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Thursday, December 4, 1890.

A SERMON ON DAMASCUS.

DR. TALMAGE CONTINUES HIS SERIES ON PALESTINE.

The Text Acts ix, 3: "As He Journeyed He Came Near Damascus"—Full Report of a Most Admirable Discourse Herewith Presented.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 7.—The New York Academy of Music was filled with an audience of nearly six thousand persons at the Christian Herald service this evening when Dr. Talmage delivered the eleventh sermon of his series on Palestine, and the adjoining countries. The same sermon, as on previous Sundays, had been preached in the morning to another large audience in the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The subject was "Damascus," and the text, "As he journeyed he came near Damascus."

In Palestine we spent last night in a mud hotel, of one story, but camels and sheep in the basement. Yet never did the most brilliant hotel on any continent seem so attractive to me as that structure. If we had been obliged to stay in a tent, as we expected to do that night, we must have perished. A violent storm had opened upon us its volleys of hail and snow and rain and wind as if to let us know what the Bible means when it prophesies, and evangelist and Christ himself spoke of the fury of the elements. The atmospheric wrath broke upon us about 10 o'clock in the afternoon and we were seated on the ground. With hands and feet numb, and our bodies chilled to the bone, we made our slow way. While high up on the rocks, and the wind whistled through a signal of distress halted the party, for down in the ravines one of the horses had fallen and his rider must not be left alone amid that wilderness of scenery and horror of storm. As the night approached the tempest thickened and blackened and strengthened. Some of our attendants going ahead had gained permission for us to halt for the night in the mud hotel I spoke of. Our first duty on arrival was the reconstitution of the exhausted of our party. My room was without a window, and an iron stove without any top in the center of the room, the smoke selecting my eyes in the absence of a chimney. Through an opening in the floor Arab faces were several times thrust up to see how I was progressing. But the tempest ceased during the night, and before it was fully day we were feeling for the stirrups of our saddled horses, this being the day whose long march will bring us to that city whose name cannot be pronounced in the hearing of the intelligent or the Christian without making the blood tingle and the nerves to thrill and printing the best emotions of the soul into agitation—Damascus!

During the day we passed Caesarea Philippi, the northern terminus of Christ's journey. North of that he never went. We lunch at noon, seated on the fallen columns of one of Herod's palaces.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon, coming to a hill top, we saw the broad plain a city, which the most famous camel driver of all time, afterward called Mohammed, the prophet and the founder of the most stupendous system of error that has ever cursed the earth, refused to enter because he said God would allow no man to enter but one pariah, and he would not enter this earthly paradise lest he should be denied entrance to the heavenly. But no city that I ever saw so plays hide and seek with the traveler. The air is so clear the distant objects seem close by. You come on the top of a hill and Damascus seems only a little way off. But down you go into a valley and you see nothing for the next half hour but heronness and rocks regurgitated by the volcanoes of other ages. Up another hill and down again. Up again and down again. But your patience is almost exhausted you reach the last hill top, and the city of Damascus, the oldest city under the whole heavens, built by Noah's grandson, grows upon your vision. Every mile of the journey now becomes more solemn and suggestive and tremendous.

This is the very road, for it has been the only road for thousands of years, the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, along which a cavalcade of mounted officers went, about 1,884 years ago, in the midst of them a fierce little man who made up by magnitude of hatred for Christ for his diminutive stature, and was the leading spirit, and, though suffering from chronic inflammation of the eye, from those eyes flashed more indignation against Christ's followers than any one of the horse-droppers.

This little man, before his name was changed to Paul, was called Saul. So many of the mightiest natures of all ages are condensed into smallness of stature. The Frenchman who was sometimes called by his troops "Old One Hundred Thousand" was often because of his abbreviated personal presence, styled "Little Nap." Lord Nelson, with insignificant eyes to start with and one eye put out at Calvi and his right eye taken off at Tenerife, proves himself at Trafalgar the mightiest hero of the English navy. The greatest of American theologians, Archbishop Alexander, could stand under the elbow of many of his contemporaries. Look out for little men when they start out for some special mission of good or evil. The thunderbolt is only a condensation of electricity.

