

CROSSING JORDAN.

DR. TALMAGE'S SUNDAY SERMON DELIVERED AT DETROIT.

He Compares the Children of Israel Crossing the Jordan With Washington Crossing the Delaware and Xerxes Crossing the Hellespont—Lessons of the Text.

DETROIT, March 12.—Rev. Dr. Talmage, who is now visiting this city, preached today to a large and intensely interested audience in the Fort Street Presbyterian church, of which Rev. Dr. Kadeliffe is pastor, on the crossing of the Jordan by the children of Israel, the text being from Joshua iii, 17, "And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."

Washington crossed the Delaware when crossing was pronounced impossible, but he did it by boat. Xerxes crossed the Hellespont with 2,000,000 men, but he did it by bridge. The Israelites crossed the Red sea, but the same orchestra that celebrated the deliverance of the one army sounded the strangulation of the other. This Jordanic passage differs from all. There was no sacrifice of human life—not so much as the loss of a linchpin. The vanguard of the host, made up of priests, advanced until they put their foot at the brim of the river, when immediately the streets of Jerusalem were as more dry than the bed of that river. It was as if all the water had been drawn off, and then the dampness had been soaked up with a sponge, and then by a towel the road had been wiped dry.

Yonder goes a great army of Israelites—the hosts in uniform. Following them the wives, the children, the flocks, the herds. The people look up at the crystalline wall of the Jordan as they pass and think what an awful disaster would come to them if before they got to the opposite bank that Ajalon wall that wall should fall on them. And the thought makes the mothers hug their children close to their hearts as they swiften their pace. Quick, now! Get them all up on the banks—the armed warriors, the wives and children, flocks and herds, and let this wonderful Jordanic passage be completed forever.

Sitting on the shelved limestone, I look off upon that Jordan where Joshua crossed under the triumphal arch of the rainbow woven out of the spray; the river which afterward became the baptistry where Christ was sprinkled or plunged; the river where the ax—the borrowed ax—miraculously swam at the prophet's order; the river illustrious in the history of the world for heroic faith and omnipotent deliverance and typical of scenes yet to transpire in your life and mine—scenes enough to make us, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, tingle with infinite gladness.

Standing on the scene of that affrighted, fugitive river Jordan, I learn for myself and for you, first, that obstacles, when they are touched, vanish. The text says that when these priests came down and touched the water—the edge of the water with their feet—the water parted. They did not wade in chin deep or waist deep or knee deep or ankle deep, but as soon as their feet touched the water it vanished. And it makes me think that almost all the obstacles of life need only be approached in order to be conquered. Difficulties but touched vanish. It is the trouble, the difficulty, the obstacle far in the distance, that seems so huge and tremendous.

The apostles Paul and John seemed to dislike cross dogs, for the apostle Paul tells us in Philippians, "Beware of dogs," and John seems to shut the gate of heaven against all the canine species when he says, "Without are dogs." But I have been told that when those animals are furious, if they come at you, if you will keep your eye on them and advance upon them they will retreat. Whether that be so or not I cannot tell, but I do know that the vast majority of the misfortunes and trials and disasters of your life that bound you steps, if you can only get your eye on them, and keep your eye on them, and advance upon them, and cry, "Begone," they will sink and cower.

A BEAUTIFUL TRADITION. There is a beautiful tradition among the American Indians that Manitou was traveling in the invisible world, and one day he came to a barrier of brambles and sharp thorns, which forbade his going on, and there was a wild beast glaring at him from the thicket, but as he determined to go on his way he did pursue it, and those brambles were found to be only phantoms, and that beast was found to be a powerless ghost, and the impassable river that forbade him rushing to embrace the Yaratilda proved to be only a phantom river.

Well, my friends, the fact is there are a great many things that look terrible across our pathway, which, when we advance upon them, are only the phantoms, only the apparitions, only the illusions of life. Difficulties touched are conquered. Put your feet into the brim of the water, and Jordan retreats. You sometimes see a great duty to perform. It is a very disagreeable duty. You say, "I can't go through it; I haven't the courage, I haven't the intelligence, to go through it." Advance upon it, Jordan will vanish.

I always sigh before I begin to preach at the greatness of the undertaking, but as soon as I start it becomes to me an exhilaration. And any duty undertaken with a confident spirit becomes a pleasure, and the higher the duty the higher the pleasure. Difficulties touched are conquered. There are a great many people who are afraid of death in the future. Good John Livingston once, on a sloop coming from Elizabethport to New York, was dreadfully frightened because he thought he was going to be drowned as a sudden gust came up. People were surprised at him. If any man in all the world was ready to die, it was good John Livingston.

So there are now a great many good people who shudder in passing a grave-

yard, and they hardly dare think of Canaan because of the Jordan that intervenes. But once they are down on a sick bed, then all their fears are gone—the waters of death dashing on the beach are like the mellow voice of ocean shells—they smell of the blossoms of the tree of life. The music of the heavenly choirs comes stealing over the waters, and to cross now is only a pleasant sail. How long the boat is coming! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Christ the Priest advances ahead, and the dying Christian goes over dry shod on coral beds and flowers of heaven and paths of pearl.

