

THE HOMILETIC MONTHLY.

A MAGAZINE

DEVOTED TO THE PUBLICATION OF SERMONS AND OTHER
MATTER OF HOMILETIC INTEREST.

VOL. VII.—JANUARY 1883.—No. 4.

SERMONIC.

CHRIST'S CURE FOR TROUBLE.

BY CHARLES F. DEEMS, LL.D., IN THE
CHURCH OF THE STRANGERS, NEW
YORK.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.—John xiv: 1-4.

I.

THE sore of the world is trouble.

THE cure of the world is faith.

The seat of trouble is not in anything outside of us. It is the passions. Work, wakefulness, losses, bereavements, sickness, poverty, life's burdens, life's battles—these are not troubles. They are discipline. While the passions are in right and healthful play all these things may befall a man, and yet he may be wholly untroubled. He may walk the lone places of a wilderness or thread the crowds of a thronged city, friendless, penniless, without pleasing material prospects, and yet not be troubled. He may sit chained and wearing life away in a prison, or be walking forward

to the martyr's stake or to the scaffold of infamy, and yet not be troubled. On the other hand, a man may be lapped in luxury and crowned with honors and externally surrounded by all that can minister to his personal comfort and dignity, and yet be exceedingly troubled. In the latter case, the man's passions are irregular, disturbed, and tossed about, as the sea is when a tempest is on it; in the other case, the man's passions are quiet, steady, serene, like a lake in the embrace of a dense forest in the fastnesses of a mountain.

We are accustomed to the distinction of intellections and emotions and volitions, or, as we are more accustomed to call them, our thoughts or belief, our feelings or passions, and our will.

But clear and certain as the distinction between these is, and well as we have learned that distinction, and that the natural order of operation is that our volitions are caused by our emotions and our emotions by our intellections, so that if you wish to induce a man to do anything you must make him feel like doing it, and to make him feel so you must make him see that it is in some way best for him to do it; yet we are all conscious that there are reactions

[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.]

and all the books to-day with all the bad debts we owe, with everything we are and have, and just ask God to pay all and to cancel each, and you will find that He is ready so to do. The past shall be forgotten and forgiven; the future bright and blessed with the hope of Heaven, because we believe in the Son, even the Savior.

AS THE LEAF.

BY T. DEWITT TALMAGE, D.D. [PRESBYTERIAN], IN THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

We all do fade as a leaf.—Isaiah lxiv: 6.

It is so hard for us to understand religious truth that God constantly reiterates. As the schoolmaster takes a blackboard, and puts upon it figures and diagrams, so that the scholar may not only get his lesson through the ear, but also through the eye, so God takes all the truths of his Bible, and draws them out in diagram on the natural world. Champollion, the famous Frenchman, went down into Egypt to study the hieroglyphics on monuments and temples. After much labor he deciphered them, and announced to the learned world the result of his investigations. The wisdom, goodness and power of God are written in hieroglyphics all over the earth and all over the heavens. God grant that we may have understanding enough to decipher them! There are scriptural passages, like my text, which need to be studied in the very presence of the natural world. Habakkuk says, "Thou makest my feet like *hind's* feet;" a passage which means nothing save to the man that knows that the feet of the red deer, or hind, are peculiarly constructed, so that they can walk among slippery rocks without falling. Knowing that fact, we understand that when Habakkuk says, "Thou makest my feet like *hind's* feet," he sets forth that the Christian can walk amid the most dangerous and slippery places without falling. In Lamentations we read that "The daughter of my people is cruel, like the *ostriches* of the wilderness;" a passage

that has no meaning save to the man who knows that the ostrich leaves its egg in the sand to be hatched out by the sun, and that the young ostrich goes forth unattended by any maternal kindness. Knowing this, the passage is significant—"The daughter of my people is cruel, like the *ostriches* of the wilderness."

Those know but little of the meaning of the natural world who have looked at it through the eyes of others, and from book or canvas taken their impression. There are some faces so mobile that photographers cannot take them; and the face of Nature has such a flush, and sparkle, and life, that no human description can gather them. No one knows the pathos of a bird's voice unless he has sat at summer evening-tide at the edge of a wood and listened to the cry of the whippoorwill.

There is to-day more glory in one branch of sumach than a painter could put on a whole forest of maples. God hath struck into the autumnal leaf a glance that none see but those who come face to face—the mountain looking upon the man, and the man looking upon the mountain.

