AT THE TABERNACLE.

DR. TALMAGE GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF HIS OBSERVATIONS ABROAD.

Some Rather Novel Views of the Czar of Russia and Affairs Generally in That Empire—The Dreadful Famine—Blessings on America.

BROOKLYN, Oct. 16.—Unusual interest attached to the sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Talmage this forenoon, it having been announced that he would devote the entire discourse to a review of his summer's journey. The great Tabernacle building was crowded early by an expectant audience. Professor Brown, the organist, during the service rendered the Russian national air, the English national air and our own national air. Among other hymns sung was—

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty.

The subject was "Observations in Russia and Great Britain," the text selected being Psalm cxxxix, 9, "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me."

What an absurd book the Bible must be to a man who has no poetry in his soul! "Wings of the morning." What kind of a bird is it, and how long are its wings and of what color? Ah, some of us have seen and felt its wings. They are golden. They are buoyant. They are swift. They are widespread. The 15th of last June I took "the wings of the morning" and started for Europe. June 20, on "the wings of the morning," I started from Liverpool. July 12, on "the wings of the morning," I entered Germany, the land of Martin Luther and many of that ilk, living and dead.

On "the wings of the morning" I entered St. Petersburg, Russia. On "the wings of the morning" I entered Moscow. On "the wings of the morning" I entered the palaces of Russia, greeted by the emperor and empress, surrounded by a lovely brood of princes and princesses. On "the wings of the morning" I entered Inverness, the capital of the Scottish highlands, country of Robert Burns and Thomas Chalmers—the one for poetry, the other for religion. Sept. 21, on "the wings of the morning," I entered the finest haven of all the earth—New York harbor—and looked off toward the most interesting place I had seen in three months—1 South Oxford street, Brooklyn.

Oh, I like "the wings of the morning." I am, by nature and by grace, a son of the morning. I think I must have been born in the morning. I would like to die in the morning. I have a notion that heaven is only an everlasting morning. In the summer of 1892 my text was fulfilled to me again and again. "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me." Yes, he led me as he always has led me since I took my first walk from the cradle to my mother's lap at Bound Brook until this pulpit where I now stand, and he will lead me until I stop for all time about three miles out yonder, where the most of you will be my fellow slumberers.

THE CRY FOR RELIEF.

You all know why I went to Russia this summer. There are many thousands of people who have a right to say to me, as was said in the Bible parable, "Give an account of thy stewardship." Through The Christian Herald, which I have the honor to edit, we had for months, in publisher's, in reportorial and editorial column, put before the people the ghastly facts concerning twenty million Russians who were starving to death, and subscriptions to the relief fund had come by letters that seemed not so much written with ink as with tears, some of the letters practically saying, "We find it hard to get bread for our own families, but we cannot stand this cry of hunger from beyond the seas, and so please to receive the inclosed." And others had sent jewels from their hands and necks saying, "Sell these and turn them into bread." And another letter said: "Inclosed is an old gold piece. It was my mother's. She gave it to me and told me never to part with it except for bread, and now I inclose it." We had gathered thirty-five thousand dollars in money, which we turned into three million pounds of flour.

When I went down to the board of trade at Chicago and left five thousand dollars of the amount raised with a prominent flour merchant, taking no receipt and leaving all to him to do the best thing, and returned, it was suggested that I had not done things in a business way. How could we know what sort of flour would be sent? There are styles of flour more fit for the trough of the swine than the mouths of hungry men and women. Well, as is customary, when the flour came to New York it was tested, and we found indeed they had cheated us. They gave us better flour than we had bought. I bought in Chicago fine flour, but they sent us superfine. God bless the merchants of Chicago!

Now we know nothing about famine in America. The grasshoppers may kill the crops in Kansas, the freshets may destroy the crops along the Ohio, the potato worm may kill the vines of Long Island, the rust may get into the wheat of Michigan, yet when there has been dreadful scarcity in some parts of the land there has been plenty in other parts. But in districts of Russia, vast enough to drop several nations into them, drought for six consecutive years has devastated, and those districts were previously the most productive of all the empire.

