

STEADILY IMPROVES

DR. TALMAGE'S SUNDAY SERMON.

Argues That the World Grows Better Day by Day—Many Opportunities For Improvement.

WASHINGTON, D. C.—In this discourse Dr. Talmage recites some great events and shows that the world is advancing in the right direction; text, Joel ii, 30, "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth."

Dr. Cumming—great and good man—would have told us the exact time of the fulfillment of this prophecy. As I stepped into his study in London on my arrival from Paris just after the French had surrendered at Sedan the good doctor said to me: "It is just what I had told you about France. People laughed at me because I talked about the seven horns and the vials, but I forecast all this from the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation." Not taking any such responsibility in the interpretation of the passage, I simply assert that there are in it suggestions of many things in our time.

Our eyes dilate and our heart quickens in its pulsations as we read of events in the third century, the sixth century, the eighth century, the fourteenth century, but there were more far-reaching events crowded into the nineteenth century than into any other, and the last twenty years eclipse any preceding twenty. We read in the daily newspapers of events announced in one paragraph and without any special emphasis—events which a Herodotus, a Josephus, a Xenophon, a Gibbon, would have taken whole chapters or whole volumes to elaborate. Looking out upon our time, we must cry out in the words of the text, "Wonders in the heavens and in the earth."

I propose to show you that the time in which we live is wonderful for disaster and wonderful for blessing, for there must be lights and shades in this picture as in all others. Need I argue that our time is wonderful for disaster? Our world has had a rough time since by the head of God it was bowled out into space. It is an epileptic earth—convulsion after convulsion; frosts pounding it with sledge hammer of icebergs and fires melting it with furnaces seven times heated. It is a wonder to me it has lasted so long. Meteors shooting by on this side and grazing it and meteors shooting by on the other side and grazing it, none of them slowing up for safety. Whole fleets and navies and argosies and flotillas of worlds sweeping all about us. Our earth like a fishing smack off the banks of Newfoundland, with the majestic and the St. Paul and the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse rush by. Besides that, our world has by sin been damaged in its internal machinery, and ever and anon the furnaces have burst, and the walking beams of the mountains have broken, and the islands have shipped a sea, and the great bulk of the world has been jarred with accidents that ever and anon threatened immediate demotion.

But it seems to us as if the last hundred years were especially characterized by disaster—volcanic, oceanic, epidemic. I say volcanic because an earthquake is only a volcano lashed up. When Stromboli and Cotopaxi and Vesuvius stop breathing, let the foundations of the earth beware! Seven thousand earthquakes in two centuries recorded in the catalogue of the British Association! Trajan, the emperor, tremors to ancient Antioch, and amid the agonies of his reception is met by an earthquake that nearly destroys the emperor's life. Lisbon, fair and beautiful, at 1 o'clock on the 1st of November, 1755, in six minutes 60,000 have perished, and Voltaire said of them, "For that region it was the best judgment; nothing wanting but a trumpet!" Europe and America feeling the throb—1500 chimneys in Boston partly or fully destroyed!

But the disasters of other times have had their counterpart in later times. In 1812 Caracas was caught in the grip of an earthquake. In 1882 in Chile 100,000 square miles of land by volcanic force upheaved to four and seven feet of permanent elevation. In 1854 Japan felt the geological agony; Naples shaken in 1857; Mexico in 1858; Mendoza, the capital of the Argentine Republic, in 1861; Manila terrorized in 1863; the Hawaiian Islands by such force uplifted and let down in 1871; Nevada shaken in 1871, Antioch in 1872; California in 1872, San Salvador in 1873, while 1883 what subterranean excitement! Ischia, an island of the Mediterranean, a beautiful Italian watering place, vineyard clad, surrounded by all natural charm and historical reminiscence; vander Capri, the summer resort of the Roman emperors; vander Naples, the paradise of art—this beautiful island suddenly toppled into the trough of the earth. 8000 merrymakers perishing, and some of them so far down beneath the reach of human obsequies that it may be said of many a one of them, as it was said of Moses, "The Lord buried him." Italy, all Europe weeping, all Christendom weeping where there were hearts to sympathize and Christians to pray. But while the nations were measuring that magnitude of disaster, measuring it not with golden rod like that with which the angel measured heaven, but with the black rule of death, Java, of the Indian archipelago, the most fertile island of all the earth, is caught in the grip of the earthquake, and mountain after mountain goes down, and city after city until that island, which produces the best beverage of all the world, produced the ghastliest catastrophe. One hundred thousand people dying, dead! Coming nearer home, on August 31, 1883, the great earthquake which prostrated one-half of Charleston, S. C.

