

THE DYING CENTURY.

REV. DR. TALMAGE MAKES A CHEERFUL PROPHECY.

He Reviews the Achievements of the Hundred Years About Closing—Great Progress in Art, Science and Religion—Work Well Done.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 29.—Considering the time and place of its delivery, this sermon of Dr. Talmage is of absorbing and startling interest. It is not only national, but international in its significance. His subject was "The Dying Century" and the text, II Kings xx, 1, "Thus saith the Lord, Set this house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

No alarm bell do I ring in the utterance of this text, for in the healthy glow of your contentment I find cause only for cheerful prophecy, but I shall apply the text as spoken in the ear of Hezekiah, down with a bad carbuncle, to the nineteenth century, now closing. It will take only four more long breaths, each year a breath, and the century will expire. My theme is "The Dying Century." I discuss it at an hour when our national legislature is about to assemble, some of the members now here present and others soon to arrive from the north, south, east and west. All the public conveniences coming this way will bring important additions of public men, so that when on Dec. 7, at high noon, the gavel of senate and house of representatives shall lift and fall, the destinies of this nation, and through it the destinies of all nations struggling to be free, will be put on solemn and tremendous trial.

Amid such intensifying circumstances I stand by the venerable century and address it in the words of my text, "Thus saith the Lord, Set this house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

Plain Talk. Eternity is too big a subject for us to understand. Some one has said it is a great clock that says "Tick" in one century and "Tack!" in another. But we can better understand old time, who has many children—and they are the centuries—and many grandchildren—and they are the years. With the dying nineteenth century we shall this morning have a plain talk, telling him some of the good things he has done, and then telling him some of the things he ought to adjust before he quits this sphere and passes on to join the eternities. We generally wait until people are dead before we say much in praise of them. Funeral eulogium is generally very pathetic and eloquent with things that ought to have been said years before.

We put on cold tombstones what we ought to have put in the warm ears of the living. We curse Charles Sumner while he is living and eulogize him into epical megalomania and wait until, in the rooms where I have been living the last year, he puts his hand on his heart and cries "Oh!" and is gone, and then we make long processions in his honor. Dr. Sunderland, chaplain of the American senate, accompanying, stopping long enough to allow the dead senator to lie in state in Independence hall, Philadelphia, and halting at Boston statehouse, where not long before damnatory resolutions had been passed in regard to him, and then move on amid the tolling bells and the boom of minute guns until we bury him at Mount Auburn and cover him with flowers five feet deep. What a pity he could not have been awake at his own funeral to hear the gratitude of the nation! What a pity that one green leaf could not have been taken from each one of the mortuary garlands and put upon his table while he was yet alive at the Arlington! What a pity that out of the great choirs who chanted at his obsequies one little girl, dressed in white, might not have sung to his living car a complimentary solo! The post mortem expression contradicted the antemortem. The nation could not have spoken the truth both times about Charles Sumner. Was it before or after his decease it lied? No such injustice shall be inflicted upon this venerable nineteenth century.

A Century's Inventions. Before he goes we recite in his hearing some of the good things he has accomplished. What an addition to the world's intelligence he has made! Look at the old schoolhouse, with the snow sifting through the roof and the filthy tin cup hanging over the water pail in the corner, and the little victims on the long benches without backs, and the illiterate schoolmaster with his hickory gad, and then look at our modern palaces of free schools, under men and women cultured and refined to the highest excellence, so that, whereas in our childhood we had to be whipped to go to school, children now cry when they cannot go. Thank you, venerable century, while at the same time we thank God! What an addition to the world's inventions—with in our century the cotton gin, the agricultural machines for planting, reaping and thrashing; the telegraph; the phonograph, capable of preserving a human voice from generation to generation; the typewriter, that rescues the world from worse and worse penmanship; and stenography, capturing from the lips of the swiftest speaker more than 200 words a minute. Never was I so amazed at a minute. Never was I so amazed at a few days ago, I telegraphed from Washington to New York a long and elaborate manuscript, and a few minutes after, to show its accuracy, it was read to me through the long distance telephone, and it was exact down to the last semi-colon and comma. What hath God wrought! Oh, I am so glad I was not born sooner! For the follow candle the electric light; for the writhings of the surgeon's table God given anesthetics, and the whole physical organism explored by sharpest instrument and giving not so much pain as the taking of a splinter from under a child's finger nail; for the lumbering stagecoach the limited express train. And there is the spectroscopic of Fraunhofer, by which our modern scientist feels the pulse of other worlds throbbing with light.

