

"DARE TO BE A DANIEL"

DIET INFLUENCES THE CHARACTER OF MEN.

THE NEW LIBERAL THOUGHT

The Noted Divine Takes For His Theme the Refusal of Daniel to Eat the Unclean Food—Sins of the Palate Among the Worst of All Sins—Often the Forerunners of All Other Sins.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1906, by Frederick Dyer, Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., July 22.—That diet influences character and that a man is largely what he eats is illustrated in this sermon, the preacher taking for his text Daniel 1, 12, "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days." "What is a victory like?" said a lady friend to the Waterloo conqueror. "The greatest tragedy in the world, madam, except a defeat," was the answer. Well said thou iron duke. None could speak more authoritatively. The world has supposed thy heart adamant. But even the stones themselves might almost weep when they are drenched with human carnage. The choirs of triumph can never drown the sob of anguish. The glittering rewards of victory cannot blind our eyes to the awful price at which that victory was purchased. Lord Roberts, upon his return from the Boer war, was hailed in England as a conquering chief. When he returned from Africa to London the whole nation rose to do him honor. But while the British were acclaiming the mighty deeds of "Little Bobs," Lord Roberts was wearing upon his uniform the symbol of the black grape. Lord Roberts' only boy had been shot among the African hills. So is it always with war. We praise the returning chieftains, but we cannot forget the bloody fields over which these heroes have waded and the many grave trenches they saw filled with the slain bodies of their valiant comrades.

But if the battlefields of the nineteenth century were the scenes of awful tragedies, what must have been the horrors of the battlefields of the fifteenth, the twelfth and the fifth centuries and the battlefields of a thousand years ago. In olden times the conquerors rarely took prisoners or liberated their captives upon parole, as we do now. The general custom was to slay the prisoners or, what was still more common, to sell them into perpetual servitude. This practice was almost universal. Thus many of the nations, like the Phoenicians and the Etruscians, made war for human captives as well as for gold and chariots. These nations were known according to an old historian's definition as "man stealers." They wanted human slaves as oarsmen to man their galleys and laborers to work in their fields and men and women to be their domestic servants as well as for gold and chariots. What was true of the great maritime states mentioned was also true of Egypt and Rome and Greece and Babylon. These mighty cities of olden times all had their human auction blocks. The greater the conquests of their returning warriors the greater the number of slaves to be put up and sold as common cattle in the market places. Thus, having made this explanation, we can understand why Daniel and the finest youths of the Hebrew nation were carried to Nebuchadnezzar's capital after Jerusalem had been captured and overthrown.

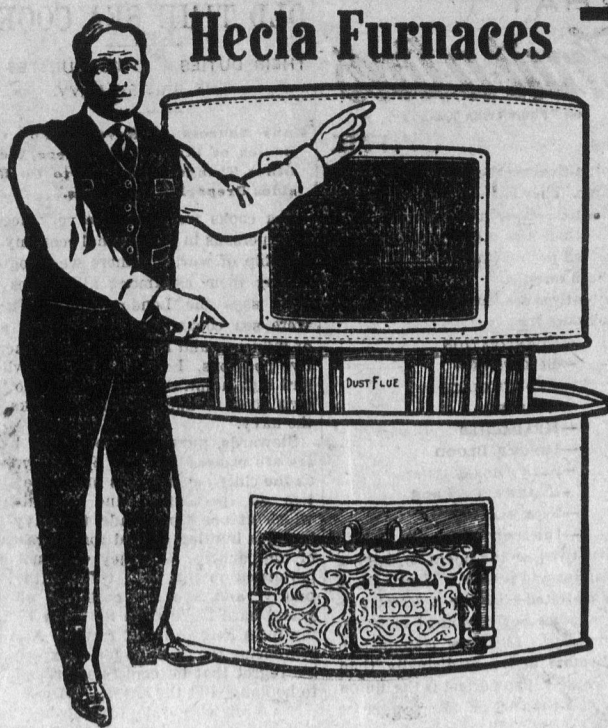
No sooner was the Babylonian king back in his palace than he called one of his chief officers, Asphenaz by name, and said: "Asphenaz, I wish you would go and look over those young Hebrews who I have brought back. Select three or four of the finest physical and mental specimens that are there. Then for the next three years take them and educate them and feed them from my own table. I want to develop these men for my own service. I want to re-educate the intelligence of my own court with the best blood of this Hebrew nation."

