THE EVENING JOURNAL. 50 Cents a Month: contains all the news. --

CONTINUES HIS SERIES ON THE BIBLE AND NATURE.

Points in Reference to Fish, Indirectly Recommended by Fishermen Were Chosen

Feb. 5.—Rev. T. De Witt Talmage this morning preached to a crowd in the Tabernacle a refreshing and eloquent sermon on Ichthyology of the Bible; or, "The Fishes," being a continuation of his series of discourses on the Bible. The text chosen was Gen. i. 21, "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life."

Glorious book the Bible is! After wandering from it and discussing different subjects found in the book of God, the book is as fresh to me as when I learned, with a stretch of memory, the shortest verse in it, "Jesus wept," and I opened months ago a new realm of Biblical study that neither my pulpit nor any other had ever explored, and having led you in this course of sermons everywhere concerning the "Astronomy of the Bible; or, God Among the Stars," the "Chronology of the Bible: Among the Centuries;" the "Orography of the Bible; or, God Among the Hills," the "Mineralogy of the Bible; God Among the Amethysts," this evening, as I may be divinely inspired, I will speak to you about the "Ichthyology of the Bible; or, God Among the Fishes."

APOSTOLIC FISHERMEN.

Jesus and his apostles were fathered and tired and their fetlocks were red with the dew and cut by the rocks, and I could see my feet out of the stirrups as night we dismounted on the shores of Galilee. The rather limited food with which we had left Jerusalem was well nigh gone, and the articles of diet repeated by oft repetition three times for three weeks ceased to be lovely. We want to see a fig again. Figs and raisins are all out of date.

Nor does the Arab caterer, who knows but half a dozen English words, answer our requests for the styles of food with which we were entertained the first few days of our cruise. "Finished." The most appetizer is abstinence, and the cry of all the party was, "Let us go on Sunday morning on fresh fish in Lake Gennesareth," for you know that that lake has four names. It is worth a profusion of nomenclature, and it is in the Bible called Sea of Galilee, Sea of Tiberias, Gennesareth and Tiberias.

The improvised table on Sabbath morning comes broiled perch, only a few minutes before lifted out of the sacred lake. It was natural that our minds should revert to the only breakfast that Christ prepared, and it was on the very shores where we breakfasted. Peter and those olden times struck up together and set on fire some dry light brushwood and then larger wood, and a pile of glowing coals was the consequence.

Like the disciples fishing on the Sabbath, "poor luck," and every time up the net it hung dripping, a fluttering fin or squirming scale. Christ from the shore hailed and told them where to cast, and 153 big fish rewarded Peter and Nathaniel, having taken of those large fish, brought to the coals which Christ had kindled, the group who had been out all night and were chill and wet and hungry, sat down and began mastication. Those scales came back to us when on Sabbath morning, December, 1889, just as the ruins of ancient Tiberias and the shore of the rippling Galilee, we sailed.

BIBLE ICHTHYOLOGY.

Is it not strange that the Bible is so inwrought from the fishes in the Holy Land is, for the most, an inland region? Only three lakes besides the one already mentioned, namely, the Dead sea, where fish live at all, and as soon as they they die, and the birds swoop on the carcasses, and the third, Merom, which are alternately fresh and dry. Only three rivers of note—Jabbok, Kishon and Jordan.

The fish now in the waters of Palestine are the perch, the carp, the minnow, the blenny, the chub, because of the barb at the shub, the dogfish, none of the Delaware shad or an Hudson trout. Well, the world's not changed, and the world's church changed. Lake Galilee is deeper and better stocked than, no doubt the rivers were more fisheries were of far more than now.

There was the Mediterranean, 15 miles away, and fish were salted and brought inland, and that article of food was so that a fish market gave name to the gates of Jerusalem. It was called the fish gate. We had great reservoirs in which were kept alive and bred. There was a fishpool. Isaiah refers to fishpools. Large fishes were caught and tied fast by ropes in the reservoirs, a ring having been put through their gills, and that is the Scripture passage where thou put a hook into their jaw through with a bodkin, the fish; that the god of the Philistines, was half man, and that is the Lord's indignation against Tyre we read that this blood beside the ark of God was by invisible fishes because the Philistines stole the fish a god. The Scripture passage, "Take and both the palms of his hands upon the threshold," to him." Now, the stump of Dagon was the fish part. The top part, which was the figure of a man, was dashed to pieces, and the Lord, by demolishing everything but the stump or fish part of the idol, practically said, "You may keep your fish, but know from the way I have demolished the rest of the idol that it is nothing divine."

THE FISHLIKE IDOLS.

