

THE GARDEN OF THE CHURCH.

Dr. Talmage Continues His Series of Rural Sermons on Summer Topics.

Christ's Chosen Flower Plot Full of Spirit Blossoms of Every Variety.

Some of the Kinds of Plants to be Found in the Lord's Garden.

Special to the Kansas City Times.

The HAMPTONS, July 11.—Continuing his series of "Rural Sermons" entitled "Voices of Gardens and Fields," the Rev. T. D. Witt Talmage, D. D., to-day preached from the Song of Solomon, v. 6: "I am come into My garden," he said:

The Bible is a great poem. We have in it faultless rhythm and bold imagery, and starting metaphors and rapturous lyric, and sweet pastoral, and instructive narrative, and devotional psalm; thoughts expressed in style more solemn than that of Montaigne, more bold than that of Milton, more terrible than that of Dante, more natural than that of Wordsworth, more impassioned than that of Coleridge, more tender than that of Cowper, more winsome than that of Spenser. This great poem brings all the gems of the earth into its cornucopia and it weaves the flames of indignation into its garlands and pours eternal harmonies into its rhythm. Everything in this book touches it makes beautiful, from the plain stones of the summer threshing floor to the daughters of Nahor filling the trough for the camels; and the fish pools of Heshbon up to the psalmist praising God with diapason of storm and whirlwind and Job leading forth Orion, Arcturus and the Pleiades.

RICH GARDENS OF THE WORLD. My text leads us into a scene of summer residence. The world has had a great many beautiful gardens. Charlemagne added to the glory of his reign by decreeing that they be established all through the realm, and even the names of the flowers to be planted there. Henry IV., at Montpelier, established gardens of bewitching beauty and luxuriance, gathering into them Alpine, Pyrenean and French plants. One of the sweetest spots on earth was the garden of Shenstone, the poet. His writings have made but little impression on the world; but his garden, "The Leasowes," will be immortal. To the natural advantage of that place was brought the perfection of art. Arbor and terrace and slope and rustic temple and reservoir and oak and fountain and here and there a crown of oak and hazel put forth their richest foliage. There was no life more diligent, no more ingenious than that of Shenstone, and all that diligence and genius he brought to the adornment of that one treasure spot. He gave £200 for it; he sold it for £7,000. And yet I am to tell you to-day of a richer garden than any I have mentioned.

CHRIST'S CHERISHED FLOWER SPOT. It is the garden spoken of in my text, the garden of the church, which belongs to Christ, for my text says so. He bought it, He planted it, He owns it, and He shall have it. Walter Scott in his outlay at Abbotsford ruined his fortune; and now, in the crimson flowers of those gardens, you can think of the man who signed that you see the blood of that old man's broken heart. The payment of the last £100,000 sacrificed him. But I have to tell you that Christ's life and Christ's death were the outlay of this beautiful garden of the church, of which my text speaks. O, how many sighs, and tears, and pangs, and agonies! Tell me ye women, who saw Him hang! Tell me ye executioners who lifted Him and let Him down! Tell me, thou sun, that didst hide; ye rocks that fell! "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." If the garden of the church belongs to Christ, certainly He has a right to walk in it. Come, then, O blessed Jesus! to-day; walk up and down these aisles, and pluck what Thou wilt of sweetness for Thyself! The church in my text, is appropriately compared to a garden, because it is a place of choice flowers, and of fruitful, and of thorough irrigation. That would be a strange garden in which there were no flowers. If nowhere else they would be along the borders or at the gateway. The homeliest taste will dictate something, if it be the old-fashioned hollyhock, or dahlia, or daffodil; but if there be larger means, then you will find the Mexican cactus, and blazing azalea, and clustering oleander.

WELL-NOW, CHRIST COMES TO HIS GARDEN AND He plants there some of the brightest spirits that ever flowered upon the world. Some of them are violets, unassuming, but sweet as heaven. You have to search for them, and you do not see them very often, perhaps, but you find where they have been by the brightened face of the invalid, and the sprig of geranium on the stand, and the new window curtains keeping out the glow of the sunlight. They are, perhaps, more like the ranunculus, creeping sweetly along amid the thorns and briars of life, giving kiss for sting; and many a man who has a garden in his heart, a great black rock of trouble, that he has covered it all over with flowery jessamines running in and out amid the crevices. These flowers in Christ's garden are not like sunflowers gaily and bravely, but they are dark, hovering over a soul that needs to be comforted, there they stand, night-blooming cereuses. But in Christ's garden there are plants that may be better compared to the Mexican cactus—thorns with soft, loveliness within—men with sharp points of character. They would almost every one of them touch them. They are hard to handle. Men pronounce them nothing but thorns, but Christ sees them notwithstanding, all their sharpness. Many a man has had a very hard ground to cultivate, and it has only been through severe trial he has raised even the smallest crop of grace.