It was like what we would have in America if the hunger fiend somehow got out of hell and alighted in our land, and swept his wing over Minnesota and said, "Let nothing grow here," and over Missouri and said, "Let nothing grow here," and over New York state and said, "Let nothing grow here," and over Ohio and Georgia and Massachusetts and Pennsylvania and Nebraska and Dakota and the Carolinas and said, "Let nothing grow here," and the hunger fiend had swept the same withering and blasting wing over the best parts of America in the years 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891 and 1892, and finally all our families were put on small allowance, and we all had risen from the table hungry, and after awhile the children had only quarter enough, and after awhile only one meal a day, and after awhile no good food at all, but a mixture of wheat and chaff and bark of trees, and then three of the children down with hunger typhus, and then all the family unable to walk, and then crawling on hands and knees, and then one dead in each room, and neighbors, not quite so exhausted, coming in to bury them, and afterward the house becoming the tomb, with none to carry the dead to more appropriate sepulcher—whole families blotted out.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND SAVED.

That was what occurred in Russia in homes more than were ever counted, in homes that were once as comfortable and happy and bountiful as yours or mine, in homes as virtuous as yours or mine, in homes where God is worshiped as much as in yours or mine. It was to do a little something toward beating back that archangel of wretchedness and horror that we went, and we have now to report that, according to the estimate of the Russian famine relief committee, we saved the lives of 125,000 people. As at the hunger relief stations the bread was handed out—for it was made into loaves and distributed—many people would halt before taking it and religiously cross themselves and utter a prayer for the donors.

Some of them would come staggering back and say, "Please tell us who sent this bread to us." And when told it came from America they would say, "What part of America? Please give us the names of those who sent it." Ah, God only knows the names of those who sent it, but he certainly does know, and many a prayer is going up, I warrant you, day by day, for those who sent flour by the ship Leo. Perhaps some of us at our tables rattle off a prayer that may mean nothing, although we call it "saying grace," but I warrant when those people who received the bread which saved their lives "said grace" it meant something.

Our religion may not demand that we "cross ourselves," but I have learned that while crossing one's self in some cases may mean nothing but mere form I believe in most cases it means, "Oh, thou of the suffering cross of Calvary, have mercy on me and accept my gratitude." Prefer your own form of religion by all means, but do not depreciate the religious forms of others. From all I can learn there were several good people before we were born, and I rather expect there will be several left after we are dead. I have traveled in many lands, but I tell you plainly, as I told Emperor Alexander III in the palace at Peterhoff, that I had never been so impressed with the fidelity to their religion of any people as by what I had seen in Russia, and especially among her public men.

I said respectfully to a Russian when I saw him cross himself, "What do you do that for?" "Oh," he said, "when I do that I always say, 'God have mercy on me!'" I hold in my hand something very suggestive. What does that black and uncomely thing look like? That is what is called hunger bread from Russia; that is what millions of people lived on for months before help came from England, Scotland, Ireland and America; that is a mixture which seems to have in it not one grain of sustenance. It is a mixture of pig weed and chaff and the sweepings of stables. That is something which, if dropped in the street, your dog or cat might sniff at, but would not eat. That was the only food on which millions of men and women lived.

You must look at that hunger bread of Russia before you can get proper appreciation of what an attractive and beautiful thing a good loaf of bread is. It is so common to us we cannot realize its meaning. Stop and look at it in a bakery window or see it on your family table—I mean an honest loaf of bread, white as a ball of packed snow, with a crust brown as the autumnal woods, and for a keen appetite more aromatic than flowers—a loaf of bread as you remember it in childhood, when the knife in the hand of your father or mother cut clean through, from crust to crust, and put before you, not a quarter of a slice or a half a slice, but a full, round slice, and another and another, just suited to a boy always ready to eat and for the most time hungry, even in a well supplied house. I remember and you remember, if you had a healthy childhood, just how it tasted. My! My! Plum pudding does not taste as good now as that plain bread then. It was then bread at the table, and bread between meals, and bread before breakfast, and bread before going to bed.