Oh, could we make our doubts remove— These gloomy doubts that rise— And view the Canaan that we love With unobscured eyes!

Could we but climb where Moses stood And view the landscape o'er, Not Jordan's stream nor death's cold flood Could fright us from the shore.

Again, this Jordanic passage teaches me the completeness of everything that God does. When God put an invisible dam across Jordan, and it was halted, it would have been natural, you would have supposed, for the water to have overflowed the region all around about, and that great devastation would have taken place, but when God put the dam in front of the river he put a dam on the other side of the river, so that, according to the text, the water halted and reared and stood there and not overflowing the surrounding country. Oh, the completeness of everything that God does!

One would have thought that, if the waters of Jordan had dropped until they were only two or three feet deep, the Israelites might have marched through it and have come up on the other bank with their clothes saturated and their garments like those of men coming ashore from shipwreck, and that would have been as wonderful a deliverance, but God does something better than that. When the priests' feet touched the waters of Jordan and they were drawn off, they might have thought there would have been a bed of mud and slime through which the army should pass.

Draw off the waters of the Hudson or the Ohio, and there would be a good many days, and perhaps many weeks, before the sediment would dry up, and yet here in an instant, immediately, God provides a path through the depths of Jordan. It is so dry the passengers do not even get their feet damp. Oh, the completeness of everything that God does! Does he make a universe? It is a perfect clock, running ever since it was wound up, the fixed stars the pivots, the constellations the intermoving wheels, and ponderous laws the weights and mighty swinging pendulum, the stars in the great dome of night striking the midnight, and the sun, with brazen tongue, telling the hour of noon.

The wildest comet has a chain of law that it cannot break. The thistle down flying before the schoolboy's breath is controlled by the same law that controls the sun and the planets. The rosebush in your window is governed by the same principle that governs the tree of the universe on which the stars are ripening fruits, and on which God will one day put his hand and shake down the fruit—a perfect universe. No astronomy has ever proposed an amendment.

A COMPLETE BIBLE. If God makes a Bible, it is a complete Bible. Standing amid the dreadful and delightful truths, you seem to be in the midst of an orchestra where the wallings over sins, and the rejoicings over pardon, and the martial strains of victory make the chorus like an anthem of eternity. This book seems to you the ocean of truth, on every wave of which Christ walks—sometimes in the darkness of prophecy, again in the splendor of which he walks to prophet, Paul to Isaiah, Revelation to Genesis—glorious light, turning midnight sorrow into the midnoon joy, dispersing every fog, hushing every tempest. Take this book; it is the kiss of God on the soul of lost man. Perfect Bible, complete Bible! No man has ever proposed any improvement.

God provided a Saviour. He is a complete Saviour—God-man—divinity and humanity united in the same person. He set up the stately pillars of the universe and the towers of light. He planted the cedars and the heavenly Lebanon. He struck out of the rock the rivers of life, singing under the trees, singing under the thrones. He quarried the sardonyx and crystal and the topaz of the heavenly wall. He put down the jasper for the foundation and heaped up the amethyst for the capital and swung the 12 gates which are 12 pearls. In one instant he thought out a universe, and yet he became a child crying for his mother, feeling along the sides of the manger, learning to walk.

Omnipotence sheathed in the muscle and flesh of a child's arm; omniscience strung in the optic nerve of a child's eye; infinite love beating in a child's heart; a great God appearing in the form of a child 1 year old, 5 years old, 15 years old. While all the heavens were ascribing to him glory and honor and power on earth, men said, "Who is this fellow?" While all the heavenly hosts, with folded wing about their faces, bowed down before him crying "Holy, holy" on earth, they denounced him as a blasphemer and a sot. Rocked in a boat on Gennesaret, and yet he it is that undirled the lightning from the storm cloud and disarmed Lebanon of its forests and holds the five oceans on the tip of his finger as the leaf holds the rain-drop.

Oh, the complete Saviour, rubbing his hand over the place where we have the pain, yet the stars of heaven the adorning gems of his right hand. Holding us in his arms when we take our last view of our dead. Sitting down with us on the tombstone, and while we plant roses there he is planting consolation in our heart, every chapter a stalk, every verse a stem, every word a rose. A complete Saviour, a complete Bible, a complete universe, a complete Jordanic passage. Everything that God does is complete.

And so there are now a great many good people who shudder in passing a grave-

yard, and they hardly dare think of Canaan because of the Jordan that intervenes. But once they are down on a sick bed, then all their fears are gone—the waters of death dashing on the beach are like the mellow voice of ocean shells—they smell of the blossoms of the tree of life. The music of the heavenly choirs comes stealing over the waters, and to cross now is only a pleasant sail. How long the boat is coming! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Christ the Priest advances ahead, and the dying Christian goes over dry shod on coral beds and flowers of heaven and paths of pearl.

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