THORNS WITH-OUT—SWEETNESS WITH- IN. A very harsh minister was talking to a very placid elder, and the placid elder said to the harsh minister: "Doctor, I do wish you would control your temper." "Ah," said the minister to the elder, "I control my temper in five minutes than you do in five years." He said: "I had a friend who came to me and said: 'I dare not join the church.' I said: 'Why?' 'O,' he said, 'I have such a violent temper.' Yesterday morning I was crossing very early at the Jersey City ferry, and I saw a milkman pour a large amount of water into the milk can, and I said to him: 'I think that will do,' and he insulted me, and I knocked him down. Do you think I ought to join the church? Nevertheless that very same man, who was so harsh in his behavior, loved Christ and could not speak of sacred things without tears of emotion and affection. Thorns without, sweetness within—the best specimen of Mexican cactus I ever saw.

There are others planted in Christ's garden who are always radiant, always impressive—more like the roses of deep hue that we occasionally find called "scents of battle." The Martin Luther, St. Paul, Christos, Wickliffe, Latimer, and Samuel Rutherford. What in other men is a spark, in them is a conflagration. When they sweat they sweat great drops of blood. When they pray their prayers come like fire. When they preach it is a pentecost. When they fight it is a Thermopylae. When they die it is a martyrdom. You find a great many roses in the garden but only a few "scents of battle." Men say: "Why don't you have more of them in the church?" I say: "Why don't you have in the world more Humbolds and Wellingtons? God gives to some ten talents, to another one.

SNOWDROPS. In this garden of the church which Christ has planted I also find the snowdrops, beautiful but cold looking, seemingly another phase of winter. I mean these Christians who are precise in their tastes, unimpassioned, pure as snowdrops and as cold. They never shed any tears, they never get excited, they never say anything rashly, they never do anything precipitately. Their pulses never quicken, their nerves never twitch, their indignation never boils over. They live longer than most people, but their life is in a minor key. They never run up to C above the staff. In their music of life they have no staccato passages. Christ planted them in the church, and if you see a century or two or three would not be there; snowdrops, always snowdrops.

But I have not told you of the most beautiful flower in all this garden spoken of in the text. If you see a century or two or three would not be there; snowdrops, always snowdrops. But I have not told you of the most beautiful flower in all this garden spoken of in the text. If you see a century or two or three would not be there; snowdrops, always snowdrops. But I have not told you of the most beautiful flower in all this garden spoken of in the text. If you see a century or two or three would not be there; snowdrops, always snowdrops.

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hasten up that garden path to see what Jesus is doing there, and lo! He is breaking off flowers, sharp and clean from the stem, and I say: "Stop, Jesus, don't fill those beautiful flowers." He turns to me and says: "I have come into my garden to gather lilies, and I mean to take these up to a higher terrace, for the garden around my palace, and there will I plant them; and in better soil and in better air they will put forth brighter leaves and sweeter redolence, and no frost shall touch them forever." And I looked up into His face and said: "Well, it is His garden and He has a right to do what He will with it, but will he do it?"—the hardest prayer a man ever made.

PICKING THE BEST OF ALL. It has seemed as if Jesus Christ took the best; for many of your household the best one is gone. You know that she was too good for this world; she was the gentlest in her ways, the deepest in her affection; and when at last the sickness came you had no faith in medicine. You knew that the hour of parting had come, and when, through the rich grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, you surrounded that treasure, you said: "Lord Jesus, take it—it is the best we have; take it. Thou art worthy!" The object in a household may have been of grosser mould; she was of the finest. One day a man was taking me from the depot to the village. He was very rough and coarse, and very blasphemous; but after awhile he melted down as he began to talk of his little son whom he had lost. "O, sir," he said, "that boy was different from the rest of us. He never used any bad language; no, sir, I never heard him use a bad word in my life. To us he was a saint, and we laughed at him; but he would keep on saying his prayers, and I often thought: 'I can't keep that child.' I said to my wife: 'Mother, we can't keep him; he will be a blessing to the world, and they brought him in and laid him down on the carpet, so white and so beautiful, my heart broke, sir, I knew we couldn't keep him.'"

