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OF HOMILETIC INTEREST.

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SERMONIC.*

MYSTERY.†

DELIVERED BY CHARLES F. DEEMS, D.D.,
LL.D., IN THE CHURCH OF THE STRAN-
GERS, NEW YORK.

*The mystery which hath been hid from ages,
and from generations, but now is made
manifest to His saints: to whom God
would make known what is the riches of
the glory of this mystery.—Col. i: 26, 27.*

It is a matter of surprise how much
"mystery" stands in the way of men
when they come to consider religion,
and how little account they take of it
in other departments of thought and
activity.

When men are pursuing any scientific
investigation which concerns itself with
the phenomena of animal life, and come
up to some fact the existence of which,
under the circumstances, is unaccount-
able, the connection of which with the
universal order of things is inscrutable,
they sit down and rest themselves on
the statement that this cannot be ex-
plained in the present state of science!

When scientific men are investigating
the workings of human intellect, the
laws of mind, the phenomena of
thought, and come upon some mental
operation which seems to involve an in-

† In accordance with the unanimous request
of the monthly meeting of the Church of the
Strangers this sermon was repeated.

* The first several sermons are reported in full, the remainder are given in condensed form.
Every care is taken to make these reports correct: yet our readers must not forget that it would
be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another,
of his discourse.—Ed.]

soluble difficulty, they do not clothe
themselves with humility, but coolly re-
pose on their old statement that these
things cannot be explained in the pres-
ent state of science!

All this seems to mean that some
things are understood now which were
not understood heretofore, and that
hereafter men will understand many
things which they do not now even ap-
prehend; and it seems to intimate also
that science is capable of doing every-
thing if you will give science time
enough.

The first of these is manifestly true,
the second has so strong a ground of
probability that we presume it to be
quite certain, but the third is the mere
assumption of a self-conceit which is
highly unscientific.

But what does all our science show
us? It shows that there has always
been mystery in every department of
creation. It establishes the probability
that there always will be mystery in
every department of human investiga-
tion. It demonstrates that that may be
a mystery in one age which is not at all
mysterious in another, and that that
may be a mystery to one mind which
is no mystery to another.

Will there never cease to be mys-
teries? None but the infinite God can
give positive answer to that question.

When the transatlantic telegraph cable was only imperfectly laid no message could be sent; it was an entirely imperfect medium for the communication of the thoughts of men; but when the laws of science triumphed and everything was in perfect order, the two continents were welded into one by the subtile electric spark. Out of Christ there is no bond of union between God and man. Man is an imperfect medium for the communication of the truth; and this necessarily implies on his part unrest—unrest, because his nature has not found its highest good. But when the union is formed, the electric spark of divine life flashes into the human soul thoughts unutterable and experiences full of glory; and in such experiences the soul rests. "Neither shall the covenant of my peace," etc.

My soul glows with the grandeur of our theme this morning. In a physical point of view how poor is the Christian compared with the everlasting hills—a speck, no more. What is this earth of ours with its oceans and continents, compared to the vast universe whose millions of suns flash their commingling beams with such radiance as to darken this little earth into a scarce discernible speck, a moth dancing in the sunbeam.

In the presence of such conceptions as these what is man and what are the works of his hands? What are fleets and forts and cities with their insect hum? The track of an insect on the ocean's shore. The breath of an infant in the tornado's blast.

Again, what are the blazes of a million suns compared with the light that streams from the eternal throne, only like the flickering light of a dim taper in the noon-day sun, and yet the God who inhabiteth eternity and the praises thereof has said, "The mountains," etc.

The loving kindness of God, more stable than the everlasting mountains, the covenant of His grace, more enduring than constellation of worlds, are destined to exalt the humblest child of God to glory and immortality. What

in comparison with the crumbling of mountains, and the decay of worlds is, being possessed of such a consciousness and such a destiny. Who shall tremble at the wreck of matter, when in perpetual youth the Christian shall outlive suns, and systems, and firmaments, and dwell forever in the light of God.

A VISIT TO THE HAUNTS OF INIQUITY IN NEW YORK.

BY T. DE WITT TALMAGE, IN THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and, when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and, behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts.—Ezek. viii: 8, 9, 10.