Layard and Wilkinson found the fish an object of idolatry all through Assyria and Egypt. The Nile was full of fish, and that explains the horrors of the plague that slaughtered the finny tribe all up and down that river, which has been and is now the main artery of Egypt's life. In Job you hear the plunge of the spear into the hippopotamus as the great dramatic poet cries out, "Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons or his head with fish spears?" Yea, the fish began to swim in the very first book of Genesis, where my text records, "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life."

Do you realize that the first living thing that God created was the fish? It preceded the bird, the quadruped, the human race. The fish has priority of residence over every living thing. The next thing done after God had kindled for our world the golden chandelier of the sun and the silver chandelier of the moon was to make the fish. The first motion of the principle of life, a principle that all the thousands of years since have not been able to define or analyze—the very first stir of life—was in a fish.

What an hour that was when in the Euphrates, the Gihon, the Pison and the Hiddekel, the four rivers of paradise, the waters swirled with fins and brightened with scales. All the attributes of the infinite God were called into action for the making of that first fish. Lanceolate and translucent miracle! There is enough wonder in the plate of a sturgeon or in the cartilage of a shark to confound the scientists. It does not take the universe to prove a God. A fish does it. No wonder that Linnæus and Cuvier and Agassiz and the greatest minds of all the centuries sat enraptured before its anatomy.

Oh, its beauty and the adaptedness of its structure to the element in which it must live; the picture gallery on the sides of the mountain trout unveiled as they spring up to snatch the flies; the grayling, called the flower of fishes; the salmon, ascending the Oregon and the Severn, easily leaping the falls that would stop them; the bold perch, the gudgeon, silver and black spotted; the herring, moving in squadrons five miles long; the carp, for cunning called the fox of fishes: the wondrous sturgeons, formerly reserved for the tables of royal families, and the isinglass made out of their membrane; the tench, called the physician of fishes, because when applied to human ailments it is said to be curative; the lampreys, so tempting to the epicurean that too many of them slew Henry II—aye, the whole world of fishes!

Enough of them floating up and down the rivers to feed the hemispheres if every ear of corn and every head of wheat and every herd of quadruped and if every other article of food in all the earth were destroyed. Universal drought, leaving not so much as a spear of grass on the round planet, would leave in the rivers and lakes and seas for the human race a staple commodity of food which, if brought to shore, would be enough not only to feed but fatten the entire human race.

In times to come the world may be so populated that the harvests and vineyards and land animals may be insufficient to feed the human family, and the nations may be obliged to come to the rivers and ocean beaches to seek the living harvests that swim the deep, and that would mean more health and vigor and brilliancy and brain than the human race now own.

IMPORTANCE OF PLAIN FOOD.

The Lord, by placing the fish in the first course of the menu in paradise, making it precede bird and beast, indicated to the world the importance of the fish as an article of human food. The reason that men and women lived three and four and five and nine hundred years was because they were kept on parched corn and fish. We mix up a fantastic food that kills the most of us before 50 years of age. Custards and whipped syllabubs and Roman punches and chicken salads at midnight are a gantlet that few have strength to run.

We put on many a tombstone glowing epithets saying that the person beneath died of patriotic services or from exhaustion in religious work when nothing killed the poor fellow but lobster eaten at a party four hours after he ought to have been sound asleep in bed. There are men today in our streets so many walking hospitals who might have been athletes if they had taken the hint of Genesis in my text and of our Lord's remark and adhered to simplicity of diet.

The reason that the country districts have furnished most of the men and women of our time who are doing the mightiest work in merchandise, in mechanics, in law, in medicine, in theology, in legislative and congressional halls, and all the presidents from Washington down—at least those who have amounted to anything—is because they were in those country districts of necessity kept on plain diet.

No man or woman ever amounted to anything who was brought up on floating island or angel cake. The world must turn back to paradisiac diet if it is to get paradisiac morals and paradisiac health. The human race today needs more phosphorus, and the fish is charged and surcharged with phosphorus—phosphorus, that which shines in the dark without burning.

What made the 12 apostles such stalwart men that they could endure anything and achieve everything? Next to divine inspiration, it was because they were nearly all fishermen and lived on fish and a few plain condiments. Paul, though not brought up to swing the net and throw the line, must of necessity have adopted the diet of the population among whom he lived, and you see the Felix, and the phosphorus in his boldest of all utterances before the wiseacres on Mars hill, and the phosphorus as he went without fright to his beheading, and the phosphorus you see in the lives of all the apostles who moved right on undaunted to certain martyrdom, whether to be decapitated or flung off precipices or hung in crucifixion.

Phosphorus, shining in the dark without burning. No man or woman that ever lived was independent of questions of diet. Let those who by circumstances are compelled to simplicity of diet thank God for their rescue from the temptation of killing delicacies. The men and women who are to decide the drift of the 20th century, which is only seven or eight steps off, are now five miles back from the rail station and had for breakfast this morning a similar bill of fare to that which Christ provided for the fishermen disciples on the banks of Lake Galilee.

