

DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

SUNDAY'S DISCOURSE BY THE NOTED DIVINE.

He Taken for His Subject a Thought Most Interesting to All Who Are Trying to Achieve a Livelihood—The Ravens of God That Brought Bread and Flesh.

TEXT: "And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening."—I Kings xvii., 2.

The ornithology of the Bible is a very interesting study—the stork which kneeth her appointed time; the common sparrow teaching the lesson of God's providence; the ostriches of the desert, by careless incubation, illustrating the recklessness of parents who do not take enough pains with their children; the eagle symbolizing riches which take wings and fly away; the pelican emblemizing solitude; the bat, a hake of the darkness; the night hawk, the centinel; the cuckoo, the lapwing, the curlew, by the command of God, in Leviticus, hung out of the world's bill of fare.

I would like to have been with Audubon as he went through the woods, with gun and pencil, bringing down and sketching the fowls of heaven, his unfolded portfolio thrilling all Christians. What wonderful creatures of God the birds are. Some of them this morning, like the songs of heaven let loose, bursting through the gates of heaven. Consider their feathers, which are clothing and conveyance at the same time; the nine vertebrae of the neck, the three eyelids to each eye, the third eyelid an extra curtain for graduating the light of the sun. Some of these birds scavenge and some of them orchestra. Thank God for quail's whistle, and lark's carol, and the twitter of the wren, called by the ancients the king of birds, because when the fowls of heaven went into a contest as to who should fly the highest, and the eagle swung nearest the sun, a wren on back of the eagle, after the eagle was exhausted, sprang up much higher, and so was called by the ancients the king of birds. Consider those of them that have golden crowns and crests, showing them to be feathered imperials. And listen to the humming bird's serenade in the ear of the honey-suckle. Look at the belted kingfisher, striking a dart from sky to water. Listen to the wail of the owl, giving the keynote to all croakers. And behold the condor among the Andes, battling with the remainder. I do not know whether an aquarium or aviary is the best altar from which to worship God.

There is an incident in my text that baffles all the ornithological wonders of the world. The grain crop has been cut off. Famine was in the land. In a cave by the brook Cherith sat a minister of God, Elijah, waiting for something to eat. Why did he not go to the neighbors? There were no neighbors. It was a wilderness. Why did he not pick some of the berries? There were none. If there had been they would have been dried up. Seated one morning at the mouth of the cave, the prophet sees a flock of birds approaching. Oh, if they were only partridges, or if he only had an arrow with which to bring them down! But as they come nearer he finds that they are not comestible, but unclean, and the eating of them would be spiritual death. The strength of their beak, the length of their wings, the blackness of their color, their loud, harsh, "crack, crack" prove them to be ravens.

They whirl around about the prophet's head, and then they come on uttering wing and pass on the level of his lips, and one of the ravens brings bread, and another raven brings meat, and after they have discharged their tiny cargo, they wheel past, and then come, until after awhile the prophet has enough, and these black servants of the wilderness table are gone. For six months, and some say a whole year, morning and evening, a breakfast and a supper bell sounded as these ravens ranged out on the air their "crack, crack!" Guess where they got the food from. The old rabbins say they got it from the kitchen of King Ahab. Others say that the ravens got their food from pious Obadiah, who was in the habit of feeding the persecuted. Some say that the ravens brought the food to their young in the trees, and that Elijah had only to climb up and get it. Some say that the whole story is improbable, for these were carnivorous birds, and the food they carried was the torn flesh of living beasts, and therefore ceremonially unclean, or it was carrion and would not have been fit for the prophet. Some say they were not ravens at all, but that the word translated "ravens" in my text ought to have been translated "Arabs," so it would have read, "The Arabs brought bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." Anything but admit the Bible to be true.

How away at this miracle until all the miracle is gone. Go on with the depleting process, but know, my brother, that you are robbing only the man—and that is yourself—of one of the most comforting, beautiful, pathetic and triumphant lessons in all ages. I can tell you who these purveyors were—they were ravens. I can tell you who frustrated them with provisions—God. I can tell you who launched them—God. I can tell you who taught them which way to fly—God. I can tell you who told them at what cave to swoop—God. I can tell you who introduced raven to prophet and prophet to raven—God. There is one passage I will whisper in your ear, for I would not want to utter it aloud, lest some one should drop down under its power, "If any man shall take away from the words of the prophecy of this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the Holy City."