So this minister of religion, Ezekiel, was commanded to the exploration of the sin of his day. He was not to stand outside the door, guessing what it was, but was to go in and see for himself. He did not in vision say, "Lord, I don't want to go in; I dare not go in; if I go in I might be criticised; O! Lord, please let me off." When God told Ezekiel to go in, he went in, "and saw, and behold all manner of creeping things and abominable beasts." I, as a minister of religion, felt I had a divine commission to explore the iniquities of our cities. I did not ask counsel of my session or my presbytery, or of the newspapers; but asking the companionship of three prominent police officials and two of the elders of my church, I unrolled my commission, and it said: "Son of man, dig into the wall, and when I had digged into the wall, behold a door, and He said, go in and see the wicked abominations that are done here, and I went in, and saw, and"—behold! Brought up in the country and surrounded by much parental care, I had not, until this Autumn seen the haunts of iniquity. By the grace of God defended, I had never sowed any "wild oats." I had somehow been able

to tell from books, and from other sources, something about the iniquities of the great cities, and to preach against them; but I saw in the destruction of a great multitude of the people, that there must be an infatuation and temptation that has never been spoken about, and I said, "I will explore. I saw tens of thousands of men going down, and if there had been a spiritual percussion answering to the physical percussion, the whole air would have been full of the rumble and roar and crack and thunder of the demolition, and this moment, if we should pause in our service, we should hear the crash, crash! Just as in the sickly season, you sometimes hear the bell at the gate of the cemetery ringing almost incessantly, so I found that the bell at the gate of the cemetery where lost souls are buried was tolling by day and tolling by night, I said, "I will explore." I went as a physician goes into a small-pox hospital, or a fever lazaretto, to see what practical and useful information I might get.

That would be a foolish doctor who would stand outside the door of a sick room, writing a Latin prescription. When the lecturer in a medical college is done with his lecture, he takes the students into the dissecting room, and he shows them the reality. I am here this morning to report a plague and to tell you how sin dissects the body and dissects the mind, and dissects the soul. "Oh," say you, "are you not afraid that in consequence of your exploration of the iniquities of the city other persons may make exploration and do themselves damage"? I reply: If in company with the Commissioner of Police, and the Captain of Police, and the Inspector of Police, and the company of two Christian gentlemen, and not with the spirit of curiosity, but that you may see sin in order the better to combat it, then in the name of the eternal God, go; but, if not, then stay away. Now I, as an officer in the army of Jesus Christ, went on this exploration, and on to this battlefield. If you bear a like commission,

go; if not, stay away. But you say: "Don't you think that somehow your description of these places will induce people to go and see for themselves?" I answer, yes, just as much as the description of the yellow fever at Grenada would induce people to go down there and get the pestilence. It was told us there were hardly enough people alive to bury the dead, and I am going to tell you a story in these Sabbath morning sermons of places where they are all dead or dying. And I shall not gild iniquity. I shall play a dirge, and not an anthem, and while I shall not put the faintest blush on fairest cheek, I will kindle the cheeks of many a man into a conflagration, and I will make his ears tingle. But you say, "Don't you know that the papers are criticising you for the position you take?" I say yes, and do you know how I feel about it? There is no man who is more indebted to the newspaper press than I am. My business is to preach the truth, and the wider the audience the newspaper press gives me the wider my field is. As the secular and religious press of the United States and the Canadas, and of England and Ireland and Scotland and Australia and New Zealand are giving me every week nearly three million souls for an audience, I say I am indebted to the press anyhow. Go on! To the day of my death, I cannot pay them what I owe. So slash away, gentlemen. The more the merrier. If there is anything I despise it is a dull time. Brisk criticism is a coarse Turkish towel with which every public man needs every day to be rubbed down in order to keep healthful circulation. Give my love to all the secular and religious editors, and full permission to run their steel pens clear through my sermons from introduction to application.

It was ten o'clock of a calm, clear, starlight night when the carriage rolled with us from the bright part of the city down into the region where gambling and crime and death hold high carnival. When I speak of houses of dissipation, I do not refer to one

