THE VEIL OF MODESTY.

Dr. Talmage Preaches the Fifth of His Series of Sermons to Women.

How Vashti Refused to Obey Ahasuerus and Became a Martyr to Kingly Insolence.

Some of the Lessons Which Every Woman Can Learn From the Bible Story.

BROOKLYN, February 5.—The annual pew letting in Brooklyn Tabernacle has just taken place, and the rental exceeds all previous years. For the best pews $500, $600, $700 and $800 were paid. But parts of the house are kept free, so that no one can truthfully say that he cannot attend church here for lack of means.

If this immense structure were twice as large it would not contain all who desire to worship here. By the time the service begins the streets are blocked with people going away.

The Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, D. D., the pastor, preached this morning the fifth in the "Series of Sermons to the Women of America, with Important Hints to Men." His subject was "The Veil of Modesty," and his text Esther i. xii: "Queen Vashti refused to come." He said:

If you will accept my arm I will escort you into a throne-room. In this fifth sermon of the series of sermons there are certainly womanly excellencies which I wish to commend, but, instead of putting them in dry abstraction, I present you their impersonation in one who seldom, if ever, gets sermonic recognition.

We stand among the palaces of Shushan. The columns rise festooned and wreathed, the wealth of empires flashing from the grooves, the ceilings adorned with images of bird and beast, and scenes of prowess and conquest. The walls are hung with shields and emblazoned until it seems that the whole round of splendors is exhausted. Each arch is a mighty leap of

ARCHITECTURAL ACHIEVEMENT,

Golden stars, shining down on glowing arabesque. Hangings of embroidered work in which mingle the blueness of the sky, the greenness of the grass, and the whiteness of the sea foam. Tapestries hung on silver rings, wedding together the pillars of marble. Pavilions reaching out in every direction. These for repose, filled with luxuriant couches, in which weary limbs sink until all fatigue is submerged. These for carousal, where kings drink down a kingdom at one swallow. Amazing spectacle! Light of silver dripping down over stairs of ivory on shields of gold. Floors of stained marble, sunset red and night black, and inlaid with gleaming pearl. Why, it seems as if a heavenly vision of amethyst, and jacinth, and topaz, and chrysoprasus had descended and alighted upon Shushan. It seems as if a show of celestial glory had dashed clear over heaven's battlements upon this metropolis of Persia. In connection with this palace there is a garden, where the mighty men of foreign lands are seated at a banquet. Under the spread of oak, and linden, and acacia, the tables are arranged. The breath of honeysuckle and frankincense fills the air. Fountains leap up into the light, the stray spray struck through with rainbows falling in crystalline baptism upon flowering shrubs then rolling down through channels of marble, and wintering out here and there into pools swarming with the finny tribes of foreign aquariums, bordered with scarlet anemones hyperions, and many colored ranunculus. Meats of rarest bird and beast smoking up amid wreaths of aromatics. The vases filled with apricots and almonds. The flasks spued up with apricots, and dates, and figs and oranges, and pomegranates. Melons tastefully twined with leaves of cacia. The bright waters of Eulaeus filling the urns, and sweating outside the rim in flashing beads amid the traceries. Wine from the royal vats of Lebanon and Shiraz, in bottles of tinged shell, and

LILY-SHAPED CUPS OF SILVER,

and flagons and tankards of gold. The music rises higher, and the revelry breaks out into wilder transport, and the wine has flushed the cheek and touched the brain, and louder than all other voices are the hiccough of the libertines, the gabble of fools, and the song of the drunkards.

In another part of the palace Queen Vashti is entertaining the princesses of Persia at a banquet. Drunken Ahasuerus says to his servants: "You go out and fetch Vashti from that banquet with the women, and bring her to this banquet with the men, and let me display her beauty." The servants immediately start to obey the king's command, but there was a rule in Oriental society that no woman might appear in public without having her face veiled. Yet here was a mandate that no one dare dispute, demanding that Vashti come in unveiled before the multitude. However, there was in Vashti's soul a principle more regal than Ahasuerus, more brilliant than the gold of Shushan, of more wealth than the realm of Persia, which commanded her to disobey this order of the king; and so all the righteousness and holiness, and modesty of her nature rises up into one sublime refusal. She says: "I will not go into the banquet unveiled." Of course Ahasuerus was infuriated, and Vashti, robbed of her position and her estate, is driven forth in poverty and ruin to suffer the scorn of a nation, and yet to receive the applause of after generations, who shall rise up to admire this martyr to kingly insolence. Well, the last vestige of that feast is gone, the last garland has fallen, the last arch has fallen, the last tankard has been destroyed, and Shushan is a ruin, but as long as the world stands there will be multitudes of men and women, familiar with the Bible, who will come into this picture gallery of God and admire

THE DIVINE PORTRAIT OF VASHTI

the queen, Vashti the veiled, Vashti the sacrifice, Vashti the silent.