While, then, we watch the ravens feeding Elijah, let the swift dove of God's spirit sweep down the sky with divine food, and on outspread wing pass at the lip of every soul hungering for comfort. On the banks of what rivers have been the great battles of the world? While you are looking over the map of the world to answer that, I will tell you that the great conflict to-day is on the Potomac, on the Hudson, on the Mississippi, on the Thames, on the Saranac, on the Rhine, on the Nile, on the Ganges, on the Hoang-Ho. It is a battle that has been going on for 6000 years. The troops engaged in it are 1,500,000,000, and those who have fallen by the way are rarer in number than those who march. It is a battle for bread.

Sentimentalists sit in a cushioned chair in their picture study, with their slippers on a damask ottoman, and say that this world is a great scene of ease and greed. It does not seem so to me. If it were not for the absolute necessities of the case, nine-tenths of the stores, factories, shops, banking houses of the land would be closed to-morrow. Who is that man delving in the Colorado hills, or toiling in a New England factory, or going through a soil of hills in the bank, or measuring a fabric on the counter? He is a champion sent forth in behalf of some home circle that has to be cared for, in behalf of some church of God that has to be supported, in behalf of some system of money that has to be maintained. Who is that woman bending over the sewing machine, or emptying the tub, or sweeping the floor, or washing the garments, or scrubbing at the mantel? That is Deborah, one of the Lord's heroes,

lines, battling against Amalekian want, which comes down with iron chariot to crush her and hers. The great question with the vast majority of people to-day is not how to rule, but whether they shall be any home to rule not one of their, but whether there shall be anything to eat. The great questions with the vast majority of the people are: "How shall I support my family? How shall I meet my needs? How shall I pay my rent? How shall I give food, clothing and education to those who are dependent upon me?" Oh, if God would help me to-day to assist you in the solution of that problem, the happiest man in this house would be your preacher. I have gone out on a cold morning with expert sportsmen to hunt for pigeons. I have gone out on the meadows to hunt for quail. I have gone out on the marsh to hunt for roedbirds, but to-day I am out for ravens.

Notice, in the first place in the story of my text, that those winged caterers came to Elijah direct from God. "I have commanded the ravens that they feed thee," we find God saying in an adjoining passage. They did not come out of some other cave. They did not just happen to alight there. God freighted them, God launched them and God told them by what cave to swoop. That is the same God that is going to supply you. He is your Father. You would have to make an elaborate calculation before you could tell me how many pounds of food and how many yards of clothing would be necessary for you and your family, but God knows without any calculation. You have a plate at his table, and you are going to be waited on, unless you act like a naughty child and kick and scramble and pound saucily the plate and try to upset things.

God has a vast family, and everything is methodized, and you are going to be served. If you will only wait your turn. God has already ordered all the suits of clothes you will ever need, down to the last suit in which you will be laid out. God has already ordered all the food you will ever eat, down to the last crumb that will be put in your mouth in the dying sacrament. It may not be just the kind of food or apparel we would prefer. The sensible parent depends on his own judgment as to what ought to be the apparel and the food of the minor in the family. The child would say, "Give me sugars and confections." "Oh, no!" says the parent. "You must have something plainer first." The child would say, "Oh, give me these great bunches of color in the garments!" "No," says the parent; "that wouldn't be suitable."

Now, God is our Father, and we are minors, and He is going to clothe us and feed us, although He may not always yield to our infantile wish for the sweet and glitter. These ravens of the text did not bring promegranates from the glittering platter of King Ahab. They brought bread and milk. God had all the best wheat and the earth before Him and under Him, and yet He sends this plain food, because it was best for Elijah to have it. Oh, be strong, my hearer, in the fact that the same God is going to supply you. It is never "hard times" with Him. His ships never break on the rocks. His banks never fail. He has the supply for you, and He has the means for sending it. He has not only the cargo, but the ship. If it were necessary, He would swing out from the heavens a flock of ravens reaching from His gate to yours until the food would be flung down the sky from beak to beak and from talon to talon.