For several autumns I made a lecturing expedition to the Far West, and one autumn, about this time saw that which I shall never forget. I have seen the autumnal sketches of Cropsey's and other skillful pencils, but that week I saw a pageant two thousand miles long. Let artists stand back when God stretches His canvas! A grander spectacle was never kindled before mortal eyes. Along by the rivers, and up and down the sides of the great hills, and by the banks of the lakes, there was an indescribable mingling of gold, and orange, and crimson, and saffron, now sobering into drab and maroon, now flaming up into solferino and scarlet. Here and there the trees looked as if just their tips had blossomed into fire. In the morning light the forests seemed as if they had been transfigured, and in the evening hour they looked as if the sunset had burst and dropped upon the leaves. In more sequestered spots,

where the frosts had been hindered in their work, we saw the first kindling of the flames of color in a lowly sprig; then they rushed up from branch to branch, until the glory of the Lord submerged the forest. Here you would find a tree just making up its mind to change, and there one looked as if, wounded at every pore, it stood bathed in carnage. Along the banks of Lake Huron there were hills over which there seemed pouring cataracts of fire, tossed up and down and every whither by the rocks. Through some of the ravines we saw occasionally a foaming stream, as though it were rushing to put out the conflagration. If at one end of the woods a commanding tree would set up its crimson banner, the whole forest prepared to follow. If God's urn of colors were not infinite, one swamp that I saw along the Maumee would have exhausted it forever. It seemed as if the sea of divine glory had dashed its surf to the tiptop of the Alleghanies, and then it had come dripping down to lowest leaf and deepest cavern.

Most persons preaching from this text find only in it a vein of sadness. I find that I have two strings to this Gospel harp—a string of sadness, and a string of joy infinite.

"We all do fade as a leaf."

First: Like the foliage, we fade gradually. The leaves which, week before last, felt the frost, have, day by day, been changing in tint, and will for many days yet cling to the bough, waiting for the fist of the wind to strike them. Suppose you that this leaf that I hold in my hand took on its color in an hour, or in a day, or in a week? No. Deeper and deeper the flush, till all the veins of its life now seem opened and bleeding away. After a while, leaf after leaf, they fall. Now those on the outer branches, then those most hidden, until the last spark of the gleaming forge shall have been quenched.

So gradually we pass away. From day to day we hardly see the change. But the frosts have touched us. The work

of decay is going on. Now a slight cold. Now a season of over-fatigue. Now a fever. Now a stitch in the side. Now a neuralgic thrust. Now a rheumatic twinge. Now a fall. Little by little. Pain by pain. Less steady of limb. Sight not so clear. Ear not so alert. After a while we take a staff. Then, after much resistance, we come to spectacles. Instead of bounding into the vehicle, we are willing to be helped in. At last the octogenarian falls. Forty years of decaying. No sudden change. No fierce cannonading of the batteries of life; but a *fading away—slowly—gradually.* *As the leaf! AS THE LEAF!*

Again: Like the leaf we fade, to make room for others. Next year's forests will be as grandly foliaged as this. There are other generations of oak leaves to take the place of those which this autumn perish. Next May the cradle of the wind will rock the young buds. The woods will be all a-hum with the chorus of leafy voices. If the tree in front of your house, like Elijah, takes a chariot of fire, its mantle will fall upon Elisha. If, in the blast of these autumnal batteries, so many ranks fall, there are reserved forces to take their place to defend the fortress of the hills. The beaters of gold leaf will have more gold leaf to beat. The crown that drops to-day from the head of the oak will be picked up and handed down for other kings to wear. Let the blasts come. They only make room for other life.

So, when we go, others take our spheres.

We do not grudge the future generations their places. We will have had our good time. Let them come and have their good time. There is no sighing among these leaves at my feet because other leaves are to follow them. After a lifetime of preaching, doctoring, selling, sewing, or digging, let us cheerfully give way for those who come on to do the preaching, doctoring, selling, sewing, and digging. God grant that their life may be brighter than ours has been! As we get older, do not let us be affronted if young men and women crowd us a little. We will have had our day, and we must let them have

theirs. When our voices get cracked, let us not snarl at those who can warble. When our knees are stiffened, let us have patience with those who go fleet as the deer. Because our leaf is fading, do not let us despise the unfrosted. Autumn must not envy the spring. Old men must be patient with boys. Dr. Guthrie, the other day, stood up in Scotland and said: "You need not think I am old because my hair is white; I never was so young as I am now." I look back to my childhood days, and remember when, in winter nights, in the sitting-room, the children played, the blithest and the gayest of all the company were father and mother. Although reaching fourscore years of age, they never got old.

