

SERMON.

In the Following Discourse, Prepared by Dr. Talmage Before His Illness, a Vivid Glimpse of the Splendors and Glories of Heavenly Life is Presented.

WASHINGTON, April 8.—In the following discourse, prepared by Dr. Talmage before his illness, a vivid glimpse of the splendors and glories of heavenly life is presented. Text, Revelation viii, 1. "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

The busiest place in the universe is heaven. It is the centre from which all good influences start. It is the goal at which all good results arrive. The Bible represents it as active with wheels and wings and orchestras and processions mounted or charioted. But my text describes a space when the wheels ceased to roll and the trumpets to sound and the voices to chant. The riders on the heavenly horses reined in their charges. The doxologies were hushed and processions halted. The hand of arrest was upon all the splendors. "Stop, heaven!" cried an omnipotent voice, and it stopped. For thirty minutes everything celestial stood still.

From all we can learn it was the only time heaven ever stopped. It does not stop as other cities for the night, for there is no night there. It does not stop for a plague for the inhabitant never says, "I am sick." It does not stop for an impassable street, for there are no fallen snows or sweeping freshets. What, then, stopped it for thirty minutes? Grotius and Professor Stuart think it was at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Mr. Lord thinks it was in the year 31, between the close of the Diocletian persecution and the beginning of the wars by which Constantine gained the throne. But that was all a guess, though a learned and brilliant guess. I do not know when it was, and I do not care when it was, but of the fact that such an intermission of sound took place I am certain. "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

And, first of all, we learn that God and all heaven then honored silence. The longest and widest dominion that ever existed is that over which stillness was queen. For an eternity there had not been a sound. World making was a later day occupation. For unimaginable ages it was a mute universe. God was the only being, and as there was no one to speak to there was no utterance. But that silence has all been broken up into words, and it has become a noisy universe. From the upheaval, worlds in conflagration, worlds in conflagration, worlds in revolution.

THE POWER OF SILENCE.

If geologists are right—and I believe they are—there has not been a moment of silence since this world began. Its rocks and the crashing and the splashing and the uproar and the hubbub are in progress. But when among the supernals a voice cried, "Hush!" and for half an hour heaven was still, silence was honored. The full power of silence many of us have yet to learn. We are told that when Christ was talking "the answerer not a word." That silence was louder than any thunder that ever shook the world. Oftentimes when we are assailed and misrepresented the mightiest thing to say is to say nothing and the mightiest thing to do is to do nothing. Those people who are always rushing into things, get themselves set, right, accomplish nothing but their own chagrin. Silence! Do right and leave the results with God. Among the greatest lessons the world has ever learned are the lessons of patience taught by those who are enduring uncomplainingly personal or domestic or political indignities. It is stronger than any bitter or sarcastic or revengeful answer is the patient silence.

The famous Dr. Morrison of Chelsea achieved as much by his silent patience as by his pen and tongue. He had asthma that for twenty-five years brought him out of his couch at 2 o'clock in the morning. His four sons and daughters died, the remaining child by sunstroke made insane, the afflicted man once said, "At this moment there is not an inch of my body that is not filled with agony." Yet he was cheerful, triumphant, silent. Those who were in his presence said they felt as though they were in the gates of heaven. Oh, the power of patient silence! Aeschylus, the immortal poet, was condemned to death for writing something that offended the people. All the pleas in his behalf were of no avail until his brother uncovered the arm of the prisoner and showed that his hand had been shot off at Salamis. That silent plea liberated him. The loudest thing on earth is silence if it be of the right kind and at the right time. There was a quaint old hymn spelled in the old style and once sung in the churches:

The race is not forever set
By him who fastest runs
Nor the Battell by those people
That shout with the longest guns.

My friend the tossing sea of Galilee seemed most to offend Christ by the amount of noise it made, for he said to it, "Be still!" Heaven has been crowning kings and queens unto God for many centuries, yet heaven never stopped thirty minutes for any such occurrence, but it stopped thirty minutes for the coronation of silence. "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

HEAVEN AN EVENTFUL PLACE.

Learn also from my text, that heaven must be an eventful and active place from the fact that it could afford only thirty minutes of recess. There have been events on earth and in heaven that seemed to demand whole days or a whole week or whole year for celestial consideration. If Grotius was right and this silence occurred at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, that scene was so awful and so prolonged that the inhabitants of heaven could not have done justice to it in many weeks. After fearful besiegement of the two fortresses of Jerusalem, Antonia and Hippicus, had been going on for a long while, a Roman soldier, mounted on the shoulders of another soldier, hurried into the windows of the temple a firebrand, and the temple was all aflame, and after covering many sacrifices to the holiness of God the building itself became a sacrifice to the rage of man.

The hunger of the people in the city during the besiegement was so great that as some outlaws were passing a doorway and inhaled the odors of food they burst open the door, threatening the mother of the household with death unless she gave them some food; and she took them aside and showed them that it was her own child she was cooking for the ghostly repast. Six hundred priests were destroyed on Mount Zion because, the temple being gone, there was nothing for them to do. Six thousand people in one cloister were consumed. There were 1,100,000 dead according to Josephus. Grotius thinks that was the cause of the silence in heaven for half an hour. If Mr. Lord was right, and this silence was during the Diocletian persecution, by which 844,000 Christians suffered death from sword and fire and banishment and exposure, why did not heaven listen throughout at least one of those awful years? The thirty minutes of silence is that the celestial program is so crowded with spectacle that it can afford only one recess in all eternity, and that for a short space. While there are great choruses in which all heaven can join, each soul there has its own part to play. The silence, in itself, and it must be a solo. How can heaven get through with all its recitatives, with all its cantatas, with all its grand marches, with all its victories? Eternity is too short to utter all the praise.