swept the city of Rochester from its foundations and took dwelling houses, barns, men, women, children, horses, cattle and tossed them into indiscriminate ruin and lifted a rail train and dashed it down, a mightier hand than that of engineer on the airbrake. Cyclone in Kansas, cyclone in Missouri, cyclone in Wisconsin, cyclone in Illinois, cyclone in Iowa, cyclone in Ohio, the power of the air never made such cyclonic disturbances as he has in our day. And am I not right in saying that one of the characteristics of the time in which we live is disaster-cyclonic?

But look at the disasters oceanic. Shall I call the roll of the dead shipping? Ye masters of the deep, answer me! I call your names. The Ville de Havre, the Schiller, the City of Boston, the McEville, the President, the Cimbrina, the Oregon, the Mohegan. But why should I go on calling the roll when none of them answers, and the roll is as long as the white scroll of the Atlantic surf at Cape Hatteras breakers? If the oceanic cables could report all the scattered life and all the bleached bones that they rub against in the ocean, what a message of pathos and tragedy for both beaches! In one storm eighty fishermen perished off the coast of Newfoundland and whole fleets of them off the coast of England. God help the poor fellows at sea and give high seats in heaven to the Grace Darlings and Ida Lewises and the lifeboat men hovering around Goodwin sands and the Sisters! The sea, owning three-fourths of the earth, proposes to capture the other fourth, and is boarding the land all around the earth. The moving of the hotels at Brighton Beach backward 100 yards from where they once stood, a trope of what is going on all around the world and on every coast. The Dead Sea rolls to-day where ancient cities stood.

So I rejoice day by day. Work for all to do, and we may turn the crank of the Christian machinery this way or that, for we are free agents. But there is the track laid so long ago no one remembers it—laid by the hand of the Almighty God in sockets that no terrestrial or satanic pressure can ever affect.

And along the track the car of the world's redemption will roll and roll to the Grand Central depot of the millennium. I have no anxiety about the track. I am only afraid that for our idleness and unfaithfulness God will discharge us and get some other stoker and some other engineer. The train is going through with us or without us.

There is a house in London where Peter the Great of Russia lived awhile when he was moving through the land incognito and in workman's dress, that he might learn ship carpentry, by which he could supply the needs of his people. A stranger was visiting at that house, "What is in that box?" The owner said: "I don't know. That box was there when I got the house, and it was there when my father got it. We haven't had any curiosity to look at it. I guess there's nothing in it." "Well," said the stranger, "I'll give you £2 for it." "Well, done," the £2 was paid, and the contents of that box were sold to the Czar of Russia for £50,000. In it the lathing machine of Peter the Great, his private letters and documents of value beyond all monetary consideration. And here are the events that seem very insignificant and unimportant, but they contain treasures of Divine Providence and eternities of meaning which after awhile God will demonstrate before the ages as being of stupendous value.

When Titans play upon they pitch mountains, but who owns those Titanic natural forces we are reading about? Whose hand is it that veils the voice of the volcano, and who denies planted on the earth? Whose hand is it that veils the voice of the volcano, and who denies planted on the earth?

Through the Lord Jesus Christ this God is mine and He is yours. Let the earthquake that shook Palestine, the crucifixion against all the down-rappings of the centuries. This God on our side, we may challenge all the centuries of time and all the cycles of eternity.

Those of you who are in midlife may well thank God that you have seen so many wondrous things, but there are people alive to-day who may live to see the shimmering veil between the material and the spiritual world lifted.

Magnetism, a word with which we cover up our ignorance, will yet be an explored realm. Electricity, the fiery courser of the sky, that Benjamin Franklin lassoed and Morse and Bell and Edison have brought under complete control, has greater wonders to reveal.

Whether here or departed this life, we will see these things. It does not make much difference where we stand, but the higher the standpoint the larger the prospect. We will see them from heaven if we do not see them from earth.

Years ago I was at Wire Island, Long Island, and I went up in the cage a iron which they telegraph to New York, the approach of vesper's hours before the cage into port. There is an opening in the wall, and the operator puts his telescope through that opening and looks out and sees vessels far out at sea. While I was talking with him he went up and looked out. He said, "We are expecting the Arizona to-night." I said: "Is it possible you know all those vessels? Do you know them as you know a man's face?" He said: "Yes, I never make a mistake. Before I see the hulls I often know them by the masts. I know them all—I have watched them so long."