The result of this command: Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah and Michael and Azariah, were selected. Ah, this was high honor for Daniel and his companions. It not only meant liberation from human slavery, but in time it also meant membership in the king's council. But, alas, alas, it seems as though Daniel is foolishly going to upset all his political prospects. When the food and the wine from the king's table are placed before him, Daniel refuses them because they are forbidden diet—unclean according to Jewish law. "But," says the king's chamberlain, "you must eat this meat and wine, for if you do not the king will not only punish me, but also will probably slay you. And he will surely know this refusal by your starved looks."

Then Daniel spoke the words of my text: "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and give us pulse to eat and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat, and as thou seest deal with thy servants." So the royal officer consented to them in this matter and proved them ten days. You all know the result of this test. At the end of ten days the countenances of Daniel and his three friends were "fairer" and fatter in flesh than all the children who did eat the portion of the king's meat. Such a day is the simple story from which we will draw our sermon's theme. And may our history in life be like that of Daniel, who refused to eat the king's meat.

Let us now look at our subject a little closer. Notice that this king's meat was to Daniel and his comrades a sensual temptation. It appealed to Daniel's eye and nostril and palate. It was the temptation of the banquet hall, which not only smelled good and looked good, but it appealed to Daniel the more enticingly because heretofore he had never had his appetite surfeited by the delectable viands of a royal kitchen.

But Daniel had never been an epicure. He had never been one who was a devotee of sensual pleasures. He had grown up with the plain, coarse, sim-

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ple and yet wholesome food upon which most of us were reared in our fathers' homes. He had the simple breakfast and the simple dinner and the simple supper common to Jewish childhood. This "pulse" which he mentions is the general name given to the leguminous plants, such as the beans and peas, etc. Thus you can see what a temptation must have come to Daniel in a sensual way when he suddenly had placed before him the viands and the wines of the king's banquet hall. Oh, they looked so good, and they smelled so good! The boy probably wanted to taste them. He wanted to feast on them. And yet, had he feasted thus and kept on feasting, he would surely have spiritually died. The meats by the Moslem law were unclean. God had said, "Thou shalt not eat this food."

"True," says some one, "the king's meat may have been unclean food for Daniel, but it is not unclean for me. We are not living under the old but under the new dispensation. What was a sin for Daniel to eat is not a sin for me to eat." Oh, of course we are not asserting that there is a direct connection between what a man eats and what a man spiritually is. And we are asserting that the sins of the palate are among the very worst of all sins. They are the sins which are often the forerunners of all other sins. They are the sins which will turn man into a beast and may unkenel all the tigers and the wolves and the hyenas and the jackals of his lower nature. Beware, O man, of the king's meats and wines, which Satan is ready to spread for us in many a banquet hall! The Sicilians erected an altar in Ceres to Atephagia, the goddess of gluttony. And as servants of the true God, never be found worshipping at this brutalizing, this mental and physical and moral and spiritual depleting shrine.

I can hear Daniel's friends talking to him and trying to persuade him to eat this unclean food. "Oh," they say, "Daniel, of course you are all right. But what is the good of being a high priest if you are a hypocrite? Why are you so hidebound about this food? Why do you not worship the

Babylonian gods? Why do you not theologically broaden out? Why do you stick so close to your Jewish laws? Why do you not become a student of the 'new thought'?" "But what is the 'new thought'?" says Daniel. "Why," say the Babylonian friends, "don't you know? Have you not been reading our new theology? Why, the 'new thought' is a beautiful belief. This is it in substance: God is goodness. God is in us. We are all part of God. Just try to think of God as a good being and try to develop all the good in you, and you will grow better and grow like God."

