

Saturday, Nov. 25, 1899

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THE COMING SERMON.

Dr. Talmage's Views on the Sermons of the Future.

Washington, Nov. 19.—In this discourse Dr. Talmage addresses all Christian workers and describes what he thinks will be the modes of preaching the gospel in the future; text, Romans xii, 7, "Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering."

While I was seated on the piazza of a hotel at Lexington, Ky., one summer evening, a gentleman asked me, "What do you think of the coming sermon?" I supposed he was asking me in regard to some new discourse of Dr. Cumming of London, who sometimes preached startling sermons, and I replied, "I have not seen it." But I found out afterward that he meant to ask what I thought would be the characteristics of the coming sermon of the world, the sermons of the future, the word "Cumming" as a noun pronounced the same as the word coming as an adjective. But my mistake suggested to me a very important and practical theme, "The Coming Sermon."

Before the world is converted the style of religious discourse will have to be converted. You might as well go into the modern Sedan or Gettysburg with bows and arrows, instead of rifles and bombshells and parks of artillery, as to expect to conquer this world for God by the old styles of exhortation and sermonology. Jonathan Edwards preached the sermons most adapted to the age in which he lived, but if these sermons were preached now they would divide an audience into two classes—those sound asleep, and those wanting to go home.

But there is a discourse of the future. Who will preach it? have no idea. In what part of the earth it will be born I have no idea. In which denomination of Christians it will be delivered I cannot guess. That discourse of exhortation may be born in the country meeting house on the banks of the Ohio or the Tombigbee or the Alabama. The person who shall deliver it may this moment be in a cradle under the shadow of the Sierra Nevada or in a New England farmhouse or amid the rice fields of southern savannas, or this moment there may be some young man in one of our theological seminaries in the junior or middle class, shaping that weapon of power, or there may be coming some new baptism of the Holy Ghost on the churches, so that some of us who now stand in the watch towers of Zion, waking to a realization of our present inefficiency, may preach it ourselves. That coming discourse may not be 50 years off. And let us pray God that its arrival may be hastened while I announce to you what I think will be the chief characteristics of that discourse or exhortation when it does arrive, and I want to make my remarks appropriate and suggestive to all classes of Christian workers.

First of all, I remark that that future religious discourse will be a living Christ, in contradistinction to didactic technicalities. A discourse may be full of Christ though hardly mentioning his name, and a sermon may be empty of Christ while every sentence is replete with his titles. The world wants a living Christ, not a Christ standing at the head of a formal system of theology, but a Christ who means pardon and sympathy and condolence and brotherhood and life and heaven, a poor man's Christ, a rich man's Christ, an overworked man's Christ, an invalid's Christ, a farmer's Christ, a merchant's Christ, an artisan's Christ, an every man's Christ.

That sermon or exhortation of the future will not deal with men in the threadbare illustrations of Jesus Christ. In that coming address there will be instances of vicarious suffering taken right out of the everyday life, for there is not a day when somebody is not dying for others—as the physician saving his diphtheritic patient by sacrificing his own life; as the ship captain going down with his vessel while he is getting his passengers into the lifeboat; as the fireman consuming in the burning building while he is taking a child out of the fourth story window; as in summer the strong swimmer at East Hampton or Long Branch or Cape May or Lake George himself perished while trying to save the drowning; as the newspaper boy, one summer, supporting his mother for some years, his invalid mother, when offered by a gentleman 50 cents to get some special paper, and he got it, and rushed up in his anxiety to deliver it and was crushed under the wheels of the train and lay on the grass with only strength enough to say, "Oh, what will be of my poor sick mother now?" Vicarious suffering—the world is full of it. An engineer said to me on a locomotive in Dakota: "We men seem to be coming to better appreciation than we used to. Did you see that accident the other day of the engineer who to save his passengers stuck to his place, and when he was found dead in the locomotive, which was upside down, he was found still smiling, his hand on the airbrake?" And as the engineer said to me he put his hand on the airbrake to illustrate his meaning, and I looked at him and thought, "You would be just as much a hero in the same crisis."

A German sculptor made an image of Christ, and he asked his little child, 2 years old, what it was, and she said, "That must be some very great man." The sculptor was dis-

pleased with the criticism, so he got another block of marble and chiseled away on it two or three years, and then he brought in his little child, 4 or 5 years of age, and said to her, "Who do you think that is?" She said, "That must be the one who took little children in his arms and blessed them." Then the sculptor was satisfied. Oh, my friends, what the world wants is not a cold Christ, not an intellectual Christ, not a severely magisterial Christ, but a loving Christ, spreading out his arms of sympathy to press the whole world to his loving heart!

The trouble is we preach audiences into a Christian frame, and then we preach them out of it. We forget that every auditor has so much capacity of attention, and when that is exhausted he is restless. That accident on the Long Island railroad came from the fact that the brakes were out of order, and when they wanted to stop the train they could not stop, and hence the casualty was terrific. In all religious discourse we want to let down at the right instant. It is a dismal thing, after a hearer has comprehended the whole subject, to have a man say, "Now to recapitulate," and "A few words by way of application," and "Once more," and "Finally," and "Now to conclude."