Notice again in this story of the text that the ravens did not allow Elijah to hoard up a surplus. They did not bring enough on Monday to last all the week. They did not bring enough one morning to last until the next morning. They came twice a day and brought just enough for one time. You know as well as I that the great fret of the world is that we want a surplus. We want the ravens to bring enough for fifty years. You have more abundance in the Washington bank or Bank of England than you have in the Royal Bank of Heaven. You say, "All that is very poetic, but you must have the black ravens. Give me the gold eagles." We had better be content with just enough. If in the morning your family eat up all the food there is in the house, do not sit down and cry and say, "I don't know where the next meal is to come from." About 5, or 6, or 7 o'clock in the morning just look up, and you will see two black spots on the sky, and you will hear the flapping of wing, and instead of Edgar A. Poe's insane raven alight on the chamber door, "only this and nothing more," you will find Elijah's two ravens, or two ravens of the Lord, the one bringing bread and the other bringing meat—plumed butcher and baker.

God is infinite in resource. When the city of Rochelle was besieged and the inhabitants were dying of the famine, the tides washed up on the beach as never before, and as never since, enough shellfish to feed the whole city. God is good. There is no mistake about that. History tells us that in 1555 in England there was a great drought. The crops failed, but in Essex, on the rocks, in a place where they had neither sown nor cultured, a great crop of peas grew until they filled 100 measures, and there were blooming vines enough, promising so much more.

But why go so far? I can give you a family incident. Some generations back there was a great drought in Connecticut, New England. The water disappeared from the hills, and the farmers living on the hills drove their cattle down toward the valleys and had them supplied at the wells and fountains of the neighbors. But these after awhile began to fail, and the neighbors said to Mr. Birdseye, of whom I shall speak: "You must not send your flocks and herds down here any more. Our wells are giving out." Mr. Birdseye, the old Christian man, gathered his family at the altar, and with his family he gathered the slaves of the household—for bondage was then in vogue in Connecticut—and on their knees before God they cried for water, and the family story is that there was weeping and great sobbing at that altar that the family might not perish for lack of water, and that the herds and flocks might not perish.

The family rose from the altar. Mr. Birdseye, the old man, took his staff and walked out over the hills and in a place where he had seen scores of times, without noticing anything particular, he saw the ground was very dark, and he took his staff and turned up the ground, the water started, and he beckoned to his servants, and they came and brought pails and buckets until all the family and all the flocks and the herds were cared for, and then they made troughs reaching from that place down to the house and barn, and the water flowed, and it is a living fountain to-day.

Now I tell that old grandfather Elijah, and I tell that brook that began to roll then and is rolling still the brook Cherith, and the lesson to me and to all who hear it is, when you are in great stress of circumstances, pray and dig, dig and pray, and pray and dig. Now does that passage not "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My loving kindness shall not fail." If your merchandise, if your mechanism, if your husbandry fail, look out for ravens. If you have in your dependence put God on trial and condemned Him as guilty of cruelty, I move to-day for a new trial. If the biography of your life is ever written, I will tell you what was the last chapter and the middle chapter and the last chapter will be best if it is written accurately. The last chapter about mercy, the middle chapter about mercy, the last chapter about mercy. The mercy that hovered over your cradle. The mercy that will hover over your grave. The mercy that will cover all between.

Again, this story of the text impresses me that relief came to this prophet with the most unexpected and with seemingly impossible conveyance. If it had been a robin redbreast, or a musical meadow lark, or a meek turtle-dove, or a sublime albatross that had brought the food to Elijah, it would not have been so surprising. But no. It was a bird so fierce and inauspicious that we have fashioned one of our most forefetal and repulsive words out of it—ravenous. That bird has a passion for picking out the eyes of men and of animals. It loves to maul the sick and the dying. It swallows with voracious gumble everything it can get its beak on, and yet all the food Elijah gets for six months or a year is from ravens. So your supply is from an unexpected source.