Oh, what a grand thing it is to have ships telegraphed and heralded long before they come to port, that friends may come down to the wharf and welcome their long absent ones! So to-day we take our stand in the watch tower, and through the glass of inspiration we look off and see a whole fleet of ships coming in. That is the ship of peace, flag with one star of Bethlehem floating above the topgallants. That is the ship of the church, mark of salt water high upon the smokestack, showing she has had rough weather, but the Captain of Salvation commands her, and all is well with her. The ship of heaven, mightiest craft ever launched, millions of passengers waiting for millions more, prophets and apostles and martyrs in the cabin, conquerors at the foot of the mast, while from the rigging hands are waving this way as if they knew us, and we wave back again, for they are ours. They went out from our own households. Ours! Hail, hail! Put off the black and put on the white. Stop tolling the funeral bell and ring the wedding anthem. Shut up the hearse and take the chariot.

Now the ship comes around the great headland. Soon she will strike the wharf and we will go aboard her. Tears for ships going out. Lavatory for ships coming in. Now she touches the wharf. Throw out the plank. Back not up that gangway with crowding long lost friends, for you will have eternity of reunion. Stand back and give way until other nations come aboard her. Farewell to strange farewells! Farewell to strange! Farewell to strange! "Blessed are all who enter in through the gates into the city."

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THE GREAT DESTROYER

SOME STARTLING FACTS ABOUT THE VICE OF INTEMPERANCE.

The Blood of the Nation—Most Excess in the Use of Alcohol is Not Due to Primitive Appetite—The Power of Bad Influence.

President David Starr Jordan, of the Leland Stanford University, has published in the Popular Science Monthly a series of articles entitled "The Blood of the Nation: A Study of the Decay of Races Through the Survival of the Unfit." That class of philosophers who are endeavoring to establish the theory that drunkenness and its attendant vices and miseries are clearly a part of the progress of the human race will find little comfort in Dr. Jordan's article. Conceding to those gentlemen a certain amount of truth which it would be extremely difficult to prove in behalf of their theories, Dr. Jordan says:

"The effect of alcoholic drink on race progress should be considered in this connection. Authorities do not agree as to the final result of alcohol in race selection. Doubtless, in the long run, the drunkard will be eliminated, and perhaps certain authors are right in regarding this as a gain to the race. On the other hand there is great force in Dr. Amos G. Warner's remark, that of all vices ganerene is the most expensive. The people of Southern Europe are relatively temperate. They have used wine for centuries, and it is thought by A. G. Reid and others that the cause of their temperance is to be found in this long use of alcoholic beverages. All those with vitiated or uncontrollable appetites have been destroyed in the long experience with wine, leaving only those with normal tastes and normal ability of resistance. The free use of wine, therefore, in this view, a cause of final temperance, while intemperance raises only among those races which have not long known alcohol, and have not become by selection resistant to it. The savage races which have never known alcohol are even less resistant, and are sooner destroyed by it."

"In all this there must be a certain element of truth. The view, however, ignores the evil effect on the nervous system of long-continued poisoning, even if the poison be only in moderate amounts. The temperate Italian, with his daily semi-saturation, is no more a normal man than the Scotch farmer with his occasional spree. The nerve disturbance which wine effects is an evil, whether carried to excess in regularity or irregularly. We know too little of its final result on the race to give certainty to our speculations. It is moreover true that most excess in the use of alcohol is not due to primitive appetite. It is drink which causes appetite, and not appetite which seeks for drink. In a given number of drunkards but a very few become such through in-born appetite. It is influence of bad example, lack of courage, false idea of manliness, or some defect in character or fortune in environment which leads to the first steps in drunkenness. The taste once established takes care of itself. In certain times when the nature of alcohol was unknown and total abstinence was undreamed of, it was the strong, the boisterous, the energetic, the apostle of the strenuous life, who carried all things to excess. The wassail bowl, the bumper of ale, the flavor of wine, all these were the attribute of the strong. We cannot say that those who sank in alcoholism thereby illustrated the survival of the fittest. Who can say that as the Latin races temperate they did not also become weak? In other words, considering the influence of alcohol alone, unchecked by an educated conscience, we must admit that it is the strong and vigorous, not the weak and nerved, that are destroyed by it. At the best, we can only say that alcoholic selection is a complex force, which makes for temperance—if at all, at a fearful cost of life which without alcoholic temptation would be well worth preserving."

