CHRISTMAS SERMON.

THE TABERNACLE PULPIT FESTOONED WITH HOLIDAY GREEN.

Rev. Dr. Talmage's Sermon on Christ the Star—A Living, Speaking, Historic and Evangelistic Star—A Discourse That Glows With Eloquence.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 24.—In the Brooklyn Tabernacle today a great audience assembled to participate in the Christmas services. Standing before the organ, festooned with Christmas greens, this sermon was delivered by Rev. Dr. Talmage, after the throngs had sung "The Star of Bethlehem." Text, Revelation xxii, 16, "I am the bright and the morning star."

This is Christmas eve. Our attention and the attention of the world is drawn to the star that pointed down to the caravansary where Christ was born. But do not let us forget that Christ himself was a star. To that luminous fact my text calls us.

It seems as if the natural world were anxious to make up for the damage it did our race in furnishing the forbidden fruit. If that fruit wrought death among the nations, now all the natural product shall become a symbol of blessing. The showering down of the wealth of the orchard will make us think of him whom Solomon describes as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and the flowers of tangled glen and cultured parterre shall be the dew glinted garland for the brow of the Lord Jesus. Yea, even the night shall be taxed, and its brightest star shall be set as a gem in the coronet of our holy religion.

Have you ever seen the morning star advantageously? If it was on your way home from a night's carousal, you saw none of its beauty. If you merely turned over on your pillow in the darkness, glancing out of the window, you know nothing about the cheerful influence of that star. But there are many in this house tonight who in great passes of their life, some of them far out at sea, have gazed at that star and been thrilled through with indescribable gladness. That star comes trembling as though with the perils of the darkness, and yet bright with the anticipations of the day. It seems emotional with all tenderness, its eyes filled with the tears of many sorrows. It is the gem on the hand of the morning thrust up to signal its coming. Other stars are dim, like holy candles in a cathedral or silver beads counted in superstitious litany, but this is a living star, a speaking star, a historic star, an evangelistic star—bright and brilliant and triumphant symbol of the great Redeemer. The telegraphic operator puts his finger on the silver key of the electric instrument, and the tidings fly across the continent. And so it seems to me that the finger of inspiration is placed upon this silver point in the heavens, and its thrill through all the earth. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Behold, I am the bright and morning star." The meaning of my text is this: As the morning star precedes and promises the coming of the day, so Christ heralds the natural and spiritual dawn.

In the first place, Christ heralded the coming of the creation. There was a time when there was no order, no sound or beauty. No wing stirred. No word was uttered. No light sped. As far as God could look up, as far down, as far out, there was nothing. Immeasureable solitude. Height and depth and length and breadth of nothingness. Did Christ then exist? Oh, yes. "By him were all things made that are made; things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth." Yes, he antedated the creation. He led forth Arcturus and his sons. He shone before the first morning. His voice was heard in the concert when the morning stars serenaded the advent of our infant earth, when, wrapped in swaddling clothes of light, it lay in the arms of the great Jehovah. He saw the first fountain laid. He saw the first light kindled. That hand which was afterward crushed upon the cross was thrust into chaos, and it brought out one world and swung it in that orbit, and brought out another world and swung it in another orbit, and brought out all the worlds and swung them in their particular orbits. They came like sheep at the call of a shepherd. They knew his voice, and he called them all by their names. Oh, it is an interesting thought to me to know that Christ had something to do with the creation. I see now why it was so easy for him to change water into wine. He first created the water. I see now why it was so easy for him to cure the maniac. He first created the intellect. I see now why it was so easy for him to hush the tempest. He sank Gennesaret. I see now why it was so easy for him to swing fish into Simon's net. He made the fish. I see now why it was so easy for him to give sight to the blind man. He created the optic nerve. I see now why it was so easy for him to raise Lazarus from the dead. He created the body of Lazarus and the rock that shut him in. Some suppose that Christ came a stranger to Bethlehem. Oh, no. He created the shepherds, and the flocks they watched, and the hills on which they pastured, and the heavens that overarched their heads, and the angels that chanted the chorus on that Christmas night. That hand which was afterward nailed to the cross, was an omnipotent and creative hand and the whole universe was poised on the tip of one of his fingers. Before the world was Christ was. All the world came trooping up out of the darkness, and he greeted them, as a father greets his children, with a "good morning," or a "good night." Hail, Lord Jesus, morning star of the first creation.