sin, or five sins, but to all sins. As the horses halted, and escorted by the officers of the law, we went in; we moved into a world of which we were as practically ignorant as though it had swung as far off from us as Mercury is from Saturn. No shouts of revelry. No guffaw of laughter, but comparative silence. Not many signs of death, but the dead were there. As I moved through this place, I said: "This is the home of lost souls." It was a Dante's "Inferno"; nothing to bring the mirth of the soul, but many things to fill the eyes with tears of pity. Ah! there were corpses, moral corpses. There were corpses on the stairway, corpses in the gallery, corpses in the gardens. Leper met leper, but no bandaged mouth kept the breath. I felt that I was sitting on the iron coast against which Euroclydon had driven a hundred dismantled hulks—every moment more blackened hulks rolling in. And while I stood and waited for the going down of the storm and the lull of the sea, I bethought myself: this is an everlasting storm, and these billows always rage; and on each carcass that strewed the beach already had alighted a vulture—the long beaked, filthy vulture of unending despair—now picking into the corruption and now on the black wing wiping the blood of a soul! No lark, no robin, no chaffinch, but vultures, vultures, vultures. I was reading of an incident that occurred in Pennsylvania a few weeks ago, where a naturalist had presented to him a deadly serpent, and he put it in a bottle and stood it in his studio; and one evening while in the studio with his daughter, a bat flew in the window, extinguished the light, struck the bottle containing the deadly serpent, and in a few moments there was a shriek from the daughter, and in a few hours she was dead. She had been bitten by the serpent. Amid these haunts of death, in that midnight exploration, I saw there were lions and eagles and doves for insignia, but I thought to myself how inappropriate. Better the insignia of an adder and a vulture.

First of all, I have to report as a result of this midnight exploration that all the sacred rhetoric about the costly magnificence of the haunts of iniquity is apocryphal. We were shown what was called the costliest and most magnificent specimen. I had often heard that the walls were adorned with masterpieces, that the fountains were bewitching in the gaslight, that the music was like the touch of a Thalberg or a Gottschalk, that the upholstery was imperial, that the furniture in some places was like the throne room of the Tuileries. It is all false. Masterpieces! There was not a painting worth five dollars, leaving aside the frame. Great daubs of color that no intelligent mechanic would put on his wall. A cross breed between a chromo and a splash of poor paint. Music! Some of the homeliest creatures I ever saw squawked discord, accompanied by pianos out of tune! Upholstery! No characteristics: red and cheap. You have heard so much about the wonderful lights—blue and green and yellow and orange flashing across the dancers and the gay groups. Seventy-five cents' worth of chemicals would produce all that in one night. Tinsel, gewgaws, tawdriness, flippery, seemingly much of it bought at a second-hand furniture store and never paid for. For the most part the inhabitants were repulsive. Here and there a soul on whom God had put the crown of beauty, but nothing comparable with the Christian loveliness and purity which you may see any pleasant afternoon on any of the thoroughfares of our great cities.

Young man, you are a stark fool if you go to places of dissipation to see pictures and hear music and admire beautiful and gracious countenances. In Thomas', or Dodsworth's or Gilmore's band in ten minutes you will hear more harmony than in a whole year of the racket and bang of the cheap orchestras of the disolute. Come to me, and I will give you a letter of introduction to any one of five hundred homes in Brooklyn and New York where you will see finer pictures and hear more beautiful music—music and pictures compared with

which there is nothing worthy of speaking of in houses of dissipation. Sin, however pretentious, is almost always poor. Mirrors, divans, Chickering's grand she cannot keep. The Sheriff is after it, with uplifted mallet ready for the vendue. "Going! Going! Gone!" But, my friends, I noticed in all the haunts of dissipation that there was an attempt at music, however poor. The door swung open and shut to music; they stepped to music; they danced to music, and I said to myself, "If such inferior music has such power, and drum and fife and orchestra are enlisted in the service of the devil, what multipotant power there must be in music; and is it not high time that in all our churches and reform associations we tested how much power there is in music to bring men off the wrong road to the right road?" Fifty times that night I said within myself, "If poor music is so powerful in a bad direction, why cannot good music be almost omnipotent in a good direction?" Oh, my friends, we want to drive men into the kingdom of God with a musical staff. We want to shut off the path of death with a musical bar. We want to snatch all the musical instruments from the service of the devil and with organ and cornet and bass viol and piano and orchestra praise the Lord. Good Richard Cecil, when seated in the pulpit, said that when Doctor Wargane was seated at the organ, he was so overpowered with the music that he found himself looking for the first chapter of Isaiah in the prayer book, wondering he could not find it. Oh, holy bewilderment. Let us send such men as Philip Philips, the Christian vocalist, all around the world, and Arbuckle, the cornetist, with his "Robin Adair" set to Christian melody, and George W. Morgan, with his "Hallelujah Chorus," and ten thousand Christian men with uplifted hosannas to capture this whole earth for God. Oh, my friends, we have had enough minor strains in the chorus; give us major strains. We have had enough dead marches in the church; play us those tunes which are played when an

army is on a dead run to overtake an enemy. Give us the double-quick. We are in full gallop of cavalry charge. Forward, the whole line! Many a man who is unmoved by a Christian argument surrenders to a Christian song. Oh! ye chanters above Bethlehem, come hover this morning and give us a snatch of the old tune about good-will to men!