The heaven of your little ones will not be fairly begun until you get there. All the kindnesses shown them by immortals will not make them forget you. There they are, the radiant thoughts that went out from your fingers. I throw a thought to the sweet angels. They are all well now in the palace. The crippled child has a sound foot now. A little lame child says: "Ma, will I be lame in heaven?" "No, my darling, you won't be lame in heaven; you'll be sick child says: "Ma, will I be sick in heaven?" "No, my dear, you won't be sick in heaven." A little blind child says: "Ma, will I be blind in heaven?" "No, my dear, you won't be blind in heaven." They are all well there."

THE LORD'S PLACE FREE TO ALL. I notice that the fine gardens sometimes have high fences around them and I cannot get in. It is so with a king's garden. It is only glimpse you ever get of such a garden is when the king rides out in his splendid carriage. It is not so with this garden, this King's garden. I throw wide open the gate and tell you all to come in. No monopoly in religion. Whosoever will, may. Choose now between a desert and a garden. Many of you have tried the garden of this world's delight. You have found it has been a chagrin. So it was with Theodora. How all the sweet things of the world laugh. He makes us laugh now when we read his poems; but he could not make his own heart laugh. While in the midst of his festivities he confronted a looking-glass, and he saw him! and said: "There that is true. I look just as I am, done up in body, mind and purse." So it was of Shenstone, of whose garden I told you at the beginning of my sermon. He sat down amid those bowers and said: "I have lost my road to happiness. I am angry and envious and frantic, and despite everything around me just as it becomes a madman to do." O, ye weary souls! come into Christ's garden to-day and pluck a little heart's ease. Christ is the only rest and the only pardon for a perturbed spirit. Do you not think your chance has almost come? You men and women who have been waiting for a year or two for a good opportunity in which to accept Christ, but have postponed it five, ten, twenty, thirty years, do you not feel as if now your hour of deliverance and pardon and salvation had come? O, what a grand grace has this against the poor soul that thou wilt not let it be saved! I feel as if salvation must come to-day in some of your hearts.

THE FATE OF MANY MORTALS. Some years ago a vessel struck on the rocks. They had only one lifeboat. In that lifeboat the passengers and crew were getting ashore. The vessel had foundered and was sinking deeper and deeper, and that one boat could not take the passengers very swiftly. A girl stood on the deck waiting for her turn to get into the boat. The boat came and went, came and went, but her turn did not seem to come. After awhile she could wait no longer, and she leaped on the taffrail and then sprang into the sea, crying to the boatman: "Save me next! Save me next!" Now is the day of salvation! Now! Now!

This sabbath is the last for some of you. It is about to sail away forever. Her bell tolls; the planks thunder back in the gangway; she shoots off, she floats out low in the great ocean of eternity. Wave farewell to your last chance for heaven. "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Invited to revel in a garden, you die in a desert. May God Almighty, before it is too late, break that infatuation!

FABLES FOR THE TIMES. THE TWO OYSTERS. Two Oysters, one of which was sick and the other well, were one day taking a walk, when the healthy Oyster said: "You are a miserable creature. You are so infirm that you can't enjoy yourself, and if an enemy were to get after you, you would be too weak to make your escape. Now look at me; why don't you brace up and look like this? I feel like an athlete and I have a digestion like an ostrich."

Just then two men came along, and each one swallowed an Oyster. But the sick Oyster made a supreme effort, climbed out of the stomach into which it had been forced, and made its escape, while the healthy Oyster died an ignominious death in a tank of gastric juice.

MORAL: This fable teaches the supremacy of a heroic spirit over the infirmities of the flesh.

THE IMPUDENT HOUSEWIFE. A Housewife tried to make her Hen lay two eggs a day by giving her double rations, but this made the Hen so fat that she quit laying altogether.

MORAL: This fable relates to the ways of improving the efficiency of high-salaried officials.

THE MAN AND THE CUCUMBER. A Man was about to pull a little cucumber from the vine, when the vegetable, with an appealing look, said: "Don't disturb me yet; I am too little to eat. Let me grow big and then I will afford you a square meal." The Cucumber was spared, and in a few weeks it twisted that man into all sorts of shapes with the colic.

MORAL: This fable teaches the virtue of prompt execution.

THE JACKASS AND THE EVENING-STAR. A Jackass went into a meeting-house and heard an Evangelist preach a sermon on "Total Depravity." When he came forth he made a joyful noise, sung aloud, and thanked his stars that he was made a Jackass and not a depraved human being.

MORAL: This fable teaches that when self-abasement becomes too abysmal it is liable to over-reach itself.

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