SYRIA'S WOODS DAY.
Well, that galloping group of horsemen on the road to Damascus were halted quicker than a bombshell or cavalry charge ever halted a regiment. The Syrian noon-day, because of the clarity of the atmosphere, is the brightest of all noon-days, and the noonday sun in Syria is positively terrific for brilliancy. But suddenly that noon there flashed from the heavens a light which made that Syrian sun seem tame as a star in comparison. It was the face of the slain and ascending Christ looking from the heavens, and under the dash of that overpowering light all the horses dropped with their riders. Human face and horse's mane together in the dust. And then two claps of thunder followed uttering the two words, the second word like the first: "Saul, Saul!" For three days that fallen eques-

trian was totally blind, for excessive light will sometimes extinguish the eyesight. And what comes and crystalline lens could endure a brilliancy greater than the noon-day Syrian sun? I had read it a hundred times, but it never so impressed me before, and probably will never so impress me again, as I took my Bible from the saddle bags and read aloud to our comrades in travel. "As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, 'Saul, Saul! Why persecutest thou me?' and he said, 'Who art thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.'"

But we cannot stop longer on this road, for we shall see this unhorsed equestrian later in Damascus, toward which his horse's head is turned and at which we must ourselves arrive before night. The evening is near at hand, and as we leave snowy Hermon behind us and approach the shadow of the cupolas of two hundred mosques we cut through a circumference of many miles of garden which embower the city. So luxuriant are these gardens, so opulent in color, so luscious of fruits, so glittering with fountains, so rich with bowers and kiosks that the Mohammedan's heaven was fashioned after what are to be seen here of bloom and fruitage. Here in Damascus the right season are cherries and mulberries and apricots and almonds and pomegranates and pomegranates and pears and apples and plums and citrons and all the rarities of the round world's pomology. No wonder that Julian called this city "the eye of the east," and that the poets of Syria have styled it "the luster on the neck of doves," and historians said, "It is the golden clasp which couples the two sides of the world together."

DISAPPOINTMENT AT DAMASCUS.
Many travelers express disappointment with Damascus, but the trouble is they have carried in their minds from boyhood the book which dazzles so many young people, "The Arabian Nights," and they come into Damascus looking for Aladdin's lamp and Aladdin's ring and the genie which appeared by rubbing them. But as I have never read "The Arabian Nights," such stuff not being allowed around our house in my boyhood, and nothing lighter in the way of reading than "Baxter's Saints' Evening Rest" and D'Aubigny's "History of the Reformation," Damascus appeared to me as sacred and secular historians have presented it, and so the city was not a disappointment, but with few exceptions a surprise.

Under my window to-night in the hotel at Damascus I hear the perpetual ripple and rush of the river. Absent as he is, secret is out! Now I know why all this flora and fruit, and why everything is so great, and the place is so great, and the river Absana! And not far off the river Pharpar, which our horses waded through today! Thank the rivers, or rather the God who made the rivers! Deserts to the north, deserts to the south, deserts to the east, deserts to the west, but here a paradise. And to the river Gihon and Phison and Hiddekel and Euphrates made the other paradise, Abana and Pharpar make this Damascus a paradise. That is what made Gen. Naaman of this city of Damascus so mad when he was told for the cure of his leprosy to go and wash in the river Jordan. The river Jordan is much of the river Pharpar that we crossed today. They are as clear as though they had been sieved through some special sieve of the mountains. Gen. Naaman had great and patriotic pride in his own rivers of his own country, and when Elisha the prophet told him that if he wanted to get rid of his leprosy he must go and wash in the Jordan, he felt as who lives on the magnificent Hudson would feel if told that we must go and wash in the muddy Thames, or as if those who live on the transparent Rhine were told that they must go and wash in the muddy Tiber.