But I have, my hearers, also to report of that midnight exploration that I saw something that amazed me more than I can tell. I do not want to tell it, for it will take pain to many hearts far away, and I cannot comfort them. But I must tell it. In all these haunts of iniquity I found young men with the ruddy color of country health on their cheek, evidently just come to town for business, entering stores and shops and offices. They had helped to gather the summer grain. There they were in haunts of iniquity, with the look on their cheek, which is never on the cheek except when there has been hard work on the farm and in the open air. Here were these young men who had heard how gaily a boat dances on the edge of a maelstrom, and they were venturing. Oh! God, will a few weeks do such an awful work for a young man? Oh! Lord, hast thou forgotten what transpired when they knelt at the family altar that morning when he came away, and how father's voice trembled in the prayer and mother and sister sobbed as they lay on the floor? I saw that young man when he first confronted evil. I saw it was the first night there. I saw on him a defiant look, as much as to say, "I am mightier than sin!" Then I saw him consult with iniquity. Then I saw him waver and doubt. Then I saw going over his countenance the shadow of sad reflection, and I knew from his looks there was a powerful memory stirring his soul. I think there was a whisper going out from the gaudy upholsterer saying: "My son, go home!" I think there was a hand stretched out from under the curtains—a hand tremulous with anxiety—a hand that had been worn with work—a hand partly wrinkled with age, that seemed to beckon

him away; and so goodness and sin seemed to struggle in that young man's soul and sin triumphed, and he surrendered to darkness and to death—an ox to the slaughter. I do not feel so sorry for that young man who, brought up in city life, knows beforehand what are all the surrounding temptations; but God pity the country lad, unsuspecting and easily betrayed. Oh, young man from the farm-house among the hills, what have your parents done that you should do this against them? Why are you bent on killing with trouble her who gave you birth? Look at her fingers; what makes them so distorted? Working for you? Do you prefer to that honest old face the berouged cheek of sin? Oh, write home to-morrow morning by the first mail, cursing your mother's white hair; cursing her stooped shoulder; cursing her old arm-chair; cursing the cradle in which she rocked you. "Oh," you say, "I can't, I can't!" You are doing it already. There is something on your hands, on your forehead, on your feet. It is red. What is it? The blood of a mother's broken heart. Oh! if I thought I could break the infatuation I would come down from the pulpit, throw my arms around you and beg you to stop. Perhaps I am a little more sympathetic with such because I was a country lad. It was not until fifteen years of age that I saw a great city. I remember how stupendous New York looked as I arrived at Courtlandt Ferry, and now that I look back and remember that I had a nature all awake to hilarities and amusements, it is a wonder that I escaped. When I see a young man coming from the tame life of the country and going down in the city ruin, I am not surprised. My only surprise is that any escape.

THE ANGELS' DESIRE TO LOOK INTO SALVATION.

BY BISHOP SIMPSON, D.D., LL.D., IN THE
BEERMAN HALL M. E. CHURCH, NEW
YORK.

Which things the angels desire to look into.
—1 Pet. i:12.

At this day in some of the periodicals

and in not a few lecture rooms it is taught that religion has nothing in it to greatly interest man, or that is worthy of the study of men of strong and cultured minds. It may furnish comfort to the sick, or it may be of help to the feeble, dying man, or it may be of benefit if taught to children, as it may stimulate their mental and moral natures. But strong men should study science and art and literature. It is thought to be a sign of weakness to bow down before the Cross.

The context which I have read teaches a different lesson. The prophets, who were men of great mental gifts, were deeply interested in this "salvation." They diligently inquired into the matter. Yet the work of salvation ought not so deeply have interested them as it should interest ourselves, for the events of Christ's life and death could be but dimly apprehended by them. But this matter was to them of greatest interest and of profound study. How much more deeply should we be interested in its study.

The apostle, in the text, goes a step beyond. He declares that the angels desired to look into these sublime truths. They were unaffected by them as far as we know. They stood perfect before God ready to do His bidding. But still this subject of salvation most deeply interested them. They desired to understand it; how much more should we, being so deeply affected by it in our most vital interest.

This will appear if we consider:

I. The nature of these angels.

The Scriptures have revealed but little about them. The Bible was not given us to reveal their nature, but to make known to us the plan of salvation, that perishing man might be saved. There are many things I have curiosity about which have not yet been revealed. I sometimes fancy I shall know these things. I need not be in a hurry, for I will have a whole eternity to study in, and an eternity, too, in which the conditions will be far more favorable for the gathering of knowledge. Yet there is something about the nature of an-