Jemmer's arrest by inoculation of one of the world's worst plagues. Dr. Keesley's emancipation for inebriety. Intimation that the virus of maddened canine and cancer and consumption are yet to be balked by magnificent medical treatment. The eyesight of the doctor sharpened till he can look through thick flesh and find the hiding place of the bullet. What advancement in geology, or the catechism of the mountains; chemistry, or the catechism of the elements; astronomy, or the catechism of the stars; electrolgy, or the catechism of the lightnings! What advancement in music! At the beginning of this century, confining itself, so far as the great masses of the people were concerned, to a few airs drawn out on accordion or massaged on church bass viol, now enchantingly dropping from thousands of fingers in Handel's "Concerto In B Flat" or Guilmaut's "Sonata In D Minor." Thanks to you, O century, before you die, for the asylums of mercy that you have founded—the blind seeing with their fingers, the deaf hearing by the motion of your lips, the born imbecile by skillful object lesson lifted to tolerable intelligence. Thanks to this century for the improved condition of most nations.

The reason that Napoleon made such a successful sweep across Europe at the beginning of the century was that most of the thrones of Europe were occupied either by imbeciles or prodigates. But most of the thrones of Europe are today occupied by kings and queens competent. France a republic, Switzerland a republic, and about 50 free constitutions, I am told, in Europe. Twenty million serfs of Russia manumitted. On this western continent I can call the roll of many republics—Mexico, Guatemala, San Salvador, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Uruguay, Honduras, New Granada, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Argentine Republic, Brazil. The once struggling village of Washington to which the United States government moved, its entire baggage and equipment packed up in seven boxes which got lost in the woods near this place, now the architectural glory of the continent and admiration of the world.

Good Word For Newspapers. The money power, so much denounced and often justly criticised, has covered this century with universities and free libraries and asylums of mercy. The newspaper press, which at the beginning of the century was an ink roller, by hand moved over one sheet of paper at a time, has become the miraculous manufacturer of four or five or six hundred thousand sheets for one daily newspaper's issue. Within your memory, O dying century, has been the genesis of nearly all the great institutions evangelistic! At London tavern, March 7, 1802, British and Foreign Bible society was born. In 1816 American Bible society was born. In 1824 American Sunday School union was born. In 1810 American board of commissioners for foreign missions, which has put its saving hand on every nation of the round earth, was born at a haystack in Massachusetts. The National Temperance society, the Woman's Temperance society and all the other temperance movements born in this century. Africa, hidden to other centuries, by exploration in this century has been put at the feet of civilization, to be occupied by commerce and Christianity.

The Chinese wall, once an impassable barrier, now is a useless pile of stone and brick. Our American nation at the opening of this century only a slice of land along the Atlantic coast, now the whole continent in possession of our schools and churches and missionary stations. Sermons and religious intelligence which in other times, if noticed at all by the newspaper press, were allowed only a paragraph of three or four lines, now find the columns of the secular press in all the cities thrown wide open, and every week for 26 years, without the omission of a single week. I have been permitted to preach one entire gospel sermon through the newspaper press. I thank God for this great opportunity!

Glorious old century! You shall not be entombed until we have, face to face, extolled you. You were rocked in a rough cradle, and the inheritance you received was for the most part poverty and struggle and hardship and poorly covered graves of heroes and heroines, of whom the world had not been worthy, and atheism and military despotism and the wreck of the French revolution. You inherited the influences that resulted in Aaron Barr's treason, and another war with England, and battle of Lake Erie, and Indian savagery, and Lundy's Lane, and Dartmouth massacre, and dissection bitter and wild beyond measurement, and African slavery, which was yet to cost a national hemorrhage of four awful years and a million precious lives. Yes, dear old century, you had an awful start, and you have done more than well, considering your parentage and your early environment. It is a wonder you did not turn out to be the vagabond century of all time. You had a bad mother and a bad grandmother. Some of the preceding centuries were not fit to live in—their morals were so bad, their fashions were so outrageous, their ignorance was so dense, their inhumanity so terrific.

