

REV. DR. TALMAGE.

THE EMINENT DIVINE'S SUNDAY DISCOURSE.

Subject: "Across the Continent"—Spiritual Thoughts Suggested While Viewing Scenes of Majesty and Grandeur Wrought by the Hand of God.

Text: "Streams in the desert."—Isaiah xxxv, 6. "He toucheth the hills and they smoke."—Psalms civ., 32.

My first text means irrigation. It means the waters of the Himalaya, or the Pyrenees, or the Sierra Nevada poured through canals and aqueducts for the fertilization of the valleys. It means the process by which the last American westwardness will be made an apple orchard, an orange grove, or a wheat field, or a cotton plantation, or a vineyard—"streams in the desert." My second text means a volcano like Vesuvius or Cotopaxi, or it means the geysers of Yellowstone Park or of California. You see a hill calm and still, and for ages immovable, but the Lord out of the heavens puts His finger on the top of it, and from it rise thick and impressive vapors: "He toucheth the hills and they smoke!" Although my journey across the continent this summer was for the eighth time, more and more am I impressed with the divine hand in its construction, and with its greatness and grandeur, and more and more am I thrilled with the fact that it is all to be irrigated, plorified, and drained. What a change when Daniel Webster on yonder Capitoline Hill said to the American Senate in regard to the centre of this continent, and to the regions on the Pacific coast: "What do you want with this vast, worthless area, this region of savages and wild beasts, of deserts and canyons, of shifting sands and prairie dogs? To what use could we ever put these great deserts or these great mountains, impenetrable and covered with eternal snow? What can we ever hope to do with the Western coast, rock-bound, cheerless and unfruitful, and a burden on the public treasury? To place the Pacific coast one inch nearer Boston than it now is." What a mistake the great statesman made when he said that! All who have crossed the continent realize that the States on the Pacific Ocean will have quite as grand opportunities as the States on the Atlantic, and all this realm from sea to sea to be the Lord's cultivated possession.

Do you know what, in some respects, is the most remarkable thing between the Atlantic and Pacific? It is the figure of a cross on a mountain in Colorado, which is called the "Mount of the Holy Cross." A horizontal crevice filled with perpetual snow, and a perpendicular crevice filled with snow, but both the horizontal line and the perpendicular line so marked, so bold, so significant, so unmistakable, that all who pass in the daytime within many miles are compelled to see it. There are some figures, some contours, some mountain appearances that you gradually make out after your attention is called to them. No man's face on the rocks in the White Mountains, no a maiden's form cut in the granite of the Adirondacks, so clearly in the moving clouds. Yet you have to look under the pointing of your friend or guide for some time before you can see the similarity. But the first instant you glance, at this side of the mountain in Colorado, you cry out: "Across a cross!" Do you say that this geological inscription is just happenstance? No! That cross on the Colorado mountain is not a human device, or an accident of nature, or the freak of an earthquake. The hand of God cut it there and set it up for the nation to look at. What a grand monument for the cross of wood was set up on the summit of Calvary, or set up at some time since the Crucifixion, I believe the Creator meant it to suggest the most notable event in all the history of the planet, and He hung it there over the heart of this continent to indicate that the only hope for this nation is in the Cross on which our Immortal dies. The clouds were vocal at our Saviour's birth; the rocks rent at His martyrdom, why not the walls of Colorado bear the record of the Crucifixion?

I supposed in my boyhood, from its size on the map, that California was a few yards across, a ridge of land on which one must walk cautiously lest he hit his head against the Sierra Nevada on one side, or slip off into the Pacific waters on the other—California, the thin slice of land, as I supposed it to be in my boyhood. I have found to be larger than all the States of New England and all New York State and all Pennsylvania added together; and if you add them together their square miles fall far short of California. And then all these new-born States of the Union, North and South Dakota, Washington, Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. Each State an empire in size.

"But," says one, "in calculating the immensity of our continent across a ridge, you must remember that vast reaches of our public domain are uncultivated heaps of dry sand, and the 'Bad Lands' of Montana and the Great American Desert, and a small island you mentioned that. Within twenty-five years there will not be between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts a hundred miles of land not reclaimed either by farmers' plough or miners' crowbar. Beyond the waters of the rivers and the showers of heaven, in what are called the rainy season, will be gathered into great reservoirs, and through aqueducts let down where and when the people want them. Utah is an object lesson. Some parts of that Territory which were so barren that a spear of grass could not have been raised there in a hundred years are now rich and fertile. County farms of Pennsylvania, or Westchester farms of New York, or Somerset County farms of New Jersey. Experiments have proved that ten acres of ground irrigated from water gathered in great hydrological basins will produce as much as fifty acres from the downpour of rain as seen in our regions. We have our freshets and our droughts, but in those lands where there to be scientifically irrigated there will be neither freshets nor droughts. As you take a pitcher and get it full of water, and then set it on a table and take a drink out of it when you are thirsty, and never think of drinking a pitcherful all at once, so Montana, and Wyoming and Idaho will catch the rains of their rainy season and take up all the waters of their rivers in great reservoirs of reservoirs, and refresh their land whenever they will.