In the first place, I want you to look upon Vashti the queen. A blue ribbon rayed with white drawn around her forehead indicated her queenly position. It was no small honor to be queen in such a realm as that. Hark to the rustle of her robes! See the blaze of her jewels! And yet, my friends, it is not necessary to have palace and regal robes in order to be queenly. When I see a woman with stout faith in God, putting her foot upon all meanness and selfishness and godless display, going right forward to serve Christ and the race by a grand and glorious service, I say: "That woman is a queen," and the ranks of heaven look over the battlements upon the coronation, and whether she come up from the shanty on the commons or the mansion of the fashionable square I greet her with the shout, "All hail, Queen Vashti." What glory was there on the brow of Mary of Scotland, or Elizabeth of England, or Margaret of France, or Catharine of Russia, compared with the worth of some of our Christian mothers, many of them gone into glory? or of that woman mentioned in the Scriptures, who put her all into the Lord's treasury?—or of Jephthah's daughter, who made a demonstration of unselfish patriotism?—or of Abigail, who rescued the herbs and flocks of her husband?—or of Ruth, who toiled under a tropical sun for poor, old, helpless Naomi? or of Mrs. Adonaraim Judson, who kindled the lights of salvation amid the darkness of Burmah?—or of Mrs. Hemans, who poured out her holy soul in words which will forever be associated with hunter's horn, and captive's chain, and bridal hour, and lute's throb, and curfew's knell at the dying day?—and scores and hundreds of women, unknown on earth, who have given water to the thirsty, and bread to the hungry, and medicine to the sick, and

SMILES TO THE DISCOURAGED

—their footsteps heard along dark lane and in government hospital, and in almshouse corridor, and by prison gate? There may be no royal robe—there may be no palatial surroundings. She does not need them, for all charitable men will unite with the cracking lips of fever-struck hospital and plague blotched lazaretto in greeting her as she passes: "Hail! hail! Queen Vashti."

Among the queens whom I honor are the female day school teachers of this land. I put upon their brow the coronet. They are the sisters and the daughters of our towns and cities, selected out of a vast number of applicants, because of their especial intellectual and moral endowments. There are in none of your homes women more worthy. These persons, some of them, come out from ancient homes, choosing teaching as a useful profession; others, finding that father is older than he used to be, and that his eyesight and strength are not so good as once, go to teaching to lighten his load. But I tell you the history of the majority of the female teachers in the public schools when I say "Father is dead." After the estate was settled the family, that were comfortable before, are thrown on their own resources.

It is hard for men to earn a living in this day, but it is harder for women—their health not so rugged, their arms not so strong, their opportunities fewer. These persons, after painfully going through the ordeal of an examination as to their qualifications to teach, hard-bewildered step over the sill of the public school to do two things—instruct the young and earn their own bread. Her work is wearing to the last degree. The management of forty or fifty bigoty and intractable children, the suppression of their vices and the

DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR EXCELLENCIES,

the management of rewards and punishments, the sending of so many bars of soap and that tooth comb on benignant ministry, the breaking of so many wild colts for the harness of life, sends her home at night weak, nervous, unstrung, so that of all the weary people in your cities for five nights of the week, there are none more weary than the public school teachers. Now, for God's sake, give them a fair chance. Throw no obstacles in the way. If they come out ahead in the race, cheer them. If you want to smite any, smite the male teachers; they can take up the cudgels for themselves. But keep your hands off of defenseless women. Father may be dead, but there are enough brothers left to demand and see that they get justice.

Within a stone's throw of this building there died years ago one of the principles of our public schools. She had been twenty-five years at the post. She had left the touch of refinement on a multitude of the young. She had, out of her slender purse, given literally thousands of dollars for the destitute who came under the observation as a school teacher. A deceased sister's children were thrown upon her hands, and she took care of them. She was a kind mother to them, while she mothered a whole school. Worn out with nursing in the sick and dying room of one of the household, she herself came to die. She closed the school book and at the same time the volume of her Christian fidelity; and when she went through the gates they cried: "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have their robes washed and made white in them blood of the Lamb."