Again, Christ heralds the dawn of comfort in a Christian soul. Sometimes we come to passes in life where all kinds of tribulations meet us. You are building up some great enterprise. You have built the foundation—the wall—you are just about to put on the capstone, when everything is demolished. You have a harp all strung for sweetest accord, and some great agony crushes it. There is a little voice hushed in the household. Blue eye closed. Color dashed out of the cheek. The foot still. Instead of the quick feet in the hall, the heavy tread of those who march to the grave. Oh, what are people to do amid all these sorrows? Some sit down and mourn. Some bite their lip until the blood comes. Some wring their pale hands. Some fall on their faces. Some lie on their backs helpless and look up into what seems to them an unpitying heaven. Some pull their hair down over their eyes and look through with a fiend's glare. Some, with both hands, press their hot brain and want to die and cry, "O God, O God!" Long night, bitter night, stupendous night of the world's suffering! Some know not which way to turn. But not so the Christian man. He looks up toward the heavens. He sees a bright appearance in the heavens. Can it be only a flashing meteor? Can it be only a falling star? Can it be only a delusion? Nay, nay. The longer he looks the more distinct it becomes, until after awhile he cries out, "A star—a morning star, a star of comfort, a star of grace, a star of peace, the star of the Redeemer!" Peace for all trouble. Balm for all wounds. Life for all dead. Now Jesus, the great heart healer, comes into our home. Peace! Peace that passeth all understanding. We look up through our tears. We are comforted. It is the morning star of the Redeemer. "Who broke off that flower?" said one servant in the garden to another. "Who broke off that flower?" And the other servant said, "The master." Nothing more was said, for if the master had not a right to break off a flower to wear over his heart or to set in the vase in the mansion, who has a right to touch the flower? And when Christ comes down into our garden to gather lilies, shall we fight him back? Shall we talk as though he had no right to come? If any one in all the universe has a right to that which is beautiful in our homes, then our master has, and he will take it, and he will wear it over his heart, or he will set it in the vase of the palace eternal. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Peace, troubled soul! I put the balm on your wounded heart tonight. The morning star, the morning star of the Redeemer.

Again, Christ heralds the dawn of millennial glory. It is night in China, night in India, night in Siberia, night for the vast majority of the world's population. But it seems to me there are some intimations of the morning. All Spain is to be brought under the influence of the gospel. What is that light I see breaking over the top of the Pyrenees? The morning! Yea, all Italy shall receive the gospel. She shall have her schools and her colleges and her churches. Her vast population shall surrender themselves to Christ. What is that light I see breaking over the top of the Alps? The morning. All India shall come to God. Her idols shall be cast down. Her juggernauts shall be broken. Her temples of iniquity shall be demolished. What is that light I see breaking over the top of the Himalayas? The morning. The empurpled clouds shall gild the path of the conquering day. The Hottentot will come out of his mud hovel to look at the dawn; the Chinaman will come up on the granite cliffs, the Norwegian will get up on the rocks, and all the beach of heaven will be crowded with celestial inhabitants come out to see the sun rise over the ocean of the world's agony. They shall come from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. These sweltered under tropical suns. These shivered under Icelandic temperature. These plucked the vineyards in Italy. These packed the teaboxes in China. These were aborigines lifting up their dusky faces in the dawn. And the wind shall waft it, and every mountain shall become a transfiguration, and the sea will become the walking place of him who trod the wave cliffs of stormy Tiberias, and the song of joy shall rise toward heaven, and the great sky will become a sounding board which shall strike back the shout of salvation to the earth until it rebounds again to the throne of the Almighty, and the morning star of Christian hope will become the full sunburst of millennial glory.