Indeed the only articles of food that Christ by miracle multiplied were bread and fish which the boy who acted as butler to the 7,000 people of the wilderness handed over—five barley loaves and two fishes. The boy must have felt badly when called on to give up the two fishes which he had brought out after having caught them himself, sitting with his bare feet over the bank of the lake and expecting to sell his supply at good profit, but he felt better when by the miracle the fish were multiplied and he had more returned to him than he had surrendered.

THE MIRACLE OF JONAH AND THE GREAT FISH.

Know also in order to understand the ichthyology of the Bible that in the deeper waters, as those of the Mediterranean, there were monsters that are now extinct. The fools who become infidels because they cannot understand the ingulfment of the recreant Jonah in a sea monster might have saved their souls by studying a little natural history. "Oh," says some one, "that story of Jonah was only a fable." Say others, "It was interpolated by some writer of later times." Others say, "It was a reproduction of the story of Hercules devoured and then restored from the monster." But my reply is that history tells us that there were monsters large enough to whelm ships.

The extinct ichthyosaurus of other ages was 30 feet long, and as late as the sixth century of the Christian era up and down the Mediterranean there floated monsters compared with which a modern whale was a sardine or a herring. The shark has again and again been found to have swallowed a man entire. A fisherman on the coast of Turkey found a sea monster which contained a woman and a purse of gold. I have seen in museums sea monsters large enough to take down a prophet.

But I have a better reason for believing the Old Testament account and that is that Christ said it was true and a type of his own resurrection, and I suppose he ought to know. In Matthew xii, 40, Jesus Christ says, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." And that settles it for me and for any man who does not believe Christ a dupe and an impostor.

Notice also how the Old Testament writers drew similitude from the fisheries. Jeremiah uses such imagery to prophesy destruction, "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them." Ezekiel uses fish imagery to prophesy prosperity, "It shall come to pass that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-gedi even to En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many," the explanation of which is that Engedi and En-eglaim stood on the banks of the Dead sea, in the waters of which no fish can live, but the prophet says that the time will come when these waters will be regenerated, and they will be great places for fish. Amos reproves idolatries by saying, "The day shall come upon you when he will take you away with hooks and your posterity with fishhooks." Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, declares that those captured of temptation are as fishes taken in an evil net. Indeed Solomon knew all about the finny tribe and wrote a treatise on ichthyology which has been lost.

THE ANCIENT FISHERMEN.

Furthermore, in order that you may understand the ichthyology of the Bible, you must know that there were five ways of fishing. One was by a fence of reeds and canes, within which the fish were caught. But the Herodic government forbade that on Lake Galilee, lest pleasure boats be wrecked by the stakes driven. Another mode was by spearing, the waters of Galilee so clear good aim could be taken for the transfixing. Another was by hook and line, as where Isaiah says, "The fishers also shall mourn, and they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament." And Job says, "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook?" And Habakkuk says, "They take up all of them with the angle."

Another mode was by a casting net or that which was flung from the shore; another, by a dragnet or that which was thrown from a boat and drawn through the sea as the fishing smack sailed on. How wonderful all this is inwrought into the Bible imagery, and it leads me to ask in which mode are you and I fishing, for the church is the boat, and the gospel is the net, and the sea is the world, and the fish are the souls, and God addresses us as he did Simon and Andrew, saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." But when is the best time to fish for souls? In the night. Peter, why did you say to Christ, "We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing?" Why did you not fish in the daytime? He replies, "You ought to know that the night is the best time for fishing."

At Tobyhanna Mills, among the mountains of Pennsylvania, I saw a friend with high boots and fishing tackle starting out at 9 o'clock at night, and I said, "Where are you going?" He answered, "Going to fish." "What, in the night." So the vast majority of souls captured for God are taken in times of revival in the night meetings. They might just as well come at 12 o'clock at noon, but most of them will not. Ask the evangelists of olden times, ask Finney, ask Nettleton, ask Osborn, ask Daniel Baker, and then ask all the modern evangelists which is the best time to gather souls, and they will answer, "The night; by all odds, the night." Not only the natural night, but the night of trouble.

Suppose I go around in this audience and ask these Christians when they were converted to God. One would answer, "It was at the time I lost my child by membranous croup, and it was the night of bereavement," or the answer would be, "It was just after I was swindled out of my property, and it was the night of bankruptcy," or it would be, "It was during that time when I was down with that awful sickness, and it was the night of physical suffering," or it would be, "It was that time when slander took after me, and I was maligned and abused, and it was the night of persecution." Ah, my hearers, that is the time for you to go after souls, when a night of trouble is on them. Miss not that opportunity to save a soul, for it is the best of all opportunities.

