

A 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.—In this holiday discourse Dr. Talmage takes the opportunity of offering some very practical and useful suggestions; text, Psalms xc, 9, "We spend our years as a tale that is told."

The Israelites were 40 years in the wilderness, and during 38 years of the 40 nothing is recorded of them, and, I suppose, no other emigrants had a duller or more uninteresting time than they had. So they got to telling stories—stories concerning themselves or concerning others; stories about the brick kilns of Egypt, where they had toiled in slavery; stories about how the waters of the Red sea piled up into palisades at their crossing; story of the lantern hung in the heavens to guide them by night; story of ibises destroying the reptiles of the wilderness; stories of personal encounter. It must have been an awful thing to have had nothing to do for 38 years except to get lost every time they tried to escape from the wilderness. So they walked away the time in story telling. Indeed there were persons whose one business was to narrate stories, and they were paid by such trifles as they could pick up from the surrounding listeners. 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 our whole life is a story told—a good story or a bad story; a tragic story or a mournful 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 a winter's night in the farmhouse; or gathered around a blazing hearth with some hunters at the mountain inn. Indeed it is a praiseworthy art to impersonate a good story well. 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 Traveler," 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 looks stupid, of one about whom you never heard a word, must be just as thrilling on a small scale as on a larger scale is a life of a Cyrus, or a Caesar, or a Pizarro, or a Mark Antony, or a Charlemagne, or the late General Gordon, who was upon a parapet leading his soldiers with nothing but a stick in his hand, and his troops cried, "Gordon, come down. You will be killed." But he did not come down, and one of the soldiers said: "It is all right. He don't mind being killed. He is one of those blessed Christians."

As Oliver Cromwell on the anniversary of his greatest victory followed his darling daughter to the grave, so his humblest and most unpretending life there has been a commingling of 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 on a small scale have been seen in the life of obscure men and women. Many a poor found and learned sermon has put the audience to sleep, while some man whose phraseology could not be parsed and whose attire was cut and fitted and made up by the plainest housewife has told the story of his life in a way that melted the prayer circle 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 striking the keynote of an anthem 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 by laymen on the subject of justification and sanctification, which lay discourses administer more to the faculties than to the edifying, 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 he was personally helped out and helped up 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 atheistic 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 by the thieves and the Samaritan paying his board bill at the tavern; that of the big dinner, to which the invited guests sent in fictitious regrets; that of the shepherd answering the bleat of the lost sheep and the rural neighbors that night

helping him celebrate the fact that it was safe in the barnyard; that of the bad boy, reduced to the swines' trough, greeted home with such banqueting and jewelry that it stupefied the older son with jealousy and disgruntlement; that of the Pharisee full of braggadocio and the publican smiting his breast with a stroke that brought down the heavens in commiseration; stories about leprosy, about paralysis, about catalepsy, about dropsy, about ophthalmia—stories that he so well told that they have rolled down 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 Ahab and Jezebel, about Jonah, about Daniel, about Deborah, about Vashti, 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 infidelity 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, when a professional nurse was called in and she asked, "Is the gentleman a Christian?" "Why do you ask that?" said the messenger. "I am the nurse who attended Voltaire in his last illness, and for all the wealth of Europe I would never see another infidel die." What discourse in its moral and spiritual effect could equal a tale like that?

You might argue upon the fact that those fallen are brothers and sisters, but could we impress any one with such a truth so well as by the scene near Victoria park, London, where men were digging a deep drain and the shoring gave way and a great pile of earth fell upon the workmen. A man stood there with his hands in his pockets looking at those who were trying to shovel away the earth from those who were buried, but when some one 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 so well as that incident set forth that when we toil 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 indefinitely 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 short story. Subtract from our life all the hours of necessary 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 when he says, "Thou hast made my days as a hand's breadth," and can appreciate the apostle James' expression when he compares life to "a vapor that appears for a little season and then vanishes away."

It does not take long to tell all the vicissitudes of life—the gladness and the griefs, the arrivals and the departures, the successes and the failures, the victories and the defeats, the ups and the downs. The longer we live the shorter the years. We hardly get over the bewildering fatigue of selecting gifts for children and friends and see that the presents get off in time to arrive on the appropriate day than we see another advancing group of holidays. Autumnal fruit so sharply chases the summer harvest, and the snow of the white blossoms of springtime come so soon after the snows of winter. It is a remark so often made that it fails to make any impression and the platitude that calls for no reply, "How rapidly time goes."