Years of Progress. O dying nineteenth century, before you go we take this opportunity of telling you that you are the best and the mightiest of all the centuries of the Christian era except the first, which gave us the Christ, and you rival that century in the fact that you, more than all the other centuries put together, are giving the Christ to all the world. One hundred and twelve thousand dollars at one meeting a few days ago contributed for the world's evangelization. Look at what you have done, O thou abused and depreciated century. All the Pacific isles, barred and bolted against the gospel when you began to reign, now all open, and some of them more Christianized than America. No more, as ever written over the church doors in Cape Colony, "Dogs and Hottentots not admitted." The late Mr. Darwin contributing \$25 to the Southern Mis-

sionary society. Cannibalism driven off the face of the earth. The gates of all nations wide open for the gospel entrance when the church shall give up its intellectual dandyism and quit fooling with higher criticism and plunge into the work as at a life saving station the crew pull out with the lifeboat to take the sailors off a ship going to pieces in the skerries. I thank you, old and dying century; all heaven thanks you, and surely all the nations of the earth ought to thank you. I put before your eyes, soon to be dim for the last sleep, the facts tremendous. I take your wrinkled old hand and shake it in congratulation. I bathe your fevered brow and freshen your parched lips from the fountains of eternal victory.

Things to Be Done. But my text suggests that there are some things that this century ought to do before he leaves us. "Thus saith the Lord, set this house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." We ought not to let this century go before two or three things are set in order. For one thing, this quarrel between labor and capital. The nineteenth century inherited it from the eighteenth century, but do not let this nineteenth century bequeath it to the twentieth. "What we want," says labor, "to set us right is more strikes and more vigorous work with torch and dynamite." "What we want," says capital, "is a tighter grip on the working classes and compulsion to take what wages we choose to pay without reference to their needs." Both wrong as sin. Both defiant. Until the day of judgment no settlement of the quarrel, if you leave it to British, Russian or American politics. The religion of Jesus Christ ought to come in within the next four years and take the hand of capital and employee and say: "You have tried everything else and failed. Now try the gospel of kindness." No more oppression and no more strikes. The gospel of Jesus Christ will sweeten this acerbity, or it will go on to the end of time, and the fires that burn the world up will be kindled in the ears of wrathful prosperity and indignant toil while they hands are still clutched at each other's throats. I fore this century sighs its last breath I would that swarthy labor and easy conscience would come up and let the carpenter of Nazareth join their hands in a pledge of everlasting kindness and peace. When men and women are dying, they are apt to divide among their children mementos, and one is given a watch, and another a vase, and another a picture, and another a robe. Let this veteran century, before it dies, hand over to the human race, with an impressiveness that shall last forever, that old family keepsake, the golden keepsake which nearly 1,900 years ago was handed down from the black rock of the mount of beatitudes, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets."