But the most wonderful part of this American continent is the Yellowstone Park. My first visit there made upon me an impression that will last forever. Go in by the Nevada route as we did this summer and have 200 miles of road, your stagecoach taking you through a day of scenery as captivating and sublime as the Yellowstone Park itself. After all poetry has exhausted itself concerning Yellowstone Park, and all the Korans and Hieroglyphs and the other charming artists have completed their odes, there will be other relations to make, and other stories of its beauty and worth, splendor and agony, to be recited. The Yellowstone Park is the geologist's paradise. By cheapening of material it becomes the nation's playground! In some portions of it there seems to be the anatomy of the elements. Fire and water, and the vapor born of that marriage, together, scatter cones or hills of crystal that have been over five thousand years growing! In places the earth, throbbing, sobbing, groaning, quaking with aqueous paroxysms. At the expiration of every sixty minutes one of the geysers tossing its boiling water 200 feet in the air and then descending into swirling rainbows. "He toucheth the hills and they smoke." Caverns of pictured walls, large enough for the sepulchre of the human race. Formations of stone in shape and color of calla lily, of heliotrope, of coral, of snowflake, of sunflower and of gladiolus. Sublimity and grandeur of iron, with their shining pencils, turning the hills into a forest of iron, or a Valley

picture-gallery. The so-called Thanatopsis Geyser, equalling as the Bryant poem it was named after, and Eraugeline Geyser, lovely as the Longfellow heroine it commemorates.

But after you have wandered along the geyserite enchantment for days, and begin to feel that there can be nothing more of interest to see, you suddenly come upon the peroration of all majesty and grandeur, the Grand Canyon. It is here that it seems to me—and I speak it with reverence—Jehovah seems to have surpassed Himself. It seems a great gulch let down into the eternities. It is a canyon, an enormous cleft, a yellow! You never saw yellow unless you saw it there. Red! You never saw red unless you saw it there. Violet! You never saw violet unless you saw it there. Triumphant banners of color. In a cathedral of basalt, Sunrise and Sunset married by the setting of rainbow ring.

Gothic arches, Corinthian capitals, and Egyptian obelisks, but before human architecture was born. Huge fortifications of granite constructed before war forged its first cannon. Gibraltar and Sebastopol that never can be taken. Thrones on which no one but the King of Heaven and earth ever sat. Fount of waters at which the hills are baptized, while the giant cliffs stand around as sponsors. For thousands of years before that scene was unveiled to human sight, the great basins and the halftones giving the finishing touches, and after all these forces of nature had done their best, in our century the curtain dropped, and the world had a new and divine light.

Standing there in the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone Park for the most part we held our peace, but after awhile it flashed upon me with such power I could not help but say to my comrades: "What a hall this would be for the great judgment! The mighty cascade with the rainbows at the foot of it? Those waters congealed and translated with the agitations of that day, what a place they would make for the shining feet of a Judge of quick sight! And those rainbows look now like the crowns to be cast at His feet. At the bottom of this great canyon is a floor on which the nations of the earth might sit, and all up and down these galleries of rock the nations of heaven might sit. And what reverberation of archangels' trumpet there would be through all these gorges and from these caverns and over these heights. Why should not the greatest of all the days the world shall ever see close amid the grandest scenery Omnipotence ever built?"

I have said these things about the magnitude of the continent, and given you a few specimens of some of its wonders, to let you know the comprehensiveness of Christ's dominion when He takes possession of this continent. Besides that, the salvation of this continent means the salvation of Asia, for we are only thirty-six miles from Asia as the crow flies, and the Behring Strait separates us from Asia, and there will be spanned by a great bridge. The thirty-six miles of water between these two continents are not all deep sea, but have three islands, and three shoals which will allow piers of bridges, and for the most of the way the water is only about twenty fathoms deep.

The American continent which will yet span those straits will make America, Asia, Europe and Africa one continent. So, you see, America evangelized, Asia will be evangelized. Europe taking Asia from one side and America from the other side. Your children will cross that bridge. America and Asia and Europe all one, what subtraction from the mass of sanctified earth and the prophecies in Revelation will be fulfilled, "the land will be no more sea." But do I mean literally that this American continent is going to be all spanned? I do. Christopher Columbus, when he went from the west coast of Santa Maria, and his second brother Alonso, when he went ashore from the Pinta, and his third brother Vincent, when he went ashore from the Nina, took possession of this country by the name of Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Satan has no more right to this country than I have to your pocket-book. To hear him talk on the roof of the temple, when he proposed to give Christ the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, you might suppose that Satan was a great capitalist or that he was loaded up with real estate, when the other miscreant owned an acre or an inch of ground on this planet. For that reason I protest against something I heard and saw this summer, and other summer, that Oregon and Oregon and Wyoming and Idaho and Colorado and California. They have given devils names to many places in the West and Northwest.