You think some great-hearted, generous man will come along and give you his name on the back of your note, or he will go security for you in some great enterprise. No, he will not. God will open the heart of a shylock toward you. Your relief will come from the most unexpected quarter. The providences which seemed ominous will be to you more than that which seemed auspicious. It will not be a chaffinch with breast and wing dashed with white and brown and chestnut. It will be a black raven.

Here is where we all make our mistake and that is in regard to the color of God's providence. A white providence comes to us, and we say, "Oh, it is mercy!" Then a black providence comes toward us, and we say, "Oh, that is disaster!" The white providence comes to you, and you have great business success, and you have \$100,000, and you get proud, and you get independent of God, and you begin to feel that the prayer, "Give me this day my daily bread," is inappropriate for you, for you have made provision for 100 years. Then a black providence comes, and it sweeps everything away, and then you begin to pray, and you begin to feel your dependence, and you begin to humble before God, and you cry out for treasure in heaven. The black providence brought you ruin. That which seemed to be harsh and fierce and discomfiting was your greatest mercy. It was a raven. There was a child born in your house. All your friends congratulated you. The other children of the family stood amazed, looking at the newborn and asked a great many questions, genealogical and chronological. You said—and you said truthfully—that a white angel flew through the room and left the little one there. That little one stood with its two feet in the very sanctuary of your affection, and with its two hands it took hold of the altar of your soul. But one day there came one of the three scourges of children—scarlet fever, or diphtheria—and all that bright scene vanished. The chattering, the strange questions, the pulling at the dresses as you crossed the floor—all ceased.

As the great friend of children stooped down and leaned toward that cradle, and took the little one in His arms, and walked away with it into the bosom of eternal summer, your eyes began to follow Him, and you followed the treasure He carried, and you have been following them ever since, and instead of thinking of heaven only once a week, as formerly, you are thinking of it all the time, and you are more pure and tender hearted than you used to be, and you are patiently waiting for the daybreak. It is not self-righteousness in you to acknowledge that you are a better man than you used to be—you are a better woman than you used to be. What was it that brought you the sanctifying blessing? Oh, it was the dark shadow on the nursery, it was the dark shadow on the soft grave, it was the dark shadow on your broken heart, it was the brooding of a great black trouble, it was a raven—it was a raven! Dear Lord, teach this people that white providences do not always mean advancement and that black providences do not always mean retrogression.

Children of God, get up out of your despondency. The Lord never had so many ravens as he has to-day. Fling your fears and worry to the winds. Sometimes under the veils of life you feel like my little girl of four years, who said under some childish vexation, "Oh, I wish I could go to heaven and see God and pick flowers!" He will let you go when the right time comes to pick flowers. Until then, whatever you want pray for. I suppose Elijah prayed pretty much all the time. Tremendous work behind him, tremendous work before him. God has spared no ravens for idlers or for people who are prayerless. I put it in the boldest shape possible, and I am willing to risk my eternity on it. Ask God in the right way for what you want and you shall have it if it is best for you.

Mrs. Jane Pithey, of Chicago, a well-known Christian woman, was left by her husband a widow with one half dollar and a cottage. She was pained and had a mother ninety years of age to support. The widowed soul every day asked God for all that was needed in the household, and the servant even was astonished at the provision with which God answered the prayers of that woman, from by then, item by item. One day, rising from the family altar, she said, "You have not asked for coal, and the coal is out."

Then they stood and prayed for the coal. One hour after that the servant threw open the door and said: "The coal has come." A generous man, whose name I could give you, has sent—as never before and never since—a supply of coal. You cannot understand it. I do. Ravens! Ravens!

My friend, you have a right to argue from precedent that God is going to take care of you. Has he not done it two or three times every day? That is most marvelous. I look back and wonder that God has given me food three times a day regularly all my lifetime, never missing but once, and then I was lost in the mountains, but that very morning and that very night I met the ravens.