Every century is a big wheel of years, which makes a hundred revolutions and breaks down. Every year is a big wheel of months and makes 12 revolutions and then ceases. Geologists and theologians go into elaborations of guesses as to how long the world will probably last; how long before the volcanic forces will explode it, or meteoric stroke demolish it, or the cold of a long winter freeze out its population, or the fires of a last-conflagration burn it.

My friends, as our life is short, punctuality is one of the important virtues and lack of punctuality one of the worst of crimes. How many who know nothing of punctuality! They arrive at the depot five minutes after the train is gone. They get to the wharf in time to see that the steamer has swung 500 yards from the dock. They are late at church and annoy all who have promptly taken their places, the late comers

not being as good as a Christian woman who when asked how she could always be so early at church replied, "It is part of my religion not to disturb the religion of others." The tardy ones mentioned are apt to speak the word of counsel when it is too late. They are resolved to repent at some time in the future, but when they come up "the door is shut." They resolve to save a soul when it is already ruined.

But short as time is it is long enough if we rightly employ it. The trouble is we waste so much time we cannot catch up. Some of us have been chasing time we lost at 20 years of age, or 30 years of age, or 40 years of age, and if we lived 250 years we could never overtake it. Joseph, a poor apprentice, every morning passed a certain store as the church clock struck 6 at the moment when the merchant took down his shutters, each of them saying "Good morning, sir," and nothing else.

A third reading of my text reminds me that life is not only a story told, but a story listened to. There is nothing more vexatious to any one than to tell a story when people are not attending. They may be "whispering on some other subject, or they are preoccupied. One cannot tell a story effectively unless there are good listeners. Well, that which in my text is called the "tale that is told" has plenty of listeners. There is no such thing as being alone. God listens, and the air is full of spiritual intelligences all listening, and the world listens to the story of our life, some hoping it will be successful, others hoping it will be a failure.

We all talk about public life and private life, but there is no private life. The story of our life, however insignificant it may seem to be, will win the applause or hiss of a great multitude that no man can number. As a "tale that is told" among admirers or antagonists, celestial or pandemoniacs, the universe is full of listening ears as well as of gleaming eyes. If we say or do the right thing, that is known. I suppose the population of the intelligences on the earth. Oh, that the story of our life might be fit for such an audience in such an auditorium! God grant that wisdom and fidelity and earnestness and truth may characterize the "tale that is told."

Aye, all the world will yet listen to and be redeemed by a "tale that is told." We are all telling it, each in his own way—some by voice, some by pen, some by artist's pencil, some by harp and some by song; mother telling it to child, teacher telling it to class, preacher telling it to assembly. The story of the Loveliest of heaven coming down to this scarred and blasted island of a world. He was ordered back from its shores and struck through with lances of human hate as soon as he landed. Shepherd's dog baying on the hills that Christmas night was better treated than this rescuer of a race, yet keeping right on, brambles on brow, feet on spikes, flagellated with whips that had lumps of lead fastened to them, through midnight without lanterns, through storms without shelter, through years that go blacker until they ended in a noonday with the sun blotted out. Mightiest tale ever told, and keep on telling it until the last sorrow is assuaged and the last animosity is quenched and the last desert is white with the life and golden with the crimson and blue with the gentian and crimson with the rose.

While reading my text the fourth time I bethink myself that the story of life will end when the group breaks up. The "tale that is told" stops when the listeners depart. Sometimes we have been in groups interestedly listening to some story told when other engagements or the hour of the night demanded the going of the guests. That stopped the story. By this exit of another year I am reminded that these earthly groups will break up. No family group or social group or religious group or political group stays long together.

The family group breaks up. Did you ever know a household that for 25 years remained intact? Not one. Was there ever a church record the same after the passage of 25 years or 15 years or 10 years? The fact is that the story of our life will soon end because the group of listeners will be gone. So you see if we are going to give the right trend and emphasis we must give it right away. If there are old people in the group of our influence, all we can do for them will be in five or ten years. If there are children around us, in 10 or 15 years they will be fashioning the story of their own life. "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." Passing all, passing everything, as a "tale that is told."

My text, in referring to the years, reminds me that in 12 hours this year will forever have gone away. Ninety-nine out of the hundred years of this century will have disappeared. We have only one year of the century left. There ought to be something especially suggestive in the last year of the century. It ought to be a year of unparalleled industries, of unheard-of consecration. Not a person in any of our audiences this day can remember the first year of this century. Not a person in any of our audiences to-day will ever again see the last year of a century.