THE STAFF OF LIFE.

Why does not some poet ring a canto on a loaf of bread, or some modern Raphael paint it, or some historian tell its history? Noticed all over like wedding cake, or dotted like many articles of food, pretentious and with fantastic ingredients, but that grandest product of the earth; that richest yield of the flour mill; that best benediction of a hot oven—a God given loaf of bread. But the rhythm of it, the luxury of it, the meaning of it, the benediction of it, the divine mercy of it, only those know who have seen a famine. No wonder Christ put this food into the sacrament and said of a broken loaf of bread, "This is my body." Thank God that I ever saw that transcendent and compact kindness of the Infinite God—a loaf of bread. And it was our joy this summer to hand over a ship-load of material for gladdening many thousands of Russians with such a beatitude.

But I have been asked by good people in Great Britain and America, again and again, Why did not the prosperous people of Russia stop that suffering themselves, making it useless for other nations to help? And I am always glad when I hear the question asked, because it gives me an opportunity of explaining. Have you any idea what it requires to feed twenty million people? There is only one being in the universe who can do it, and that is the Being who this morning breakfasted sixteen hundred million of the human race. The nobility of Russia have not only contributed most lavishly, but many of them went down and staid for months amid the ghastliness, and the horror, and the typhus fever, and the smallpox that they might administer to the suffering.

I sat at the dining table in the house of one of our American representatives beside a baroness who had not only impoverished her estates by her contributions to the suffering, but who left her own home and went down into the worst of the misery, until prostrated with fever, then reviving and toiling on until prostrated by the smallpox. She had come home to get a little strength, and in a few days she was going down again to the suffering districts, and she commissioned me to execute in America a literary enterprise by which she expects with her pen more money, all of which is to go for bread to those who lack it. Then there are the Bobrinskies. They are of the nobility—not only the nobility of earth, but the nobility of heaven. You know we have in America certain names which are synonyms for benevolence—George Peabody, James Lenox, William E. Dodge, Mr. Slater and so on. What their names mean in America Bobrinski means in Russia.

The emperor has made larger contributions toward this relief fund than any monarch ever made for any cause since the world stood, and the superb kindness written all over the faces of emperor and empress and crown prince is demonstrated in what they have already done and are doing for the sufferers in their own country. When a few days ago I read in the papers that the emperor and empress, hearing an explosion, stopped the royal rail train to find out what accident had occurred, and the empress knelt down by the side of a wounded laborer and held his head until pillows and blankets could be brought, and the two wounded men were put upon the royal train to be carried to a place where they could be better cared for I said to my wife, "Just like her."

When I saw a few days ago in the papers that the emperor and empress had walked through the wards of the most virulent cholera, talking with the patients, shaking hands with them and cheering them up, it was no surprise to me, for I said to myself, "That is just like them." Any one who has ever seen the royal family will believe anything in the way of kindness ascribed to them, and will join me in the execration of that too prevalent opinion that a tyrant is on the throne of Russia. If God spares my life I will yet show by facts beyond dispute that the most slandered and systematically lied about nation on earth is Russia, and that no ruler ever lived more for the elevation of his people in education and morals and religion than Alexander the Third. So I put in the three prayers together—God save the president of the United States! God save the queen of England! God save the emperor and empress of Russia!

I will, whether in sermons or lectures I have not yet decided, show that nineteen-twentieths of all the things written and published against Russia are furnished by men who have been hired by other countries to "write up" or rather write down Russia, so as to divert commerce from that empire or because of international jealousies. Russia being larger than all the rest of Europe put together, you can see how natural would be the jealousies. I know of two prominent European newspapers that keep men on salaries to catch up everything unfavorable to Russia and magnify the incident. And the stereotyped stories of Siberian cruelty in one case out of a hundred is true, but in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases they are fabrication. And in the one case as soon as it is reported the official is discharged.