"But," says Daniel, "who has that to do with the first commandment, which Moses gave to the children of Israel: I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage; thou shalt have no other gods before me?" "Oh, Daniel, Daniel, Daniel," say the Babylonian friends, "we have outgrown all that superstitious stuff. We have outgrown all the commandments and the Jewish dietary laws. We are the advocates of the 'new thought.' Is that 'new thought' we just try to be good, and that is all one needs to do." My friends, cannot you hear Daniel's friends trying to get him to eat the unclean food and adopt the religious liberalism of the Babylonians?

Is not Satan trying to get you to eat of the unclean food in our modern Babylon by the same pernicious argument of theological liberalism? I am not the least bit afraid that you will become a blatant atheist. I am not afraid that you will turn your back upon Christ or upon the Bible. But I am afraid lest the insidious advance of the new liberal thought should undermine the foundations of your faith. I find it doing its deadly work in the churches and in society. Men are giving up their anchorages and are drifting out on the sea of doubt toward the rocks of eternal disaster. Never let go your faith in the essential truths of Christianity. The divinity of Christ, his sinless life and his atonement on the cross, his resurrection and ascension, the work of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of the new birth and the inspira-

tion of the Bible—these are the distinguishing doctrines of our faith. To abandon these is to surrender all that has made our religion a power in the world; it is to turn Christianity into a dry, dead system of ethics. In Christ alone have we life. The Bible declares it. If you deliberately go forth to eat of the unclean food in the Babylonish capital you just perish. O God, may we never become so liberal that we cannot make the words of Jesus Christ the centre, the circumference, the all in all of what we should believe and how we should live!

But there is still another fact which would have made the eating of the king's meat easy for Daniel. The king's food was spread in the presence of the young man's enemies. If Daniel did not eat the meat and drink the wine which came from the royal kitchens and wine cellars at once, in all probability the refusal would be reported to the king's higher officials, and Daniel's bright political prospects would not only be stopped, but without doubt Daniel would lose his head. "Well," you say, "that is strange. How can this be? Daniel did not have any enemies as yet. He had just been selected for future political favoritism and had not yet eaten his first meal in the palace. Ah, my friends, by that question I know one fact. You have not traveled much abroad.

In our country the word "clannishness" has not much meaning. When we go back to our Revolutionary days we find that scores and hundreds of inventors like Stevenson and Lafayette helped to win our independence. Then we find that Hamilton and a host of other statesmen who helped make us what we are were foreign born. Then we find that scores and hundreds of inventors like Ericsson and moneyed kings like Carnegie and teachers like Agassiz were also born across the sea. And thus, strange to say, the highest recommendation that an artist or a writer or a preacher can have before the American public is that he was foreign born. But, though our own people seem to feel that all prima donnas who have a foreign name can sing better than our

own, yet this is not true of foreign lands. The man whom the Germans are most ready to honor is the German. The man the English are most ready to honor is the Englishman. The man the Scotch are most ready to honor is the Scotchman. The same law was true of the Romans, the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Hebrews and the Babylonians. The people who were not of their own nationality were always looked at askance and despised. Thus you can see the natural prejudice which at once arose against Daniel after his selection by the king because he was foreign born.

"Aha!" the people cry. "Aha! If he does not eat the king's meat we will expose him. Then this foreign upstart will remain a slave, as he ought to do." And yet, my friends, as I hear the enemies of Daniel gloating about his overthrow, can I not hear your enemies gloating over your spiritual overthrow in the same way? You enter a certain line of business. The proprietor decides to keep his place open on Sunday, or, what is worse, his foreman comes to you and asks you to do something which is not squarely and uprightly honest. "But," you say to the foreman, "I never work on Sunday," or you say: "That is not honest, I am not going to do it." The foreman shrugs his shoulders and says: "All right. If you won't do it, I will tell the boss. Then I guess you will have to hunt another place." Then all your enemies will cry: "Aha! We will destroy him. Aha, aha!" What have you done? Are you to-day compromising your Lord in the presence of your enemies?