Queens are all such, and whether the world acknowledges them or not. When Carron, the wit and ecclesiastic, asked as he was brilliant, was about to marry Madame de Maintenon, he was asked by the notary what he proposed to settle upon Mademoiselle. The reply was: "Immortality! the names of

THE WIVES OF KINGS

die with them; the name of the wife of Socrates will live always." In a higher and better sense upon all women who do their duty God will settle immortality! Not the immortality of earthly fame, which is mortal, but the immortality celestial. And they shall reign forever and ever. Oh, the opportunity which every woman has of being a queen! The longer I live the more I admire good womanhood. And I have come to form my opinion of the character of a man by his appreciation or non-appreciation of woman. If a man have a depressed idea of womanly character he is a bad man, and there is no exception to the rule. The writing of Goethe can never have any such attraction for me as Shakespeare, because nearly all the womanly characters of the great German have some kind of turpitude. There is his Mariana, with her clandestine scheming, and his Mignon, of evil parentage, yet worse than her ancestors, and his Theresa, the brazen, and his Aurelia, of many intrigues, and his Melina, the tarnished, and his Baroness, and his Countess, and there is seldom a womanly character in all his voluminous writings that would be worthy of residence in a respectable coal cellar, yet pictured, and dramatized, and emblazoned till all the literary world is compelled to see. No! No! Give me William Shakespeare's idea of woman, and I see it in Desdemona, and Cordelia, and Rosalind, and Imogen, and Helena, and Hermione, and Viola, and Isabella, and Sylvia, and Perdita, all of them with enough faults to prove them human, but enough kindly characteristics to give us the author's idea of womanhood. His Lady Macbeth only a dark background to bring out the supreme loveliness of his other female characters. Oh, woman of America rise to your opportunity. Be no slave to pride, or worldliness, or sin. Why ever

CRAWL IN THE DUST

when you can mount a throne? Be queens unto God forever. Hail Vashti!

Again: I want you to consider Vashti, the veiled. Had she appeared before Ahasuerus and his court on that day, with her face uncovered, she would have shocked all the delicacies of Oriental society, and the very men who in their intoxication demanded that she come, in their sober moments would have despised her. As some flowers seem to thrive best in the dark lane and in the shadow, and where the sun does not seem to reach them, so God appoints to most womanly natures a retiring and unobtrusive spirit. God once in a while does call an Isabella to a throne, or a Miriam to strike the timbrel at the front of a host, or a Maria Antoinette to quell a French mob, or a Deborah to stand at the front of an armed battalion, crying out: "Up! Up! This is the day in which the Lord will deliver Sisera into thy hands." And when women are called to such outdoor work, and to such heroic positions, God prepares them for it; and they have iron in their soul, and lightenings in their eye, and whirlwinds in their breath, and the borrowed strength of the Lord Omnipotent in their right arm. They walk through furnaces as though they were hedges of wild flowers, and cross seas as though they were shimmering sapphire, and all the harpies of hell sink down to their dungeon at the stamp of their womanly indignation. But these are exceptions. Generally, Dorcas would rather make a garment for the poor boy; Rebecca would rather fill the trough for the camels; Hannah would rather make a coat for Samuel; the Hebrew maid would rather give a prescription for Naaman's leprosy; the woman of Sarepta would rather gather a few sticks to cook a meal for famished Elijah; Phebe would rather carry a letter for the inspired apostle; Mother Lois would rather educate Timothy in the Scriptures. When I see a woman going about her daily duty—with cheerful dignity presiding at the table; with kind and gentle, but firm discipline presiding in the nursery; going out into the world

WITHOUT ANY BLAST OF TRUMPETS,

following in the footsteps of Him who went about doing good—I say: "This is Vashti with a veil on." But when I see a woman of unblushing boldness, loud-voiced, with a tongue of infinite clitter-clatter, with arrogant look, passing through the streets with a masculine swing, gayly arrayed in a very hurricane of millinery, I cry out: "Vashti has lost her veil." When I see a woman struggling for political preferment, and rejecting the duties of home as insignificant, and thinking the offices of wife, mother, and daughter of no importance, and trying to force her way on up into conspicuity, I say: "Ah, what a pity; Vashti has lost her veil." When I see a woman of comely features, and of adroitness of intellect, and endowed with all that the schools can do for one, and of high social position, yet moving in society with supercilliousness and hauteur, as though she would have people know their place, and an undefined combination of giggle and strut, and rodomontade, endowed with allopathic quantities of talk, but only homeopathic infinitesimals of sense, the terror of dry goods clerks and railroad conductors, discoverers of significant meanings in plain conversation, prodigies of dulness and innuendo—I say: "Vashti has lost her veil."