Saving the World. Another thing that needs to be set in order before the veteran century quits us is a more thorough and all embracing plan for the world's gardenization. We have been trying to save the world from the top, and it cannot be done that way. It has got to be saved from the bottom. The church ought to be only a West Point to drill soldiers for outside battle. What if a military academy should keep its students from age to age in the mess-room and the barracks? No, no! They are wanted at Montezuma and Chapultepec and South Mountain and Missionary Ridge, and the church is no place for a Christian to stay very long. He is wanted at the front. He is needed in the desperate charge of taking the parapets. The last great battle for God is not to be fought on the camps of a college or the lawn of a church. It is to be fought at Missionary Ridge. Before this century quits us let us establish the habit of giving the forenoon of the Sabbath to the churches and the afternoon and the evening of the Sabbath to gospel work in the halls and theaters and streets and fields and slums and wildernesses of sin and sorrow. Why do Christians who have stuffed themselves with "the strong meat of the word" and all gospel vendors on Sabbath forenoons want to come up to a second service and stuff themselves again? These old gourmands at the gospel feast need to get into outdoor work with the outdoor gospel that was preached on the banks of the Jordan and on the fishing smacks of Lake Galilee and in the bleak air of Assyrian mountains. I am told that throughout all our American cities the second Sabbath service in the majority of churches is sparsely-yes, disgracefully-attended and is the distress of the congregated and eloquent pastors who bring their learning and piety before pews ghastly for their incoquency. What is the providential meaning? The greatest of all evangelists since Bible times recently suggested that the evening services in all the churches be turned into the most popular style of evangelistic meetings for outsiders. Surely that is an experiment worth making. If that does not succeed, then it does seem to me all the churches which cannot secure sufficient evening audiences ought to shut up their buildings at night and go where the people are and invite them to come to the gospel banquet.

Help One Another. Let the Christian souls, bountifully fed in the morning, go forth in the afternoon and evening to feed the multitudes of outsiders starving for the bread of which if a man eat he shall never again hunger. Among these clear down the gospel would make more rapid conquest than among those who know so much and have so much that God cannot teach or help them. In these lower depths splendid fellows in the rough, like the shoeblack that a reporter saw near New York city hall. He asked a boy to black his boots. The boy came up to his work provokingly slow and had just begun, when a large boy shoved him aside and began the work, and the reporter reproved him as being a bully, and the boy replied: "Oh, that's all right! I am going to do it for 'im. You see, he's been sick in the hospital more'n

a month, so us boys turn in and give 'im a lift." "Do all the boys help him?" asked the reporter. "Yes, sir. When they ain't got no job themselves, and Jim gets one, they turn in and help 'im, for he ain't strong yet, you see." "How much percentage does he give you?" said the reporter. "Do he give you?" I don't keep none of it. I ain't no such sneak as that. All the boys give up what they got on his job. I'd like to catch any feller sneaking on a sick boy, I would!" The reporter gave him a 25 cent piece and said, "You keep 10 cents for yourself and give the rest to Jim." "Can't do it, sir. It's his customer. Here, Jim." Such big souls as that strew all the lower depths of the cities and get them converted to God, this would be the last full century of the world's sin, and but little work of evangelization would be left for the next century. Before this century expires let there be a combined effort to save the great cities of America and Great Britain and of all Christendom. What an awful thing it would be for you, O dying century, to bequeath to the coming century, as yet innocent and unswayed with a single sin or burdened with a single sorrow, the blasphemy, the lawlessness, the atheism, the profligacy and the woes of great cities still unevangelized!

What we ought to see, O dying century, is a revival of religion that would wrap the continents in conflagrations of religious awakening, and that would make legislation and merchandise and all styles of worldly business wait awhile at the telegraph offices and the telephone offices because they are occupied with telling the story of cities and nations born in a day. Nearly all the centuries closed with something tremendous. Why may not this century close in the salvation of America? I do not know whether our theological friends who have studied the subject more than I have are right or wrong when they say Christ will come in person to set up his kingdom in this world; but, though we would be overwhelmed with our unworthiness, I would like to see Christ descend from heaven in one of the clouds of this morning and plant his feet on this earth, which he came centuries ago to save, declare his reign of love and mercy and salvation on earth begun. And what more appropriate place—I say it reverentially—for such a divine landing than the capital of a continent never cursed by the tyrannies and superstitions of the old world?

Wonderful Sights. What has this dying nineteenth century to tell us before he goes? We all love to hear septuagenarians, octogenarians, nonagenarians and centenarians talk. We gather around the armchair and listen till it is far on into the night and never weary of hearing their experiences. But Lord Lyndhurst at 88 years of age pouring into the ears of the house of lords in a four hours' address the experiences of a lifetime, and Apollonius at 160 years of age recounting his travels to thrilled listeners, and Charles Macklin at 167 years of age absorbing the attention of his hearers, and Ralph Parham of our country at 107 years telling the Prince of Wales the story of Banker Hill, can create no such interest as this dying centenarian if he will only speak.