Do not be disturbed as you see good and great men die. People worry when some important personage passes off the stage, and say, "His place will never be taken." But neither the Church nor the State will suffer for it. There will be others to take the places. When God takes one man away, He has another right back of him. God is so rich in resources that He could spare five thousand Summerfields and Paysons, if there were so many. There will be other leaves as green, as exquisitely veined, as gracefully etched, as well-pointed. However prominent the place we fill, our death will not jar the world. One falling leaf does not shake the Adirondacks. A ship is not well manned unless there be an extra supply of hands—some working on deck; some sound asleep in their hammocks. God has manned this world very well. There will be other seamen on deck when you and I are down in the cabin, sound asleep in the hammocks.

Again: As with the leaves, we fade and fall *amid myriads of others*. One cannot count the number of plumes which these frosts are plucking from the hills. They will strew all the streams; they will drift into the caverns; they will soften the wild beast's lair, and fill the eagle's eyrie.

All the aisles of the forest will be covered with their carpet, and the steps

of the hills glow with a wealth of color and shape that will defy the looms of Axminster. What urn could hold the ashes of all these dead leaves? Who could count the hosts that burn on this funeral pyre of the mountains?

So we die *in concert*. The clock that strikes the hour of our going will sound the going of many thousands. Keeping step with the feet of those who carry us out will be the tramp of hundreds doing the same errand. Between fifty and seventy people every day lie down in Greenwood. That place has a hundred and fifty-three thousand of the dead. I said to the man at the gate, "Then if there are a hundred and fifty-three thousand here, you must have the largest cemetery." He said there were two Roman Catholic cemeteries in the city, each of which had more than this. We all are dying. London and Peking are not the great cities of the world. The grave is the great city. It hath mightier population, longer streets, brighter lights, thicker darknesses, Cæsar is there, and all his subjects. Nero is there, and all his victims. City of kings and paupers! It has swallowed up in its immigrations Thebes, and Tyre, and Babylon, and will swallow all our cities. City of *Silence*. No voice. No hoof. No wheel. No clash. No smiting of hammer. No clack of flying loom. No jar. No whisper. Great City of Silence! Of all its million million hands, not one of them is lifted. Of all its million million eyes, not one of them sparkles. Of all its million million hearts, not one pulsates. The living are in small minority.

If, in the movement of time, some great question between the living and the dead should be put, and God called up all the dead and the living to decide it as we lifted our hands, and from all the resting-places of the dead they lifted *their* hands, the dead would out-vote us. Why, the multitude of the dying and the dead are as these autumnal leaves drifting under our feet to-day. We march on toward eternity, not by companies of a hundred, or regiments of a thousand, or battalions of

ten thousand, but one thousand million abreast! *Marching on! MARCHING ON!*

Again: As with *variety of appearance the leaves depart, so do we*. You have noticed that some trees, at the first touch of the frost, lose all their beauty; they stand withered, and uncomely, and ragged, waiting for the northeast storm to drive them into the mire. The sun shining at noonday gilds them with no beauty. Ragged leaves! Dead leaves! No one stands to study them. They are gathered in no vase. They are hung on no wall. So death smites many. There is no beauty in their departure. One sharp frost of sickness, or one blast of the cold waters, and they are gone. No tinge of hope. No prophecy of Heaven. Their *spring* was all abloom with bright prospects; their *summer* thick foliated with opportunities; but October came, and their glory went. *Frosted!* In early autumn the frosts come, but do not seem to damage vegetation. They are light frosts. But some morning you look out of the window and say, "There was a *black* frost last night," and you know that from that day everything will wither. So men seem to get along without religion, amid the annoyances and vexations of life that nip them slightly here and nip them there. But after a while death comes. It is a *black* frost, and all is ended.

Oh! what withering and scattering death makes among those not prepared to meet it! They leave everything pleasant behind them—their house, their families, their friends, their books, their pictures, and step out of the sunshine into the shadow. They hang their harps on the willow, and trudge away into everlasting captivity. They quit the presence of bird, and bloom, and wave, to go unbeckoned and unwelcomed. The bower in which they stood, and sang, and wove chaplets, and made themselves merry, has gone down under an awful equinoctial. No funeral bell can toll one-half the dolefulness of their condition. *Frosted.*

But thank God that is not the way

people always die. Tell me, on what day of all the year the leaves of the woodbine are so bright as they are to-day? So Christian character is never attractive as in the dying hour. Such go into the grave, not as a dog, with frown and harsh voice, driven into a kennel, but they pass away *calmly, brightly, sweetly, grandly!* *As the leaf.* **AS THE LEAF!**