But do not misinterpret what I say into a depreciation of the work of those glorious and divinely called women who will not be understood till after they are dead, women like Susan B. Anthony, who are giving their life for the betterment of the condition of their sex. Those of you who think that women have under the laws of this country an equal chance with men are ignorant of the laws. A gentleman writes me from Maryland saying: "Take the law of this State. A man and wife start out in life full of hope in every respect; by their joint efforts, and as is frequently the case, through the economic ideas of the wife,

SUCCEED IN ACCUMULATING A FORTUNE,

but they have no children; they reach old age together, and then the husband dies; what does the law of this State do then? It says to the widow, hands off your late husband's property, do not touch it, the State will find others to whom it will give that, but, you, the widow, must not touch it, only so much as will keep life within your aged body that you may live to see those others enjoy what rightly should be your own." And the State seeks the relatives of the deceased husband, whether they were ever heard of before or not, and transfers to them singly or collectively, the estate of the deceased living widow.

Now, that is a specimen of unjust laws in all the States concerning womanhood. Instead of flying off to the discussion as to whether or not the giving of the right of voting to woman will correct these laws, let me say to men, be gallant enough, and fair enough, and honest enough and righteous enough, and God loving enough to correct these wrongs against women by your own masculine vote. Do not wait for woman suffrage to come, if it ever does come, but so far as you can touch ballot boxes, and Legislatures, and Congresses begin the reformation, but until justice is done to your sex by the laws of all the States, and women of America take the platforms and pulpits, and no honorable man will charge Vashti with having lost her veil.

Again, I want you this morning to consider Vashti the sacrifice. Who is this that I see coming out of that palace gate of Shushan? It seems to me that I have seen her before. She comes homeless, houseless, friendless, trudging along with a broken heart. Who is she? It is Vashti the sacrifice. O, what a change it was from regal position to a waylarer's crust. A little while ago approved and sought for; now none so poor as to acknowledge her acquaintanceship. Vashti the sacrifice. Ah, you and I have seen it many a time. Here is

A HOME EMPALACED WITH BEAUTY.

All that refinement and wealth can do for that home has been done; but Ahasuerus, the husband and the father, is taking hold on paths of sin. He is gradually going down. After a while he will flounder and struggle like a wild beast in the hunter's net—further away from God, further away from the right. Soon the bright apparel of the children will turn to rags; soon the household song will become the sobbing of a broken heart. The old story over again, brutal Centaurs breaking up the marriage feast of Lapithæ. The house full of outrage, and cruelty and abomination, while trudging forth from the palace gate are Vashti and her children. There are homes represented in this house this morning that are in danger of such a breaking up. O, Ahasuerus, that you should stand in a home, by your wasted life destroying the peace and comfort of that home. God forbid that your children should ever have to wring their hands, and have people point their finger at them as they pass down the street, and say: "There goes a drunkard's child." God forbid that the little feet should ever have to trudge the path of poverty and wretchedness. God forbid that any evil spirit, born of the wine-cup or the brandy flask, should come forth and uproot that garden, and, with a blasting, blistering, all-consuming curse, shut for ever the palace gate against Vashti and the children.

Oh the women and men of sacrifice are going to take the brightest coronals of heaven! This woman of the text gave up palatial residence, gave up all for what she considered right. Sacrifice! Is there anything more sublime? A steamer called the Prairie Belle burning on the Mississippi River. Bludso, the engineer, declared he would keep the bow of the boat to the shore till all were off, and he kept his promise. At his post,

SCORCHED AND BLACKENED,

he perished, but he saved all the passengers. Two verses of pathetic poetry describe the scene, but the verses are a little rough, and so I changed a word or two:—

"Through the hot black breath of the burning
Jim Bludso's voice was heard,
And they all had trust in his stubbornness,
And knew he would keep his word.
And sure's you're born they all got off
Afore the smoke-stacks fell;
And Bludso's ghost went up above,
In the smoke of the "Prairie Belle."

