BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST.

Fearful Finale of the Babylonian Monarch's Banquet.

The Handwriting on the Wall—"Accept of Christ and be Saved"—Characteristic Discourse of Dr. Talmage.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., Jan. 25.—Dr. Talmage preached the following sermon this morning. His text was Daniel, v., 30: "In the night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain." After the sight of Babylon had been selected, 2,000,000 of men were employed for the construction of the wall and principal works. The walls of the city were 60 miles in circumference. They were surrounded by the trench, out of which had been dug the material for the construction of the city. There were 25 gates of solid brass on each side of the square city. Between every two gates a great watch tower sprang up into the heavens. From each of the 25 gates, on either side, a street ran straight through to the gate on the other side, so that there were 50 streets, each fifteen miles long, which gave to the city the appearance of wonderful regularity. The houses did not join each other on the ground, and between them were gardens and shrubbery. From house-top to house-top bridges swung, over which the inhabitants were accustomed to pass. A branch of the Euphrates went through the city, over which a bridge of marvelous structure was thrown, and under which a tunnel ran. To keep the river from overflowing the city in times of freshet, a great lake was arranged to catch the surplus, in which the water was kept as in a reservoir until times of drought, when it was sent streaming down over the thirsty land. A palace stood at each end of the Euphrates bridge; one palace a mile and three-quarters in compass, and the other palace seven and a half miles in circumference. The wife of Nebuchadnezzar, having been brought up among the mountains of Media, could not stand it in this flat country of Babylon, and so, to please her, Nebuchadnezzar, had a mountain, 400 feet high, built in the midst of the city. This mountain was surrounded by terraces, for the support of which great arches were lifted. On the top of these arches flat stones were laid; then a layer of reed and bitumen; then two rows of bricks, closely cemented; then thick sheets of lead, upon which the soil was placed. The earth here deposited was so deep that the largest trees had room to anchor their roots. All the glory of the flowery topics was spread out at that tremendous height, until it must have seemed to one below as though the clouds were all in blossom, and the very sky leaned on the shoulder of the cedar. At the top an engine was constructed, which drew the water from the Euphrates, far below, and made it spout up amid this garden of the skies. All this to please his wife. I think she must have been pleased. In the midst of this city stood also the temple of Belus. One of its towers was one-eighth of a mile high, and on the top of it an observatory, which gave the astronomers great advantage, as, being at so great a height, one could easily talk with the stars. This temple was full of cups, and statues, and censers, all of gold. One image weighed 1,000 Babylonish talents, which would be equal to $52,000,000.

All this by day, but now night was about to come down on Babylon. The shadows of her 250 towers began to lengthen. The Euphrates rolled on, touched by the fiery splendors of the setting sun; and gates of brass, burnished and glittering, opened and shut like doors of flame. The hanging gardens of Babylon, wet with the heavy dew, began to pour, from starlit flowers and dripping leaf, a fragrance for many miles around. The streets and squares were lighted for dance and frolic and promenade. The theaters and galleries of art invited the wealth and pomp and grandeur of the city to rare entertainments. Scenes of riot and wassail were mingled in every street; godless mirth and outrageous excess and splendid wickedness came to the king's palace to do their mightiest deeds of darkness. A royal feast to-night at the king's palace. Rushing up to the gates are chariots, upholstered with precious cloths from Dedan and drawn by fire-eyed horses from Togarmah, that rear and neigh in the grasp of charioteers, while a thousand lords dismount, and women, dressed in all the splendors of Syrian emerald, and the color-blending of agate and the chasteness of coral, and the somber glory of Tyrian purple, and princely embroideries, brought from afar by camels across the desert, and by ships of Tarshish across the sea. Lift the banners. Fill the cups. Clap the cymbals. Blow the trumpets. Let the night go by with song, and dance, and ovation; and let that Babylonish tongue be palsied that will not say, "O, King Belshazzar, live forever!"

All parts of the earth had sent their richest viands to that table. The signal is given, and the lords and ladies, the mighty men and women of the land, come around the table. Pour out the wine. Let foam and bubble kiss the ring. Hoist everyone his cup and drink to the sentiment: "O, King Belshazzar, live forever!" Lord shouts to lord, captain ogles to captain. Goblets clash and decanters rattle. There come in the vile song, and the drunken hiccough, and the slavering lip, and the guffaw of idiotic laughter, bursting from the lips of princes, flushed, reeling, bloodshot, while mingling with it all I hear; "Huzza! huzza! for great Belshazzar!"

What is that on the plastering of the wall? Is it a spirit? Is it a phantom? Is it God! Out of the black sleeve of the darkness a finger of fiery terror trembles through the air and comes to the wall, circling about as though it would write, and then, with sharp tip of flame, engraves on the plastering the doom of the king. The music stops. The goblet falls from the nerveless grasp. There is a thrill. There is a start. There is a thousand-voiced shriek of horror. Let Daniel be brought in to read that writing. He comes in. He reads it: "Weighed in the balance and found wanting."

Meanwhile the Assyrians, who for two years had been laying siege to that city, took advantage of that carousal and came in. Massacre rushes in with a thousand gleaming knives. Death bursts upon the scene; and now there is nothing there but torn banners, and broken wreaths, and the slush of upset tankards, and the blood of murdered women, and the kicked and tumbled carcass of a dead king. For "in that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain."