Tumbled to it.
Jimmy—Wot did youse git arrested fer?
Riggs—Trowed a banana skin on de pavement.
Jimmy—Did de cop git enter it?
Riggs—Yep.—New York Press.

CANADA'S NICKEL MINES.

All Future Grants of Mining Lands in Ontario Shall Provide That the Output Must be Refined in the Province.

The recently issued Order-in-Council defining the policy of the Ontario Government with regard to our growing mining interests and the industrial interests connected with them, has naturally directed attention to the valuable resources which the Province possesses in its nickel mines. The expansion of our nickel industry has hitherto been handicapped by the adverse American tariff, which prevented our finding a market for the finished metal, though the United States imports increasing quantities of ore and nickel matte to be refined within their own borders. The policy laid down by the Hon. G. W. Ross is the development of the nickel industry by providing that all future grants of mining lands shall provide that copper and nickel ores mined shall be treated and refined in the Province, so as to produce the finished metal instead of exporting the raw material, and it is also contemplated to request the Dominion Government to put in operation an existing Act giving them the power to place an export duty on nickel and copper ores and to reopen negotiations with the British Government with the view of inducing them to accept an interest in nickel mines to be operated for Imperial purposes.

The impetus which such a measure will give to nickel production may be understood from a comparison of some of the statistics furnished by the last report of the Bureau of Mines and the figures showing the nickel production and manufacture of the United States. The figures, covering a period of seven years from 1892 to 1898 inclusive, show that the total quantity of ore smelted in the Sudbury district was 591,852 tons, giving a product of 29,705,000 pounds of nickel and 34,570,500 pounds of copper. At the selling price of matte at the furnaces, which is the form in which it is exported, the total value of the nickel product for the period in question has been \$3,294,060 and of copper \$1,802,805, a total of \$4,596,865. Last year the yield was 4,567,500 pounds in nickel and 8,873,500 in copper, having a total selling value of \$782,300. The price of nickel per pound last year was 9.23 cents, showing a slight rise as compared with the three previous years.

Taking the statistics furnished concerning the nickel industry in the United States by a publication entitled "The Mineral Industry, Its Statistics, Technology and Trade," a recognized authority on the subject, we find that the total home production of nickel in that country was 33,700 pounds in 1897, which had diminished to 11,145 pounds in 1898, all from Missouri, and whereas the product of the manufactured metal from both domestic and imported ore during the latter year amounted to 7,138,929 pounds. The average value of the refined metal in New York during both years was over 34 cents per pound. A comparison of this figure with the 9 cents per pound received by the Canadian exporter shows the benefit received by the American refiner at our expense, by working up the ore to an advanced stage of manufacture.

The Canadian Manufacturer gives some further figures supplied by Mr. R. P. Rothwell of the above-mentioned publication, showing the extent to which the American nickel market is supplied by the crude material from the Ontario mines. According to this authority the amount of nickel contained in Canadian ores imported into the United States has increased from 2,267,661 pounds, valued at \$594,504 in 1895 to 7,127,784 pounds, of the value of \$2,459,085, in 1898. The value of nickel in the construction of warships and the strong feeling now existing among our neighbors in favor of greatly increasing their naval strength points to a still further augmentation of this demand in the future. As the Americans possess so little nickel that it is, as has been shown, hardly an appreciable factor in the output of their refineries, Canada with her large deposits of this valuable metal practically controls the situation and can safely oppose the import tariff of the United States on the refined metal, an export duty on the shipment of matte and ore, which will result in the transfer of the refining industry to our Province. The Americans must come to Ontario for a supply, and it lies with the people of the Province to determine whether they shall have it in a crude form or as a finished product.

The expansion of the nickel indus-

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try in all its branches would result in the distribution here of a very large amount in wages, which now goes to foreigners. Mr. Blue of the Bureau of Mines gives the amount of wages paid in the nickel and copper industries during the last seven years at \$1,929,894, being an average of \$489.45 per year for each employe. The total number of hands engaged last year was 637. Considering the difference between the price at which nickel and copper matte were exported and the value of the refined metals at an average selling price it is estimated that as a result of final stages of the manufacture being carried on abroad instead of in Ontario the foreigners realized some \$10,000,000 for wages, services and profits which should have gone to build up our own community.

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