They who have been sent "to write up" Russia and Siberia have done as that man would do who, sent to "write up" New York, should write up the slums as a specimen of what New York is, or, sent to write up the American congress, should write up some depraved politicians as a specimen of American statesmanship, or, sent to write up the sanitary condition of this country, should send a kodak picture of all the warts and carbuncles he could find as a specimen of American health. I believe I can reverse the opinion of any man antagonistic to Russia who will give me an honest hearing, as my own opinions have been reversed by what I recently saw and heard.

Before passing to the other field of my summer observation I give you one little specimen of the falsehoods about Russia. I stood in London with my tickets for St. Petersburg, Russia, in my pocket. It was two o'clock in the afternoon, and at three o'clock I was to take the train. An American physician came in and said, "You certainly are not going to Russia." I said, "Why not?" Then a morning paper was shown me, saying that in St. Petersburg there were two thousand cases of virulent cholera; the city had been divided into hospital districts, and the doctors were at their wits' end what to do with the number of patients. The population was flying in terror. It was almost as bad in Moscow.

While reflecting on these accounts two messages arrived from other friends protesting against the foolhardiness of my rushing into the presence of two thousand cases of cholera in one city. Of course I halted. I halted for four days. Meanwhile a telegram from St. Petersburg encouraged me to go. I went. There was not a single case of cholera in St. Petersburg or Moscow, and there was not a single case in either city until four weeks after I left those cities. But the continental falsehood had done its commercial errand. Tens of thousands of Americans and Englishmen who proposed to summer in Russia turned in other directions.

At the large hotel in St. Petersburg at which I stopped, though capable of holding five hundred guests, and months before every room and every hallway and every mattress and every pillow had been engaged by telegraph by sightseers, all the orders were canceled, and instead of five hundred guests I should think about thirty, and that including our party. And so it was in all the hotels in northern Russia, and the subtraction of that amount of commercial profit from those cities you may imagine. But that whole subject of systematic fabrication I adjourn to some other hour. Yet I must tell you of a picture of pathos and moral power impressed upon my mind, so that neither time nor eternity may efface it.

The ship Leo swung to the docks a few miles below St. Petersburg loaded with flour from America. The sailors on board buzzzed as they came to the wharf. From a yacht on which we had descended the river to the sea the prominent citizens of St. Petersburg disembarked. The bank was crowded by prosperous citizens, who stood on the wharf, and back of them by poor laborers, who had come down to offer their services free of all charge for the removal of the bread-stuffs from the ship to the imperial freight train that took the flour to the interior free of charge. While we stood there the long freight train rumbled down to the docks, the locomotive and each car decorated with a flag—the American flag and the Russian flag alternating.

Though a flag to some eyes is only a floating rag, you ought to see how the American flag looks five thousand miles from home. It looked that day like a section of heaven let down to cheer mortal vision. Addresses of welcome and responses were made, and then the work began, the only contest being who should lift the hardest and be most expeditious. From ship to rail train. From rail train to kneading board. From kneading board to oven. From oven to the white and quivering lips of the dying. Upon all who, whether by contribution small or large, helped make that scene possible may there come the benediction of him who declared, "I was hungry and ye fed me."

GREAT MEETINGS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

But I must also give a word of report concerning my other errand—the preaching of the Gospel in Great Britain last summer. It was a tour I had for many years anticipated. With the themes of the Gospel I confronted more people than ever before in the same length of time—multitudes after multitudes, and beyond anything I can describe. The throngs in all the cities were so great that they could be controlled only by platoons of police, so that none should be hurt by the pressure, each service indoors followed by a service for the waiting throngs outdoors, and both by handshakings to the last point of physical endurance.

From the day in which I arrived at noon in Liverpool, and that night addressing two vast assemblages, until I got through my evangelistic journey, it was a scene of blessing to my own soul and I hope to others. I missed but three engagements of all the summer, and those from being too tired to stand up. At all the assemblages large collections were taken—the money being given to local charities, feeble churches, orphan asylums or Young Men's Christian associations—my services being entirely gratuitous. But what a summer! There must have been much praying here and elsewhere for my welfare, or no mortal could have gone through all I went through.