So Gen. Naaman cried out with a voice as loud as ever he had used in commanding his troops, uttering those memorable words which every minister of the gospel sooner or later takes for his text: "Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus, better than the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" Thank God he lives in a land so plentifully watered, and that they bless all our Atlantic coast and all our Pacific coast, and reiterate all the continent between the coasts. Only those who have traveled in the deserts of Syria, or Egypt, or have in the oriental cities heard the tinkling of the bell of those who sell water, can realize what it is to have this divine beverage in abundance. Water running over the rocks, turning the mill wheel, saturating the roots of the trees, dripping from the buckets, filling the pitchers of the household, rolling through the fonts or baptistries of holy ordinance, filling the reservoirs of cities, inviting the cattle to come down and slake their thirst and the birds of heaven to dip their wing, according in robe of mist and falling again in the exhilaration of shower-water, living water, God given water.

AWAKENING IN THE MORNING.
We are awakened in the morning in Damascus by the hoarse voices of those who have different styles of food to sell. It is not a street cry as in London or New York, but a weird and long drawn out solo, compared with which a buzz saw is musical. It makes you inopportunistly waken, and will not let you sleep again. But to those who are in the morning meaning of the song it becomes quite tolerable, for they sing: "God is the nourisher, buy my bread," "God is the nourisher, buy my milk," "God is the nourisher, buy my fat." As you look out of the window you see the Mohammedans, who are in large majority in the city, at prayer. And if it were put to vote who should be king of the city, fifteen thousand in that city would say Christ, but one hundred and thirty thousand would say Mohammed. Looking from the window, you see on the housetops and on the streets Mohammedans at worship. The muezzin, or the officers of religion who announce the time of worship, appear high up on the different minarets or tall towers, and walk around the minaret, inclosed by a railing and cry in a loud and hurrying way: "God is great. I bear witness that there is no God but God. I bear witness that Mohammed is the apostle of God. Come to prayer. Come to salvation! God is great. There is no other but God. Prayers are better than sleep." Five times a day must the Mohammedans engage in worship, as he begins he turns his face toward the city of Mecca, and utters upon the ground a rug which he almost always carries. With his thumbs touching the lobes of his ears, and holding his face between his hands, he cries: "God is great." Then folding his hands across his girdle, he looks down and says: "Holiness to thee, O God, and praise be to thee. Great is thy name. Great is thy greatness. There is no deity but thee." Then the worshiper sits upon his heels, and then he touches his nose to the rug, and then his forehead, these genuflections accompanied with the cry: "Great God." Then, raising the forefinger of his right hand toward heaven, he says: "I testify there is no deity but God, and I testify that Mohammed is the servant of God, and the messenger of God." The prayers close by the worshiper holding his hands opened upward as if to take the divine blessing, and then his hands are rubbed over his face as if to convey the blessing to his entire body.

REASONS FOR PRAISING MOHAMMEDANISM.
There are two or three commendable things about Mohammedanism. One is that its disciples wash before every act of prayer, and that is five times a day, and there is a gospel in cleanliness. Another commendable thing is they don't care who is looking and nothing can stop them in their prayer. Another thing is that by the order of Mohammed, and an order obeyed for thirteen hundred years, no Mohammedan touches strong drink. But the polygamy, the many wifehood of Mohammedanism, has made that religion the unattainable and everlasting curse of woman, and when woman sinks the race sinks. The proposition recently made in high ecclesiastical places for the reformation of Mohammedanism, instead of its obliteration, is like an attempt to improve a plague or educate a leprosy. There is only one thing that will ever reform Mohammedanism, and that is its extinction from the face of the earth by the power of the gospel of the Son of God, which makes not only man, but woman, free for this life and free for the life to come.

The spirit of the horrible religion which

Continued on third page.

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