Why go to the death-bed of distinguished men, when there is hardly a house on this street but from it a Christian has departed? When your baby died there were enough angels in the room to have chanted a coronation. When your father died you sat watching, and after a while felt of his wrist, and then put your hand under his arm to see if there were any warmth left, and placed the mirror to the mouth to see if there was a sign of breathing; and when all was over you thought how grandly he slept!—a giant resting after a battle. Oh! there are many Christian death-beds. The chariots of God come to take his children home are speeding every whither. This one halts at the gate of the almshouse; that one at the gate of princes. The shout of captives breaking their chains comes on the morning air. The heavens ring again and again with the "Coronation." The twelve gates of Heaven are crowded with the ascending righteous. I see the accumulated glories of a thousand Christian death-beds—an *autumnal forest illumined by an autumnal sunset*. They died not in shame, but in triumph! *As the leaf!* **AS THE LEAF!**

Lastly: As the leaves fade and fall *only to rise, so do we*. All this golden shower of the woods is making the ground richer, and in the juice, and sap, and life of the tree the leaves will come up again. Next May the south wind will blow the resurrection trumpet, and they will rise. So we fall in the dust only to rise again. "The hour is coming when all who are in their graves shall hear His voice and come forth." It would be a horrible consideration to think that our bodies were always to lie in the ground. However

beautiful the flowers you plant there, we do not want to make our everlasting residence in such a place.

I have with these eyes seen so many of the glories of the natural world, and the radiant faces of my friends, that I do not want to think that when I close them in death I shall never open them again. It is sad enough to have a hand or foot amputated. In a hospital, after a soldier had had his hand taken off, he said: "Good-by, dear old hand; you have done me a great deal of good service," and burst into tears. It is a more awful thing to think of having the whole body amputated from the soul forever. I must have my body again, to see with, to hear with, to walk with. With this hand I must clasp the hand of my loved ones when I have passed over Jordan, and with it wave the triumphs of my King. Aha! we shall rise again—we shall rise again. *As the leaf! AS THE LEAF!*

Crossing the Atlantic, the ship may founder, and our bodies be eaten by the sharks; but God smeth Leviathan, and we shall come again. In awful explosion of factory boiler our bodies may be shattered into a hundred fragments in the air; but God watches the disaster, and we shall come again. He will drag the deep, and ransack the tomb, and upturn the wilderness, and torture the mountain, but He will find us, and fetch us out and up to judgment and victory. We shall come up with perfect eye, with perfect hand, with perfect foot, and with perfect body. All our weaknesses left behind.

We fall, but we rise! We die, but we live again! We molder away, but we come to higher unfolding! *As the leaf! AS THE LEAF!*

MEN DIE AS THEY LIVE.—Leaves fade characteristically. The foliage that is gloomiest in its unfolding is most unsightly in its decay. The leaf of the ash is the last to kindle its bud, the first to wither. The leaf of the linden is beautiful from first to last—green in spring, fragrant in summer, gorgeous in autumn. So with men. They die as they live.—*Macmillan.*

A YOUNG MAN WITHOUT PRINCIPLE.

TO YOUNG PEOPLE, BY JAMES D. WILSON, D.D., IN THE CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him.—2 Samuel, xviii: 17.

BETWEEN the closing of a grave and the putting up of a monument there is usually an interval of months, sometimes an interval of years; but here is a man, who was buried and had his monument erected the same day. It was built in haste, it was built by rough hands, it bore no inscription, yet how significant the monument was. In fact, the whole burial scene is fraught with sad and touching interest. A lonely wood, a company of soldiers, a deep trench; into it is flung the body of Absalom once fair to look upon, but now arrow-pierced, bloodstained. How different the post-mortem honors which men plan for themselves, and those which are really paid them. Absalom supposed that when he died the land would be draped in mourning, so he built a mausoleum for himself, in the king's dale, and erected a pillar; and no doubt pictured to his mind the magnificent funeral pageantry that some day would be gathered about that spot, where with dirge and lamentation his body should be laid to rest. But now, in the heart of a lonely forest, without a shroud, without a requiem, without a tear, he is flung into a pit. A great pile of stones is heaped upon him, and when this mark of detestation is finished, the people, turning, fly homeward, and leave Absalom to sleep in his lonely, forsaken and dishonored grave.

This burial scene in the forest of Ephraim presents the last incident in the career of a young man who lived and died without principle. This young man began life with brilliant prospects. He was rich and handsome. He was by birth a prince, and carried within himself the power of leadership among men; yet his life was a failure and a blot, because he was a young man without prin-