In every city and town I had messages poured into my ears for families in America. Oh, sons of Scotchmen, Englishmen, Welshmen and Irishmen, there are hearts on the other side of the sea beating in affection for you and praying for your present and eternal welfare. They wanted me to give you their love, and here it is by the wholesale, for I cannot give it by retail. Disappoint not the old folks on the other side the Atlantic. You will probably never see them again in this world. Their hair is whitening, and their step is not as firm as when you saw them last. So live that you may meet them in heaven. Write home often, and while you know they are praying for you, do not forget to remember in your prayers those who were your first friends, and friends than whom you will never have better—I mean your old father and mother.

By the memories of the old Scotch kirk, where you were baptized, and of the English fireside, by which you played, and of the Welsh hills and valleys, among which you roamed, and the old homes on the banks of the Tweed and the Shannon and the Clyde, I charge you be honorable and true and Christian. You have good ancestral blood in your veins. Prove yourself worthy. It seems to me that the Gospel is making mighty strides over there.

Only one thing I saw in the chapels and churches I did not like. That is a lack of appreciation of each other as between the national church and the dissenters. Now each is doing a great work that the other cannot do. God speed them all—they of the episcopacy and they of the dissenters! Some need the ritual of the national church and others the spontaneity of the Wesleyan. In the kingdom of God there is room for all to work and each in his own way. Some people are born Episcopalians and others Methodists and others Baptists and others Presbyterians, and do not let us force our notions on others.

As for myself, I was born so near the line that I feel as much at home in one denomination as another, and when in the Episcopal church the liturgy stirs my soul so that I cannot keep back the tears, and it overwhelms me with its solemnity and its power. When in an old fashioned Methodist church the responses of "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!" lift me until, like Paul, I am in blessed bewilderment as to "whether in the body or out of the body, God knoweth." And as for the Baptists, though I have never been anything but sprinkled, I have immersed hundreds and expect to immerse hundreds more in the baptistry under this pulpit where I now stand.

NO DOCTRINAL DISPUTATIONS.

What is the use of controversy about anything except how we shall keep close to the cross and do the most for helping people for this world and the next? May there come in England more cordiality between the national church and the dissenters. Although I would be called a dissenter there, almost my first step in England was into a banqueting hall—the lord mayor's banquet, given to the bishops and high officials of the national church, the great and good and genial archbishop of Canterbury at their head, and a more magnificent group of folks, intellectually and spiritually, I never got among, and I found that though we had never met before the archbishop and myself were old friends. But all up and down Great Britain I found a multitude that no man can number enlisted for God and eternity, and I tell you the kingdom is coming.

If the pessimists would get out of the way—the people who snivel and groan and think everything has gone to the dogs or is about to go—I say these pessimists would only get out of the way, the world would soon see the salvation of God. Christianity is only another name for elevated optimism. Was Isaiah an optimist? See his deserts incarnadined with red roses and snowed under with white lilies and his lamb asleep between the paws of a lion. Was St. John an optimist? Read the uplifting splendors in the Apocalypse and the hallelujah chorus with which the old book, which they cannot kill, closes.

The greatest thing I can think of would be to have a triple alliance of America, England and Russia in complete harmonization, and then to have upon all of them come a deluge of the Holy Ghost. Let the defamation of other nations cease. Peace and good will to men! For that glorious consummation, which may be nearer than we think, let us pray, remembering that God can do more in five minutes than man can do in five centuries. If the consummation is not effected in our day I shall ask the privilege of coming out from heaven a little while to look at this old world when it shall have put on its millennial beauty. I think God will let us come out to see it at least once in its perfected state before it is burned up.

I should not wonder if all heaven would adjourn for an excursion to this world to see how a shipwrecked planet was got off the breakers and set afloat again amid the eternal harmonies. Meanwhile let us do all we can to make it better, and it will somehow tell in the final result, though it be only a child's sob hushed, or a trickling tear wiped from a pale face, or a thorn extracted from a tired foot, or a sinful soul washed white as the wool. May God help us to help others! And so these lessons of gratitude and sympathy and helpfulness and vindication I have brought you on the wings of this morning.

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