Go up along the Mohawk, or the Juniata, or the Delaware, or the Tombigbee, or the St. Lawrence right after a rain, and you will find the fishermen all up and down the banks. Why? Because a good time to angle is right after the rain, and that is a good time to catch souls, right after a shower of misfortune, right after floods of disaster. And as a pool overshadowed with trees is a grand place for making a fine haul of fish, so when the soul is under the long dark shadows of anxiety and distress it is a good time to make a spiritual haul. People in the bright sunshine of prosperity are not so easily taken.

THE BEST FISHERS OF MEN.

But be sure before you start out to the gospel fisheries to get the right kind of bait. "But how," you say, "am I to get it?" My answer is, "Dig for it." "Where shall I dig for it?" "In the rich Bible grounds." We boys brought up in the country had to dig for bait before we started for the banks of the Raritan. We put the sharp edge of the spade against the ground and then put our foot on the spade, and with one tremendous plunge of our strength of body and will we drove it in up to the handle and then turned over the sod.

We had never read Walton's "Complete Angler" or Charles Cotton's "Instructions How to Angle For Grayling in a Clear Stream." We knew nothing about the modern red hackle or the fly of orange colored mohair, but we got the right kind of bait. No use trying to angle for fish or angle for souls unless you have the right kind of bait, and there is plenty of it in the promises, the parables, the miracles, the crucifixion, the heaven of the grand old gospel.

Yes, not only must you dig for bait, but use only fresh bait. You cannot do anything down at the pond with old angleworms. New views of truth. New views of God. New views of the soul. There are all the good books to help you dig. But make up your mind as to whether you will take the hint of Habukkuk and Isaiah and Job and use hook and line, or take the hint of Matthew and Luke and Christ and fish with a net.

I think many lose their time by wanting to fish with a net, and they never get a place to swing the net. In other words, they want to do gospel work on a big scale or they will not do it at all. I see feeble minded Christian men going around with a Bagster's Bible under their arm, hoping to do the work of an evangelist and use the net, while they might be better content with hook and line and take one soul at a time. They are bad failures as evangelists. They would be mighty successes as private Christians. If you catch only one soul for God, that will be enough to fill your eternity with celebration. All hail the fisherman with hook and line!

I have seen a man in roughest corduroy outfit come back from the woods loaded down with a string of finny treasures hung over his shoulder and his gamebag filled, and a dog with his teeth carrying the basket filled with the surplus of an afternoon's angling, and it was all the result of a hook and line, and in the eternal world there will be many a man and many a woman that was never heard of outside of a village Sunday school or a prayer meeting buried in a church basement who will come before the throne of God with a multitude of souls ransomed through his or her instrumentality, and yet the work all done through personal interview, one by one, one by one.

You do not know who that one soul may be. Staupitz helped one soul into the light, but it was Martin Luther. Thomas Bilney brought salvation to one soul, but it was Hugh Latimer. An edge tool maker was the means of saving one soul, but it was John Summerfield. Our blessed Lord healed one blind eye at a time, one paralyzed arm at a time one dropsical patient at a time, and raised from the dead one girl at a time, one young man at a time. Admire the net that takes in a great many at once, but do not despise the hook and line.

THE APPLICATION TO CHRISTIANITY.

God help us amid the gospel fisheries, whether we employ hook or net, for the day cometh when we shall see how much depended on our fidelity. Christ himself declared: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down and gathered the good in the vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world—the angels shall come forth and separate the wicked from the just."

Yes, the fishermen think it best to keep the useful and worthless of the haul in the same net until it is drawn upon the beach, and then the division takes place, and if it is on Long Island coast the mossbankers are thrown out and the bluefish and shad preserved, or if it is on the shore of Galilee the fish classified as siluroids are hurled back into the water or thrown up on the bank as unclean, while the perch and the carp and the barbel are put into pails to be carried home for use.

So in the church on earth the saints and the hypocrites, the generous and the mean, the chaste and the unclean, are kept in the same membership, but at death the division will be made, and the good will be gathered into heaven, and the bad, however many holy communions they may have celebrated, and however many rhetorical prayers they may have offered, and however many years their names may have been on the church rolls, will be cast away. God forbid that any of us should be among the "cast away." But may we do our work, whether small or great, as thoroughly as did that renowned fisherman, George W. Bethune, who spent his summer rest angling in the waters around the Thousand Isles and beating at their own craft those who plied it all the year, and who the rest of his time gloriously preached Christ in a pulpit only 15 minutes from where I now stand, and ordering for his own obsequies: "Put on me my pulpit gown and bands, with my own pocket Bible in my right hand. Bury me with my mother, my father and my grandmother. Sing also my own hymn:

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