Paul preached until midnight, and Eutychus got sound asleep and fell out of a window and broke his neck. Some would say, "Good for him." I would rather be sympathetic, like Paul, and resuscitate him. That accident is often quoted now in religious circles as a warning against somnolence in the church, against prolixity. Eutychus was wrong in his somnolence, but Paul made a mistake when he kept on until midnight. He ought to have stopped at 11 o'clock and the discourse had been no accident. If Paul might have gone on to too great length, let all those of us who are now preaching the gospel remember that there is a limit to religious discourse, or ought to be, in our time we have no apostolic power of miracles. Napoleon in an address of seven minutes thrilled his army and thrilled Europe. Christ's sermon on the mount, the model sermon, was less than 18 minutes long at ordinary mode of delivery. It is not electricity scattered all over the sky that strikes, but electricity gathered into a thunderbolt and hurled, and it is not religious truth scattered over and over again, but religious truth projected in compact form that flashes light upon the soul and rives its indifference.

When the religious discourse of the future arrives in this land and in the Christian church, the discourse which is to arouse the world and startle the nations and usher in the kingdom, it will be a brief discourse. Hear it, ye men and women who in Sabbath schools and other departments are toiling for Christ and the salvation of immortal souls—brevity, brevity.

But I remark also that the religious discourse of the future of which I speak will be a popular discourse. There are those in these times that speak of a popular sermon as though there must be something wrong about it. As these critics are dull themselves, the world gets the impression that a sermon is good in proportion as it is stupid. Christ was the most popular preacher the world ever saw, and, considering the small number of the world's population, had the largest audience ever gathered. He never preached anywhere without making a great sensation. People rushed out in the wilderness to hear him, recklessly of their physical necessities. So Christ that, taking no food with them, they would have fainted and starved had not Christ performed a miracle and fed them. Why did so many people take to him? Because they all understood it. He illustrated his subject by a hen and her chickens, by a bushel measure, by a handful of salt, by a bird's flight, and by a lily's aroma. All the people knew what he meant, and they flocked to him. And when the religious discourse of the future appears it will not be a Princetonian, not a Rochesterian, not an Andoverian, not a Middletonian, but an Olivetian, plain, practical, unique, earnest, comprehensive of all the woes, wants, sins and sorrows of an auditory.

But when that exhortation or discourse does come there will be a thousand gleaming scimiters to charge on it. There are in so many theological seminaries professors telling young men how to preach, themselves not knowing how, and I am told that if a young man in one of our theological seminaries says anything quaint or thrilling or unique faculty and students fly at him and set him right and straighten him out and smooth him down and chop him off until he says everything just as everybody else says it. Oh, what the future religious discourse of the Christian church arrives at the Churches of Christ in our great cities will be thronged!

A mother with a dead babe in her arms came to the good Siva and asked to have her child restored to life. The good Siva said to her, "You go and get a handful of mustard seed from a house in which there has been no sorrow and in which there has been no death, and I will restore your child to life."

So the mother went out, and she went from house to house and from home to home looking for a place where there had been no sorrow and where there had been no death, but she found none. She went back to the good Siva and said: "My mission is a failure. You see I haven't found a place where there has been no sorrow and no death." "Oh!" says the good Siva. "Understand, your sorrows are no worse than the sorrows of others. We all have our griefs, and all have our heart-breaks."

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone;
For the sad old earth must borrow
its mirth;
But has trouble enough of its own.

We hear a great deal of discussion now all over the land about why people do not go to church. Some say it is because Christianity is dying out, and because people do not believe in the truth of God's word, and all that. They are false reasons. The reason is because our sermons and exhortations are not interesting and practical and helpful. Some one might as well tell the whole truth on this subject, and so I will tell it. The religious discourse of the future, the gospel sermon to come forth and shake the nations, will be a popular sermon, just for the simple reason that it will meet the woes and the wants and the anxieties of the people.

There are in all our denominations ecclesiastical mummies sitting around to frown upon the fresh young pulpits of America to try to awe them down, to cry out: "Tut, tut, tut! Sensational!" They stand to-day preaching in churches that hold a thousand people, and there are a hundred persons present, and if they cannot have the world saved in their way it seems as if they do not want it saved at all.

That religious discourse of the future will be an everyday sermon, going right down into every man's life, and it will teach him how to vote, how to bargain, how to plow, how to do any work he is called upon to do, how to wield a yardstick and plane, and it will teach women how to preside over their household and how to educate their children and how to imitate Miriam and Esther and Timothy, and Mary, the mother of Christ, and those women who on northern and southern battlefields were mistaken by the wounded for angels of mercy fresh from the throne of God. Yes, I have to tell you, the religious discourse of the future will be a reported sermon. If you have any idea that printing was invented simply to print secular books and stenography and photography were contrived merely to set forth secular ideas, you are mistaken. The printing press is to be the great agency of gospel proclamation. It is high time that good men, instead of denouncing the press, employ it to scatter forth the gospel of Jesus Christ. The vast majority of people in our cities do not come to church, and nothing but the printed sermon can reach them, and call them to pardon and life and peace and heaven.