In my text heaven spared thirty minutes, but it was never again spent in minutes. In worship in earthly churches where there are many to take part we have to counsel brevity, but how will heaven get on rapidly enough to let one hundred and forty-four thousand get through each with his own story, and then one hundred and forty-four million, and then one hundred and forty-four billion and then one hundred and forty-four trillion? Not only are all the triumphs of the past to be commemorated, but all the triumphs to come. Not only what we now know of God, but what we will know of him after the study of the ages. In my text had said there was silence in heaven for 30 days, I would not have been started at the announcement, but it indicates 30 minutes. Why, there will be so many friends to hunt up, so many of the greatly good and useful things that will be kept in the heart, that the world never fully appreciated—the yellow fever and cholera doctors who died, not flying from their posts; the female nurses who faced pestilence in the lazarettes; the railroad engineers who stayed at their places in critical moments, though they themselves perished. Hubert Goffin, the master miner, who, landing from the bucket at the bottom of the mine just as he heard the waters rush in and when one jerk of the rope would have lifted him into safety, put in the bucket a blind miner who wanted to go to his sick child and jerked the rope for him to be pulled up, crying, "Tell them the water has burst in and we are probably lost, but we will seek refuge at the other end of the right gallery," and then giving the command to the other miners to fill their buckets themselves so near out that the people from the outside could come to their rescue. The multitudes of men and women who get no crown on earth we will want to see when they get their crown in heaven. I tell you heaven will have no more time to spare.

Besides that heaven is full of children. They are in the vast majority. No child on earth who amounts to anything can be kept quiet half an hour, and how are you going to keep five hundred million of them quiet half an hour? You know heaven is much more of a place than it was when that recess of 30 minutes occurred. Its population has quadrupled, sextupled, multiplied. Heaven has more on hand, more of rapture, more of knowledge, more of intercommunication, more of worship. The most thrilling place we have ever been in is stupor, nothing with that, and, if we now have no time to spare, we will then have no eternity to spare. Silence in heaven only half an hour!

THAT IMMORTAL HALF HOUR.

My subject also impresses me with the immortality of a half hour. That half hour mentioned in my text is more widely known than any other period in the calendar of heaven. None of its whole hours of heaven is measured off, none of the years, none of the centuries. Of the millions of ages past and the millions of ages to come not one is especially measured off in the Bible. But the half-hour of my text is made immortal. The only part of eternity that was ever measured by earthly timepiece and measured by the minute hand of my text. Oh, the half hours! They decide everything. I am not asking what you will do with the years or months or days of your life, but what of the half hours? Tell me the history of your half hours and I will tell you the story of your whole life in eternity. The right or wrong things you can do in thirty minutes, the right or wrong things you can say in thirty minutes; the right or wrong things you can do in thirty minutes are glorious or baleful, inspiring or desolate.

Look out for the fragments of time. They are pieces of eternity. It was the half hours between shooting horses that made Ellihu Burritt the learned blacksmith, the half hours between professional calls as a physician that made Abercrombie the Christian philosopher, the half hours between his duties as schoolmaster that made Salmon P. Chase chief justice, the half hours between shoe lasts that made Henry Wilson vice-president of the United States, the half hours between canal-boats that made James A. Garfield president. The half hour a day for good books or bad books, the half hour a day for prayer or indolence, the half hour a day for helping others or helping others.

ers, the half hour before you go to business and the half hour after you return from business—that makes the difference between the scholar and the ignorant, between the Christian and the infidel, between the saint and the demon, between the triumph and the catastrophe, between heaven and hell. The most tremendous things of your life and mine were certain half hours. The half hour when in the passage of a country minister I resolved to become a Christian then and there, the half hour when I decided to become a preacher of the gospel; the half hour when I first realized that my room was dead, the half hour when I stood on the top of my house in Oxford street and saw our church burn, the half hour in which I entered Jerusalem, the half hour when I declared to occur on Mars hill and about ten or fifteen other half hours are the chief times of my life. You may forget the names of the exact years or most of the important events of your existence, but those half hours, like the half hour of my text, will be immortal. I do not know what you will do with the twentieth century, I do not know what you will do with this year, but what will you do with the next half hour. Upon that hinges your destiny, and during that some of you will receive the gospel and make complete converts, some of you that others of you will make final and fatal rejection of the full and free and urgent and impassioned offer of life eternal. Oh, that the next half hour might be the most glorious thirty minutes of your earthly existence!

Oh, set sail for it! Here is the ship that bears all the hopes of other worlds, make this half hour the grandest half hour of your life and become a Christian. Pray for a regenerated spirit. Louis XIV., while walking in the garden at Versailles, met Mansard, the great architect, and the architect took off his hat before the king, but only God can make Mansard! And I say to you, my hearers, only God by his convicting and converting grace can make a Christian, but he is ready this very half-hour to accomplish it.

"FOREVER AND EVER."

Again, my text suggests a way of studying heaven so that we can better understand it. The word "eternity" that we can handle so much is an immeasurable word. Knowing that the Bible uses it only once, we say "forever and ever." But how long is "forever and ever." I am glad that my text puts under our eye heaven for thirty minutes. As when you see a great picture, you can make a sketch of it, and you can look through it or join your forefinger to your thumb and look through the circle between, and the picture becomes more intense, so this masterpiece of heaven by St. John is more impressive when we take only thirty minutes of it at a time. Now, we have something that we can copy into a scroll and look through it or join your forefinger to your thumb and look through the circle between, and the picture becomes more intense, so this masterpiece of heaven by St. John is more impressive when we take only thirty minutes of it at a time. 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