Again, Christ heralds the dawn of heaven upon every Christian's dying pillow. I suppose you have noticed that the characteristics of people in their healthy days are very apt to be their charcteristics in their dying days. The dying words of ambitious Napoleon were, "Head of the army." The dying words of poetic Lord Byron were, "I must sleep now." The dying words of affectionate Lord Nelson were, "Kiss me, Hardy." The dying words of Voltaire were, as he saw one whom he supposed to be Jesus in the room, "Crush that wretch." But I have noticed that the dying words of Christians always mean peace. Generally the pain is all gone, and there is great quietude through the room. As one of these brothers told me of his mother in the last moment: "She looked up and said, pointing to some supernatural being that seemed to be in the room, 'Look at that bright form. Why, they have come for me now.'"

The lattice is turned so that the light is very pleasant. It is peace all around. You ask yourself: "Why, can this be a dying room? It is so different from anything I ever expected." And you walk the floor, and you look out of the window, and you come back and look at your watch, and you look at the face of the patient again, and there is no change, except that the face is becoming more radiant, more illuminated. The wave of death seems coming up higher and higher, until it has touched the ankle, then it comes on up until it touches the knee, and then it comes on up until it reaches the girdle, and then it comes on up until it reaches the lip, and the soul is about to be floated away into glory, and you roll back the patient's sleeve, and you put your finger on the pulse, and it is getting weaker and weaker, and the pulse stops, and you hardly know whether the life has gone or not. Indeed, you cannot tell when she goes away, she goes away so calmly. Perhaps it is 4 o'clock in the morning, and you have the bed wheeled around to the window, and the dying one looks out into the night sky, and she sees something that attracts her attention, and you wonder what it is.

Why, it is a star. It is a star that out of its silver rim is pouring a supernatural light into that dying experience. And you say, "What is it that you are looking at?" She says, "It is a star." You say, "What star is it that seems so well to please you?" "Oh," she says, "that is the morning star—Jesus!" I would like to have my death bed under that evangelistic star—I would like to have my eye on that star, so I could be assured of the morning. Then the dash of the surf of the sea of death would only be the billowing up of the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." All other lights will fail—the light that falls from the scroll of fame, the light that flashes from the gem in the beautiful apparel, the light that flames from the burning lamps of a banquet—but this light burns on and burns on. Paul kept his eye on that morning star, until he could say: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." Edward Payson kept his eye on the star until he could say, "The breezes of heaven fan me." Dr. Goodwin kept his eye on that evangelistic star until he could say, "I am swallowed up in God." John Tennant kept his eye on that evangelistic star until he could say, "Welcome, sweet Lord Jesus—welcome, eternity." No other star ever pointed a mariner into so safe a harbor. No other star ever sunk its silvered anchor into the waters. No other star ever pierced such accumulated cloud, or beckoned with such a holy luster.

With lanterns and torches and a guide, we went down in the Mammoth cave of Kentucky. You may walk 14 miles and see no sunlight. It is a stupendous place. Some places the roof of the cave a hundred feet high. The grottoes filled with weird echoes, cascades falling from invisible height to invisible depth. Stalagmites rising up from the floor of the cave—stalactites descending from the roof of the cave, joining each other, and making pillars of the Almighty's sculpturing. There are rosettes of amethyst in halls of gypsum. As the guide carries his lantern ahead of you, the shadows have an appearance supernatural and spectral. The darkness is fearful. Two people, getting lost from their guide only for a few hours, years ago, were demented, and for years sat in their insanity. You feel like holding your breath as you walk across the bridges that seem to span the bottomless abyss. The guide throws his calcium light down into the caverns, and the light rolls and tosses from rock to rock and from depth to depth, making at every plunge a new revelation of the awful power that could have made such a place as that.