So I cannot understand the nervousness of some of my brethren of the ministry. When they see a newspaper man coming in, they say, "Alas, there is a reporter!" Every added reporter is 10,000, 50,000, 100,000 immortal souls added to the auditory. The time will come when all the village, town and city newspapers will reproduce the gospel of Jesus Christ, and sermons preached on the Sabbath will reverberate all over the world, and, some by type and some by voice, all nations will be evangelized.

The practical bearing of this is upon those who are engaged in Christian work, not only upon theological students and young ministers, but upon all who preach the gospel and all who exhort in meetings and all of you if you are doing your duty. Do you exhort in prayer meetings? Be short and spirited. Do you teach in Bible class? Though you have to study every night, be interesting. Do you accost people on the subject of religion in their homes or in public places? Study adroitness and common sense.

A dying Christian took out his watch and gave it to a friend and said: "Take that watch. I have no more use for it. Time is at an end for me, and eternity begins." Oh, my friends, when our watch has ticked away for us the last moment and our clock has struck for us the last hour, may it be found we did our work well, that we did it in the very best way, and whether we preached the gospel in public, or taught Sabbath classes, or administered to the sick as physicians, or bargained as merchants, or pleaded the law as attorneys, or were busy as artisans or husbandmen or mechanics, or were, like Martha, called to give a meal to a hungry Christ, or like Hannah, to make a coat for a prophet, or like Deborah, to rouse the courage of some timid Barak in the Lord's conflict, we did our work in such a way that it will stand the test of the judgment! And in the long procession of the redeemed that march around the throne may it be found that there are many there brought to God through our instruction, and in whose rescue we labored. But let none of us who are still unsaved, wait for that religious discourse of the future. It may come after our obsequies. It may come after the stonecutter has chiseled our name on the slab 50 years before we do not wait for a great steamer of the Cunard or White Star line to take you off the wreck, but hail the first of the future (it may be 40, 50 years off), take this plain invitation of a man who has given you spiritual eyesight would be glad to be called the spittle of the hand of Christ out on the eyes.



Deadly Habits. The woman who is addicted to the terrible morphine habit knows that she is rapidly going down the steep hill that leads to death. There are thousands of other women suffering from nervousness, headache, depression, irritability, and a dozen other symptoms of female troubles. For relief they turn to the many nostrums, patent medicines, and other "compounds," so widely advertised to cure the ailments of women. These produce a false stimulation, and the sufferer finds herself compelled to take more and more as time passes, and soon becomes an unwitting slave to strong drug. What a weakly woman needs is Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, which contains not a grain of opium or a single drop of alcohol, but other dangerous stimulants. It acts directly upon the womanly organs, stopping drains, restoring displacements and having a wonderfully beneficial effect upon the general health. Suffering women who wish to consult Dr. R. V. Pierce himself can do so by mail, addressing him at Buffalo, N. Y. He makes no charge whatever for advice.

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If you want a book that tells about all women's diseases, and how to treat them at home, send 3¢ one-cent stamps to Dr. Pierce to pay customs and postage, and he will mail you a free copy of his great thousand-page illustrated Common Sense Medical Adviser. For a heavier, handsome cloth-bound book for popular reading ever written.

of a blind man and who would consider the highest compliment of this service if, at the close, 500 men should start from these doors saying: "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not. This one thing I know—whereas I was blind, now I see."

Swifter than shadows over the plain, quicker than birds in their aerial flight, hastier than eagles to their prey, his you to a sympathetic Christ. The orchestras of heaven have strung their instruments to celebrate your rescue.

And many were the voices around the throne,
Rejoice for the Lord brings back his
own.

THERE'LL COME A DAY.
There'll come a day when the supremest splendor
Of earth, or sky, or sea,
Whatever their miracles, sublime or tender,
Will wake no joy in me.

There'll come a day when all the aspiration
Now with such fervor fraught
As lifts the heights of breathless exaltation,
Will seem a thing of naught.

There'll come a day when riches, honor, or glory,
Music and song and art,
Will look like puppets in a worn-out story,
Where each has played his part.

There'll come a day when human love, the sweetest
Gift that includes the whole
Of God's grand giving—sovereignest, completest—
Shall fail to fill my soul.

There'll come a day—I shall not care how passes
The cloud across my sight,
If only, lark-like, from earth's nested grasslands
I spring to meet its light.
—Margaret Junkin Preston.

eat, dearest?
Mrs. Newlywed—That is angel cake, darling.
Mr. Newlywed—Ha! See me make it fly!

The barber's face must be his shaving mug.
The flirt of to-day will be the old maid of to-morrow.

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AND DOWN TO
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