But there is yet one more fact about this king's meat to which I wish to call your attention. It was spread in a foreign land; it was spread scores and hundreds of miles away from the place where Daniel was born; it was spread in the Babylonish capital; it was spread so far away from home that methinks at first I can hear Daniel whisper to himself these words: "Well, what is the difference if I do eat the king's meat and drink the king's wine? It will only be for a short time that I will do it. Father and mother will never hear about it. They are away off now among the Jean hills, and even if I do go back to Jerusalem, why, then I will start all over again and be a consistent Hebrew, as I used to be." But no sooner does he speak thus than I hear him say: "Nay, I will not do this. God sees. God knows. I see, I know. And I will be true to myself and true to my absent loved ones and true to my God whether I am in the Babylonish capital or in my own dear Jerusalem or in my own father's house." Oh, my friends, has not the tempter come to you, as I have imagined he came to Daniel, whispering: "Why don't you eat the unclean food? No one knows; no one will know. Why don't you eat the fruit of the forbidden tree just once?"

But, though the tempter may come to you and whisper, "Child, just once, and no one will know of this sin," believe him not; the tempter is a perfurer. For no man ever sinned but at last he found him out. In that fascinating book of travels, "On the Frontier," Mr. Campion tells us how in the isthmus of Panama he tried to gather some beautiful green plants of a most delicate shade and form. No sooner would he reach out and pluck one than this leaf would become nothing but a withered, shriveled, brownish weed. "At first," said Mr. Campion, "I thought I was stricken with a delirium of the fatal Panama fever, but after awhile I found that I had been plucking a sensitive plant, so sensitive that as soon as I touched one immediately it lost its color and life. So it is with sin. We may think we can pluck the beautiful leaves of sin and press them to our lips to kiss them and no one will know it. But, alas, the leaf will soon see that we are not holding in our hands the beautiful flower of purity, but a withered stalk of sin. No sin can be safely hidden. Every sin will ultimately be found out. No Babylon is so far away but the misdeeds of a Daniel will be carried back to the home land and what is far worse, carried up to be written down in the pages of the great book which shall be opened by the recording angel at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Hear it, man! Hear it, woman! Hear it, child!

Thus it is with great joy that I hold up before your eyes the character of Daniel for you to copy. The last time I ever heard D. L. Moody preach was about this mighty man of God. In that scenic picture he showed us how Daniel was able to stand with unblanching cheek amid the gaping mouths of the lions' den. But if you have followed me you know I have not once mentioned Daniel as the mighty statesman of Nebuchadnezzar's court. My sermon has revolved about the first great temptation of Daniel's life, when he refused to eat the king's meat, as the first great temptation of Joseph's life was in Potiphar's home. When these two young men were found true to God in the first temptations of youth the way was paved for them to become the premiers of kings. So may we be true to God in the first temptations. May we be true to God in our youth. Then, whether we rise to positions of power and influence among the great of the world or continue in humble life, doing our duty in obscurity, we shall please him who, when this world's work is done, shall give to us our heavenly crown. Thus I close with the only five words I remember of D. L. Moody's sermon. They are these: "Dare to be a Daniel! Dare to be a Daniel! Dare to be a Daniel!" In God's name and with God's power, dare to be a Daniel and triumph on earth and in heaven. In God's name, dare.

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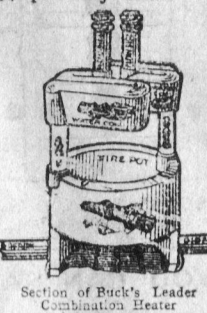
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