Oh, the Lord is so good that I wish all His people would trust Him with the two lives—the life you are living and that which every tick of the watch and every stroke of the clock informs you is approaching. See, they alight on the platform. They alight on the backs of all the pews. They swing among the arches. Ravens! Ravens! "Blessed fare they that hunger after righteousness, for they shall be filled. To all the stinging, and the scowring, and the tempted, deliverance comes this hour. Look down, and you see nothing but your spiritual deformities. Look back, and you see nothing but wasted opportunity. Cast your eye forward, and you have a fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary. But look up, and you behold the whipped shoulder of an interceding Christ, and the face of a pardoning God, and the irradiation of an opening heaven. I hear the whir of their wings. Do you not feel the rush of air on your cheek? Ravens! Ravens!

TEMPERANCE TOPICS.

NOTES OF INTEREST TO THE ANTI-LIQUOR LEAGUERS.

Dr. Talmage Sends Out a Ringing Eagle Blast to the Seventeen Million Christians of the United States—The Other Side.

The Seven Angels.

MIDST the stume where fifth and sin is rife, Where direst souls strive hard for paltry life, Where every word's a curse, where God's great name is wed with vilest words of crime and shame; Where poverty and dread disease like hounds Track close upon each soul, where crime abounds; Where love is dead, where home is but a nest Of filthy straw where tollers crawl to rest; With patient tread feet, by night and day God's angels, uniformed in blue, find way To bring a word of cheer, of love and hope, and feed The hungry, clothe the naked in their need, And doubtless by their sides to us unseen White angels interpose a spotless screen.

Above the pain-racked beds they calmly bow So tenderly, and smooth the death-dewed brow, And whisper words to cheer the parting soul, And guide it through the dark to heaven's goal. They fold the tired hands on pulseless breasts And place a rose to glorify who rests For the first time since first he opened his eyes In poverty and shame, where never skies Of blue looked into cheer. In haunts where shame is found unmasked, where harlotry in robes of flame And brazen frontery reigns a queen, They tread These humble ones amidst the living and the dead, But heaven has taken note of all they do And will reward these angels uniformed in blue.

Dr. Talmage Sends Out a Eagle Blast. It seems to me that it is about time for the 17,000,000 professors of religion in America to take sides. It is going to be an out and out battle between drunkenness and sobriety, between heaven and hell, between God and the devil. Take sides before there is any further national decadence, take sides before your sons are sacrificed and the homes of your daughters go down under the alcoholism of imbruted husbands. Take sides while your voice, your pen, your prayer, your vote, your have any influence in arresting the desolation of this nation. If the 17,000,000 professors of religion should take sides on this subject, it would not be very long before the destiny of this nation would be decided in the right direction. I tell you what many of you may never have thought of—that today, not in the millennium, but today—the church holds the balance of power in America, and if Christian people, the men and women who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and to love purity, and to be the sworn enemies of all uncleanness and debauchery and sin, if all such would march side by side and shoulder to shoulder, this evil would soon be overthrown. Think of the \$9,000 churches and Sunday schools in Christendom marching shoulder to shoulder! How very short a time it would take them to put down this evil if all the churches of God, transatlantic and cisatlantic, were armed on this subject. What a hell on earth a woman lives in who has a drunken husband! Oh death, how lovely thou art to her, and how soft and warm thy skeleton hand! The sepulcher at midnight in winter is a king's drawing room compared to that woman's home. It is not so much the blow on the head that hurts as the blow on the heart. The rum fiend came to the door of that beautiful home and opened the door and stood there and said: "I curse this dwelling with unrelenting curses." "I curse that father into a maniac." "I curse that mother into a pauper." "I curse those sons into vagabonds." "I curse those daughters into profligates." "Cursed be bread tray and cradle." "Cursed be couch and chair and family bible with records of marriages and births and deaths." "Curse upon curse." Oh, how many wives there are waiting to see if something can not be done to shake these frosts of the second death of the orange blossoms. Yes, God is waiting—the God who works through human instrumentalities—waiting to see if this nation is going to overthrow this evil, and if it refuse to do so God will wipe out the nation as he did the Phoenicians, as he did Rome, as he did Thebes, as he did Babylon. Aye, he is waiting to see what the church of God will do. If the church will not do its work, then he will wipe it out as he did the church of Ephesus, the church of Thyatira, the church of Sardis. The Protestant and Roman Catholic churches today stand side by side with an impotent look, gazing on this evil, which costs this country more than a billion dollars a year to take

care of the 500,000 paupers and 215,000 criminals and the 300,000 idiots, and to bury the 75,000 drunkards.—T. DeWitt Talmage.