Tell us, O nineteenth century, before you go, in a score of sentences, some of the things you have heard and seen. The veteran turns upon us and says: "I saw Thomas Jefferson riding in unattended from Monticello, only a few steps from where you stand, dismount from his horse and hitch the bridle to a post, and on yonder hill take the oath of the presidential office. I saw your capital ablaze with war's incendiarism. I saw the puff of the first steam engine in America. I heard the thunders of Waterloo, of Sevastopol and Sedan and Gettysburg. I was present at all the coronations of the kings and queens and emperors and empresses now in the world's palaces. I have seen two billows roll across this continent and from ocean to ocean; a billow of revival joy in 1857, and a billow of blood in 1864. I have seen four generations of the human race march across this world and disappear. I saw their cradles rocked and their graves dug. I have heard the wedding bells and the deathknells of near a hundred years. I have clasped my hands for millions of joys and wraug them in millions of agonies. I saw Macready and Edwin Forrest act and Edward Payson pray. I heard the first chime of Longfellow's rhythms, and before any one else saw them I read the first line of Bancroft's History," and the first verse of Bryant's "Thanatopsis," and the first word of Victor Hugo's almost supernatural romance. I heard the music of all the grand marches and the lament of all the requiems that for high ten decades made the cathedral windows shake. I have seen more moral and spiritual victories than all of my predecessors put together.

Admiration and Benediction. "For all you who hear or read this valedictory I have kindled all the domestic firesides by which you ever sat and roused all the hallows and roundels and merriments you have ever heard and unraveled all the pictured sunset and starry banners of the midnight heavens that you have ever gazed at. But ere I go take this admiration and benediction of a dying century: The longest life, like mine, must close. Opportunity gone never come back, as I could prove from nine hundred years of observation. The eternity that will soon take me will soon take you. The wicked live not out half their days, as I have seen in 10,000 instances.

"The only influence for making the world happy is an influence that I, the nineteenth century, inherited from the first century of the Christian era—the Christ of all the centuries. Be not deceived by the fact that I have lived so long, for a century is a large wheel that turns 100 smaller wheels, which are the years, and each one of those years turns 365 smaller wheels, which are the days, and each one of the 365 days turns 24 smaller wheels, which are the hours, and each one of those 24 hours turns 60

smaller wheels, which are the minutes, and those 60 minutes turn still smaller wheels, which are the seconds. And all of this vast machinery is in perpetual motion and pushes us on and on toward the great eternity whose doors will, at 13 o'clock of the winter night between the year 1900 and the year 1901, open before me, the dying century. I quote from the three inscriptions over the three doors of the cathedral of Milan. Over one door, and I a wreath of sculptured roses, I read, "All that which pleases us is but for a moment." Over another door, around a sculptured cross, I read, "All that which troubles us is but for a moment." But over the central door I read, "That only is important which is eternal." O eternity, eternity, eternity!"

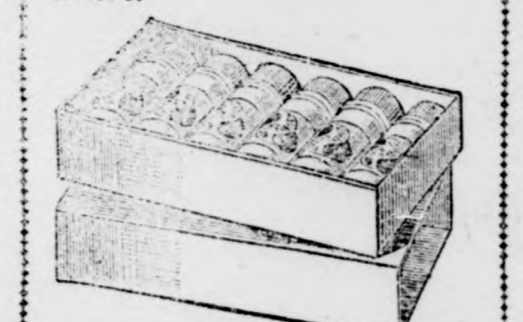
My hearers, as the nineteenth century was born while the face of this nation was yet wet with tears because of the fatal horseback ride that Washington took out here at Mount Vernon, through a December snowstorm, I wish the next century might be born at a time when the face of this nation shall be wet with the tears of the literal or spiritual arrival of the Great Deliverer of Nations, of whom St. John wrote with apocalyptic pen, "And I saw, and beheld a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer."



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