He weren't no saint, but at judgment
I'd run my chances with Jim,
Alongside of some pious gentlemen
That wouldn't shake hands with him.
He'd seen his duty, a dead sure thing,
And went for it there and then,
And Christ is not going to be too hard
On a man that died for men."

Once more: I want you to look at Vashti the silent. You do not hear any outcry from this woman as she goes forth from the palace gate. From the very dignity of her nature you know there will be no vociferation. Sometimes in life it is necessary to make a retort; sometimes in life it is necessary to resist; but there are crises when the most triumphant thing to do is to keep silence. The philosopher, confident in his newly-discovered principle, waited for the coming of more intelligent generations, willing that men should laugh at the lightning rod, and cotton-gin and steamboat—waiting for long years through the scoffing of philosophical schools, in grand and magnificent silence. Galileo, condemned by mathematicians, and monks, and cardinals, caricatured everywhere, yet waiting and watching with his telescope to see the coming up of stellar reinforcements, when the stars in their courses would fight for the Copernician system; then sitting down in complete blindness and deafness to wait for the coming of the generations who would build his monument and bow at his grave. The reformer, execrated by his contemporaries, fastened in a pillory the slow fires of public contempt burning under him, ground under the cylinders of the printing press, yet calmly waiting for the day when

PURITY OF SOUL

and heroism
sanction of

heaven. Affliction, enduring without any complaint the sharpness of the pang, and the violence of the storm, and the heft of the chain, and the darkness of the night—waiting until a divine hand shall be put forth to soothe the pang, and hush the storm, and release the captive. A wife abused, persecuted, and a perpetual exile from every earthly comfort—waiting, until the Lord shall gather up his dear children in a heavenly home, and no poor Vashti will ever be thrust out from the palace gate. Jesus, in silence, and answering not a word, drinking the gall, bearing the cross, in prospect of the rapturous consummation when

"Angels thronged His chariot wheel,
And bore Him to His throne;
Then swept their golden harps and sung
The glorious work is done."

An Arctic explorer found a ship floating helplessly about among the icebergs, and going on board he found that the captain was frozen at the wheel, and the men on the lookout were frozen in their places. That was awful, but magnificent. All the Arctic blasts, and all the icebergs could not drive them from their duty. Their silence was louder than thunder. And this old ship of a world has many at their posts in the awful chill of neglect and frozen of the world's scorn, and their silence shall be the eulogy of the skies, and be rewarded long after this weather beaten craft of a planet shall have made its last voyage.

I thank God that the mightiest influences are the most silent. The fires in the furnace of a factory, or of a steamship roar though they only move a few shuttles or a few thousand tons, but

THE SUN THAT WARMS A WORLD

rises and sets without a crackle or faintest sound. Travelers visiting Mount Etna, having heard of the glories of sunrise on that peak, went up to spend the night there, and see the sun rise next morning, but when it came up it was so far behind their anticipations they actually hissed it. The mightiest influences today are like the planetary system—completely silent. Don't hiss the sun!

O, woman! does not this story of Vashti the queen, Vashti the veiled, Vashti the sacrifice, Vashti the silent move your soul? My sermon converges into the one absorbing hope that none of you may be shut out of the palace gate of heaven. You can endure the hardships, and the privations, and the cruelties, and the misfortunes of this life, if you can only gain admission there. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant you go through those gates, or never go at all.

When Rome was besieged the daughter of its ruler saw the golden bracelets on the left arm of the enemy, and she sent word to them that she would betray her city, and surrender it to them if they would only give her those bracelets on their left arms. They accepted the proffer, and by night this daughter of the ruler of the city opened one of the gates. The army entered, and keeping their promise, threw upon her their bracelets, and also their shields, until under their weight she died. Alas, that all through the ages the same folly has been repeated, and for the trinkets and glittering treasures of this world men and women swing open the portals of their immortal soul for an everlasting surrender, and die under the shining submergment.

Through the rich grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, may you be enabled to imitate the example of Rachel, and Hannah, and Abigail, and Deborah, and Mary, and Vashti. Amen!

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RESOLVED—That when I want any school books or stationary I will go to the new drug store and buy them.

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