A sense of suffocation comes upon you as you think that you are 250 feet in a straight line from the sunlit surface of the earth. The guide after awhile takes you into what is called the "Star Chamber," and then he says to you, "Sit here," and then he takes the lantern and goes down under the rocks, and it gets darker and darker, until the night is so thick that the hand an inch from the eye is unobservable. And then, by kindling one of the lanterns and placing it in a cleft of the rock, there is a reflection cast on the dome of the cave, and there are stars coming out in constellations—a brilliant night heavens—and you involuntarily exclaim: "Beautiful! beautiful!" Then he takes the lantern down in other depths of the cavern, and wanders on, and wanders off, until he comes up from behind the rocks gradually, and it seems like the dawn of the morning, and it gets brighter and brighter. The guide is a skilled ventriloquist, and he imitates the voices of the morning, and soon the gloom is all gone, and you stand congratulating yourself over the wonderful spectacle. Well, there are a great many people who look down into the grave as a great cavern. They think it is a thousand miles subterraneous, and all the echoes seem to be the voices of despair, and the cascades seem to be the falling tears that always fall, and the gloom of earth seems coming up in stalagmite, and the gloom of the eternal world seems descending in the stalacite, making pillars of indescribable horror. The grave is no such place at that to me, thank God.

Our divine Guide takes us down into the great caverns, and we have the lamp to our feet and the light to our path, and all the echoes in the rifts of the rock are anthems, and all the falling waters are fountains of salvation, and after awhile we look up and, behold! the cavern of the tomb has become a king's star chamber. And while we are looking at the pomp of it an everlasting morning begins to rise, and all the tears of earth crystallize into stalagmite, rising up in a pillar on the one side, and all the glories of heaven seem to be descending in stalactite, making a pillar on the other side, and you push against the gate that swings between the two pillars, and as the gate flashes open you find it is one of the 12 gates which are 12 pearls. Blessed be God that through this gospel the mammoth cave of the sepulcher has become the illumined Star Chamber of the King!

I would God that if my sermon today does not lead you to Christ, that before morning, looking out of the window, the astronomy of the night heavens might lead you to the feet of Jesus.

Hark! Hark! To God the chorus breaks
From every host, from every gem;
But one alone, the Saviour speaks—
Is the Star of Bethlehem.

A Great Climax.

"I've seen a good many funny snaps in the way of plays and play actors in my time," said the advance agent, "but one I struck out in Milwaukee the other day was by far the best of anything I have been up against. It was in one of the museums there. The museum has a stock company in its theater, and its great specialty is border drama. Every week they give a new drama of the wild and wooly west.

"This play that I saw was a blood curdler of that character, and at the time I arrived at the theater the stage was pitch dark, and two men were fighting a duel. I could hear the knives clash together and hear the men stumble around the stage, but I could but faintly distinguish the forms of the actors. After awhile there was a thump on the floor and the villain (I knew it was the villain by his accent) hissed: 'Ah, ha! Rudolph Tegherington, I have you now and no one nigh to see me do the deed!'

"Then the drummer hit the bass drum a belt, and the calcium man turned on the light, and away up on top of a rocky pass a woman (the heroine) was seen standing. 'Coward!' she shouted, 'me and heaven is here!'"—Buffalo Express.

What Machinery Is Doing.

One of the astonishing facts in the field of industry is the marvelous power of machinery operated by hand. In the cotton trade, in 1850, the average product of every employee was something less than $700, while 30 years later he was able to produce a value of $1,200, notwithstanding the reduced price of cotton. In the woolen factory the change was much the same, the hand of each worker being able, as long ago as 1850, to make over $1,200 of product, and in 1880 about $1,800, the proportion of material consumed by improved machinery being about the same.

How much the world is indebted to invention cannot be stated in tangible form, but with the strength of man remaining the same and the skill of the present artisan, though showing some advances, still not distancing that of the ancient Egyptian, the vast increase of human resources is due mainly to the influence of invention in discovering ways in which machines can do the work of men. The competition is no longer a competition of skill of labor, but that of invention, and in America we are far in advance of any other nation in this respect. A man who 50 years ago could turn out a value equal to a scant wage, now, at fairly good wages, is able to bring into being four or five or six times the value.—

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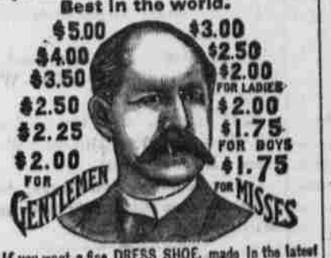

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