When God writes anything on the wall, a man had better read it as it is. Daniel did not misinterpret or modify the handwriting on the wall. It is all foolishness to expect a minister of the Gospel to preach always things that the people like or the people choose. Young men, what shall I preach to you to-night? Shall I tell you of the dignity of human nature? Shall I tell you of the wonders that our race has accomplished? "Oh! no," you say, "tell me the message that came from God." I will. If there is any handwriting on the wall, it is this lesson: "Accept of Christ, and be saved!" Jesus never flattered those to whom he preached. He said to those who did wrong, and who were offensive in his sight, "Ye generation of vipers! ye whited sepulchres! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Paul the apostle preached before a man who was not ready to hear him. Did he say, "Oh, you are a good man, a very fine man, a very noble man?" No; he preached of righteousness to a man who was unrighteous; of temperance to a man who was the victim of bad appetites; of the judgment to come to a man who was unfit for it. Hugh Latimer offended the king by a sermon he preached: and the king said, "Hugh Latimer, come and apologize." "I will," said Hugh Latimer. So the day was appointed; and the king's chapel was full of lords and dukes, and the mighty men and women of the country, for Hugh Latimer was to apologize. He began the sermon by saying, "Hugh Latimer, bethink thee! Thou art in the presence of thine earthly king, who can destroy thy body. But bethink thee, Hugh Latimer, that thou art in the presence of the King of heaven and earth, who can destroy both body and soul in hell fire." Then he preached with appalling directness at the king's crimes.

Another lesson comes to us: There is a great difference between the opening of the banquet of sin and its close. Young man, if you had looked in upon the banquet in the first few hours you would have wished you had been invited there, but you look in at the close of the banquet, and your blood curdles with horror. The King of Terrors has there a ghastlier banquet; human blood is the wine, and dying groans are the music. Sin has made itself a king in the earth. It has spread a banquet. It invites all the world to come to it. It has hung in its banqueting-hall the spoils of all kingdoms and the banners of all nations. It has gathered from all music. It has strewn, from its wealth, the tables and the floors, and arches. And yet how often is that banquet broken up; and how horrible is its end! Ever and anon there is a handwriting on the wall. The knees of wickedness knock together. God's judgment, like an armed host, breaks in upon the banquet; and that night is Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain. Here is a young man who says, "I cannot see why they make such a fuss about the intoxicating cup. Why, it is exhilarating! It makes me feel well. I can talk better, think better, feel better. I cannot see why people have such a prejudice against it." A few years pass on, and he wakes up and finds himself in the clutches of an evil habit which he tries to break, but cannot. How bright it was at the start! How black it was at the last!

I learn further from this subject that Death sometimes breaks in upon a banquet. Here is a young man just come from college. He is kind. He is loving. He is enthusiastic. He is eloquent. By one spring he may bound to heights toward which many men have struggled for years. A profession opens before him. He is established in the law. His friends cheer him. Eminent men encourage him. After awhile you may see him standing in the Senate, or moving a popular assemblage by his eloquence, as trees are moved in a whirlwind. Some night he retires early. A fever is on him. Delirium, like a reckless charioteer, seizes the reins of his intellect. Father and mother stand by and see the tides of his life going out to the great ocean. The banquet is coming to an end. The lights of thought, and mirth, and eloquence are being extinguished. The garlands are snatched from the brow. The vision is gone. Death at the banquet!

I have also to learn from the subject that the destruction of the vicious, and of those who despise God, will be very sudden. Are there any here who are unprepared for the eternal world? Are there any here who have been living without God and without hope? Let me say to you that you had better accept of the Lord Jesus Christ, lest suddenly your last chance be gone. The lungs will cease to breathe; the heart will stop. The time will come when you shall go no more to the office, or to the shop. Nothing will be left but death, and judgment and eternity. Oh! flee to God this hour! If there be one in this presence who has wandered far away from Christ, though he may not have heard the call of the Gospel for many a year, I invite him now to come and be saved. Flee from thy sin! Flee to the stronghold of the Gospel! Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

Good night, my young friends! May you have rosy sleep, guarded by him who never slumbers! May you awake in the morning strong and well! But, oh! art thou a despiser of God? Is this thy last night on earth? Shouldst thou be awakened in the night by something, thou knowest not what, and there be shadows floating in the room, and a handwriting on the wall, and you feel your last hour has come, and there be a fainting at the heart, and a tremor in the limb, and a catching of the breath, then thy doom would be but an echo of the words of the text: "In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain."

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Disappointment first comes in life to the baby who has a horn given to him for a present, and then finds he hasn't wind enough to blow it.

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If Diogenes had lived to-day he would have solved the honest-man problem by buying a mirror.

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SUNDAY SPORT.

Narrow Escape of an Iceboating Party From Drowning.

TORONTO, Jan. 26.—An iceboating party came to disaster on the bay yesterday afternoon. The weather was fine with a fresh gale blowing. The ice was as smooth as glass. The boats were rushing hither and thither faster than the wind. The principal boating was done east of the direct line between York street and Hanlan's Point. Custom was briskest at the former place and the wind was favorable to sailing across the bay and back again. An old man named Lundy thought he would go farther west with his boat than the others. He had on board a family party—Mr. and Mrs. E. S. Stubbs, of New York, and two sons, the latter aged respectively about 20 and 12. About half way between Hanlan's and the Northern elevator some two or three acres of ice have been cut away. The water has not been frozen over again. Lundy was running his boat straight across from the point, and, seeing no signals in front of him, ran into the open water. The mishap was observed by hundreds of people on the bay, and a score of iceboats and a crowd of skaters made for the rescue. The five occupants of the boat were clinging on to the rope, and the frame. They were in the water about a quarter of an hour. Planks were stretched out to them and they were all got on the solid ice again. The woman was half taken home. She was wrapped up in rugs and

Fishy.

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Jan. 26.—During the snow storm here Friday morning countless small fish were seen to fall. They were about an inch long and resembled the carp or mullet. The greatest number fell on Broad street. Some were found on Union street, several blocks away.

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