

DEATHS.

FERGUSON—At Moncton, N. B., Jan. 2nd, Maude, wife of W. F. Ferguson, and daughter of G. N. Ferguson of Wolfville, N. S., in the 94th year of her age.

HARVEY—In Fernald, Mass. Dec. 20, Susan Harvey, aged 74 years, 9 months and 23 days. (Liverpool, N. S., papers please copy.)

ROBERTS—At her residence, 42 Spring street, Jan. 2nd, May C., wife of Rev. W. Keith, aged 23 years.

McKENNON—At Moncton, N. B., on Dec. 31st, widow of the late John McKinnon, aged 75 years, and daughter of the late Mr. McPhail of Argyle Shore.

TUCKER—At Little River, N. B., Tuesday, Dec. 26th, Hannah S., beloved wife of Tucker, aged 7 months.

VRADENBURGH—At Highfield, Queens Co., Ireland, on Dec. 25th, Arthur H. Vradenburg, in the 61st year of her age, leaving a husband and two children.

COLE'S ISLAND.

A very pleasant event occurred at the Cole's Island House on the evening of Dec. 27th, when Miss Iva Cole and James A. Murray of Long's Creek were united in marriage. The popularity of the parties concerned was fully attested by the large number of guests that filled every room in the island house some time before the hour for the ceremony had arrived. The happy couple were supported by Walter and Miss Emma Secord as best man and bridesmaid respectively, while Miss Helen Parker and Miss Florence Ryan officiated very prettily as maids of honor. The impressive marriage service of the Presbyterian church was performed by the Rev. Mr. Campbell, pastor of this place.

The surrounding country was largely represented. Some of the more notable guests from a distance were: Dr. A. A. Stockton, Burpee Wetmore, Howard Ryan, Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank, Grant Murray, Councillor David Hamilton, A. C. Worden and others. The bride and groom, after receiving the congratulations of the assembled guests, led the way to the large dining room, where a very agreeable and tasty repast had been prepared by Mr. and Mrs. John S. Murray, whose excellent qualities as host and hostess are well known to the travelling public. It is sufficient to say that all enjoyed themselves thoroughly and returned to their homes feeling that they had witnessed the leading social event of the season. It is doubtful if a more pleasant and agreeable function has ever occurred in this part for many years. The happy couple were the recipients of a large number of presents of a suitable kind, both useful and ornamental, including vases, statuary, paintings, engravings, as well as considerable cash and jewelry, including to the bride by the groom. Both the contracting parties are exceedingly popular among their associates, and begin their married life with the best wishes of the entire community.

MAUGERVILLE.

MAUGERVILLE, Sunbury Co., Dec. 29.—The supper and concert given by the ladies on the new Baptist church on Wednesday night was a complete success. Nearly fifty dollars were realized, which will aid in liquidating the existing indebtedness of the building. The present condition is now all complete and only remains to be furnished. It is a neat, substantial structure with a seating capacity for one hundred and fifty. The church will not be dedicated for some time yet, although services will be held in it during the winter.

William G. Dickman's health is in a precarious condition at his home here. George Johnson of Lower St. Mary's will be in charge of the Central school at the beginning of the new year. Miss Perkins of Fredrickton has been engaged by the trustees of the Lower school. Miss Jewell will return to No. 1.

Clear air, and a strange of Kingdewell are waiting their daughters here. A. R. Miles will take his horse and pump him on his survey next winter, on the head waters of the Miramichi. Capt. C. W. Shields has gone to the Tobique.

NO MONEY TO WASTE.

"Julia, you ought to see the doctor about that cough."

"So near Christmas as this? No, indeed!"—Chicago Record.

SHIP NEWS.

PORT OF ST. JOHN.

Jan 2—Str Dunmore Head, 1,469, Burns, from Swansea, Wm Thompson and Co. bal.

Jan 2—Sch Lena Maid, 98, Glegg, from Boston, master, bal.

Jan 2—Sch Fanny, 61, Sypher, from Boston, J. A. Likely, bal.

Jan 2—Str Prince Arthur, Kenney, from Boston, A. C. Currie, mds and pas.

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