The Other Side.

A gentleman once said to us, "I do not favor prohibiting the sale of liquor, it would be an injustice to the men in business; besides, it would throw thousands out of employment."

We replied: "You do not look at the issue from the right side. You take a contractor's view."

"Just before the war closed a government contractor said in a car, 'I hope the war will not close under two years. I will lose thousands of dollars; besides, many men will be turned out of employment from the government works.'"

"A lady passenger, clad in weeds of mourning, rose to her feet, and with tearful voice, said, 'Sir, I have a brave boy and husband sleeping the sleep of death in a soldiers' cemetery. I have only one boy left, and he is in front of the foe. Oh, God! I wish the cruel war would close now.'"

He saw the point. Do you? It may be your boy or girl that will fall the next victim to the drink "industry" (?)

Would you consider the "trade" worthy such a price? If not, for your own sake, and for the sake of other fathers and mothers, stop the murderous traffic.

Look out for flowers along the way, And heed not the stinging thorn; There are stars above the darkest night, And sure is the coming morn.

Let us scatter seeds of kindness for our reaping by and by.

The right is always practicable. No man can get any farther into heaven than heaven gets into him.—Ex.

Liquor Poisons the Blood.

The blood owes its beautiful red tint to millions of microscopic discs. The red matter with which they are charged absorbs in passing into the lungs the air that has been inhaled, and transports it everywhere. But alcohol encounters this beneficial action, and so intervenes that the dark blood in the veins is not so completely changed as it ought to be into arterial blood, red, and vivifying. But this is not all. The blood contains other globules which are of the greatest interest. These are white globules. If a thorn penetrates the skin, immediately they will flow to that place, surround it, form matter which detaches it, and gets rid of it. If a microbe wandering about gets into our organism, immediately the white globules in the vicinity hasten to meet it, struggle with it, and finish by swallowing it. These few words indicate the important role which falls to their lot in the protection of our health. Alcohol, continuing its perverse action, does not leave them intact. It sends them to sleep, it makes them drunk, and so delivers us without defense to the enemies which lie in wait for us. And, nevertheless, how many persons, ignoring all these things, believe they increase their immunity by resorting to gin, brandy or rum to preserve them from infectious maladies, cholera, influenza, typhus? They have recourse to this universal panacea, which pretends to cure them, but causes other evils, and finally kills more than the most destructive wars.—Dr. A. Bien-fait, of Liege, Belgium.

Unkited Friends.

National Advocate: It was in a cell of the Tombs where we sat—the condemned cell, where we found one who had formerly been a church member waiting the hour of his execution for the murder of his wife. He was a drunkard. Who made him so? Did his enemies hate him, and as the most cruel revenge they could take make him a drunkard? No, he never had an enemy in his life. He was genial and kind hearted, a friend to everybody; even the saloonists who sold him drink loved him as much as they could love anybody. Kind friends who loved him made him a drunkard. His mother gave it to him when a baby. His father in kindness (?) taught him to drink a health. His sisters and the very wife he loved, yet murdered, often passed and pledged the cup with him. His father's friend must drink with the son of their old friend. His companions, every one of whom would have risked their lives to save him, pressed him to the party, the song and the bowl. At wedding and dinners his friends passed to him the glass. They even laughed at him when first intoxicated, and invited him to drink again. Oh, he had many friends. But while he could have been saved, kindness restrained the warning voice. He leaned on friends at every step, until he lost his all, and died a drunkard and a murderer. Kind friends did it!

The Romans Never Drank.

"We talk of the gladiatorial shows," says Dean Farrar. "More English youths and men, by many thousands, are killed every year by the temptations of the gin-shop than were ever 'battered' to make a Roman holiday."

The Bureau of Ethnology in Washington has at present about 6,000 volumes on anthropology.