Dr. Jordan, it is to be presumed, would not care to be understood as indorsing the idea that the wine-drinking countries of Europe have been made temperate by their wine-drinking. He is probably much too well acquainted with the current history of France and the other so-called "wine countries" to be in ignorance of the true state of affairs there.—New Voice.

Dangers of Alcoholism.

It is needless to enter into details as to the consequences entailed by overindulgence in the use of alcohol. Most of us are familiar with cases of ruined lives and wretched homes as the result of the fatal habit, and in these days of high-pressure living it is becoming more and more common. Mental worry, overwork, ill-health, want of sufficient nourishment and clothing tend to swell the number of chronic alcoholists, and the habit so easily acquired is extremely difficult to relinquish. The real danger to the race, however, lies in the fact that the great majority of inebriates need no incentive to acquire the habit; they are born with the tendency, and it is to this cause chiefly that we must ascribe the increase in the number of deaths from chronic alcoholism during the last twenty-three years. A reference to the table of statistics shows that in 1875 twenty-seven persons in 1,000,000 died as the result of chronic alcoholism; in 1893 these figures had more than doubled themselves, the number then being reckoned as sixty-five per 1,000,000 of population.

The following quotations point to the conclusions arrived at by some of the most eminent men of the day: "Hereditarily as a causation is estimated to be present in nearly sixty per cent. of all cases of chronic alcoholism." "There are not a few human beings so saturated with the taint of alcoholic heredity that they could as soon turn back a flowing river from the sea as arrest the march of an attack of alcoholism." Much that has been said respecting insanity applies equally to inebriety. Both belong to the group of diseases of the nervous system, showing a marked tendency to degeneration, and both are liable to be transmitted hereditarily.—Westminster Review.

Forbid Drinking Employees.

The laws of several of the States add prescriptions of intemperance to the rules of the railroad companies. For example, Michigan forbids the employment of a drinking man in any responsible capacity connected with the operating of a railroad, and even New York provides for the punishment of any railroad corporation that retains in its service as engineer, fireman, conductor, switchman, train-dispatcher or telegrapher, or in any capacity where by his neglect of duty the safety and security of life, person or property may be imperiled, any man of known intemperate habits. These rules and laws have been adopted, not because of any agitation or pressure brought to bear upon the railroad companies, but because years of experience have demonstrated their necessity.

NEGRO SUPERSTITION. Some of Them Are Just Like the Ones Held by Their White Brethren.

Many of the negro superstitions in Kentucky are quite interesting. An old philosopher told me with great graviosity: "If you want peppers to grow, you must git mad. My old 'oman an' me had a spat, an' I went right out an' planted my peppers, an' they came right up." Still another saying is that peppers, to prosper, must be planted by a red-headed or by a high-tempered person. The negro also says that one never sees a jallbird on Friday, for the bird visits his satanic majesty to "pack kindling" on that day. The three signs in which the negroes place implicit trust are the well-known ones of the ground hog appearing above ground on the 2d of February; that a hoe must not be carried through a house or a death will follow, and that potatoes must be planted in the dark of the moon, as well as all vegetables that ripen in the ground, and that corn must be planted in the light of the moon. Feed gunpowder to dogs and it will make them fierce. A negro will not burn the wood of a tree that has been struck by lightning, for fear that his house will burn or be struck by lightning. If a bird flies into a house it brings luck. If a crawfish or a turtle catches your toes it will hold on till it thunders. When a child is told by a black nurse that if a bat alights on one's head it will stay there till it thunders. This was so terrifying that even now I have an unnecessary fear of being clutched by a bat. To make soap, stir it with a sassafras stick in the dark of the moon.

His Royal Highness.

A good story is told of England's heir apparent, who recently made the grand imperial tour. He was riding on a London bus incog. not many months ago, and, being of an inquiring turn of mind, asked the driver, beside whom he sat, his reason for exclaiming, whenever he whipped up one of the horses, "Come up, your royal highness, will you?" "Why do you call him royal highness?" asked the duke. "Well, sir," he replied civilly, "cause he's so 'orty and lazy, and good for nothing! See?" His royal highness did not pursue the subject, but afterward told the story to his friends with great glee, and so it got into print.—Detroit Free Press.



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