As soon as you get in Yellowstone Park or California you have pointed out to you places cursed with such names as "The Devil's Bluff," "The Devil's Kitchen," "The Devil's Thumb," "The Devil's Mill," "The Devil's Mush-Pot," "The Devil's Tea-Kettle," "The Devil's Saw-Mill," "The Devil's Machine-Shop," "The Devil's Gate," and so on. Now it is very much needed that the geological survey Congressional Committee or group of distinguished guests go through Montana and Wyoming and California and Colorado and give other names to these regions, all these regions belong to the Lord, and to Christian nation, and away with such Plutonic nomenclature! But how is this continent to be spanned? The pulp and a Christian preacher and put them together will be the mightiest team for the first plough. Not by the power of cold, formalistic theology; not by ecclesiastical technicalities; not by the wisdom of the world and the next. Let your religion of gladders crack off and fall into the Gulf Stream and get melted. Take all your creeds of all denominations and drop out of them all human phraseology and put in agricultural phraseology, and you will see how quick the people will jump after them.

On the Columbia River we saw the salmon jump clear out of the water in different places. I suppose for the purpose of getting the insects. And if when we want to haul for men and we only have the right kind of bait, they will spring out above the hook of their sins and forever to reach it. The Young Men's Christian Associations of America will also do part of the work. They are going to take the young men of this nation for God. These institutions are better than either with God and man than ever before. Business men and capitalists are awaking to the fact that they can do nothing better in the way of living benevolence or in the way of testament than to do what Mr. Harwood did for Brooklyn when he made the Young Men's Christian palace possible. These institutions will get our young men all over the land and into a better way of heaven. Thus we will all in some way help on the work, you with your ten talents, I with five, somebody else with three. It is estimated that to irrigate the arid and desert lands of America as they ought to be irrigated, it will cost about one hundred million dollars to gather the waters into reservoirs. As much contribution and effort as they would irrigate with Gospel influences all the waste places of this continent. Let us by prayer and contribution and right living all help to fill the reservoirs. You will carry a bucket, and you will dip, and even a thimbleful would help. And after a while God will send the floods of mercy so gathered, pouring down over all the land, and some of us on earth and some of us in heaven will sing with Isaiah, "In the wilderness waters have broken out, and streams in the desert." And with David, "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the right of God." We fill up who reap the right of God for God!

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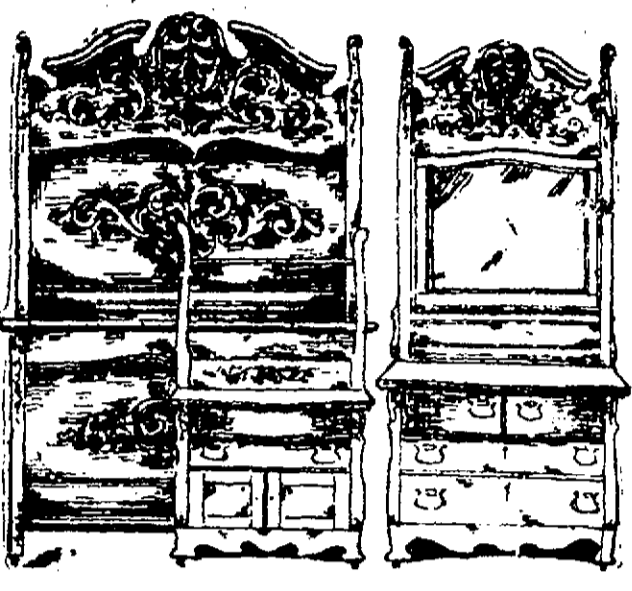
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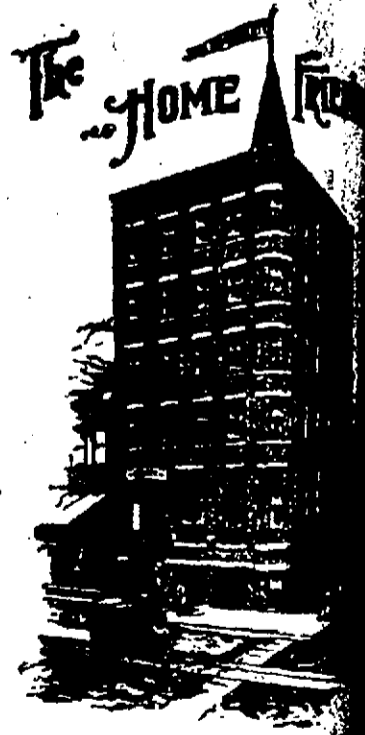


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