

THE PULPIT TREASURY.

AN EVANGELICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK, MAY, 1883.

NO. I.

→*SERMONS*←

REJECTERS OF GOD'S WORD.

BY JOHN HALL, D.D., IN FIFTH AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.—JEREMIAH xiii, 10.

THERE is a prevailing and strong dislike, among educated and thoughtful people, to sensational preaching. We probably on various grounds share in that feeling. But we must be sure that our dislike be discriminating and intelligent. We do not, for example, object to the preaching that *produces a sensation*. I am sure for my part I wish I could produce a sensation of alarm and terror in the careless, of responsibility in the believing, of joy and irrepressible gladness in the saintly. Whitfield surely produced a sensation. So did Nettleton, and Edwards and Tennant. So did Erskine and Henderson and Knox. So did Luther. So in earlier times did Paul and Peter, when whole cities were moved, and thousands owned the irresistible power with which they spoke.

And if we could not object to such results we could not object to *the means adopted and intended to produce them*. If vivid painting—in words or deeds—if dramatic presentation, if quaint manner, and queer titles would do it, even though they offended taste and shocked the refined, we should be willing to make the sacrifice for the sake of the imperishable results. To hesitate about it, to stand up for literary propriety and the canons of taste, when disregard of them would reclaim souls, would be as base and contemptible as to refuse help to a drowning man or the terrified inmates of a burning house, because it would derange our dress or necessitate awkward and

•• TIMELY SERVICE ••

THE DECORATED GRAVE.

BY T. DE WITT TALMAGE, D.D., IN THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE (PRESBYTERIAN.)

In the garden a new Sepulchre.—JOHN, 19, 41.

LOOKING around the church this morning, seeing flowers in wreaths, and flowers in stars, and flowers in crosses, and flowers in crowns, billows of beauty, conflagration of beauty, I feel as if I stood in *a small heaven*.

You say these flowers will fade. Yes, but perhaps we may see them again. They may be immortal. The fragrance of the flower may be *the spirit of the flower*; the body of the flower dying on earth, its spirit may appear in better worlds. I do not say it will be so. I say it may be so. The ancestors of these tuberose and camelias and japonicas and jasmines and heliotropes were born in Paradise. These apostles of beauty came down in the regular line of apostolic succession. Their ancestors during the flood under ground, afterward appeared.

The world started with Eden, it will end with Eden. Heaven is called a Paradise of God. Paradise means flowers. While theological geniuses in this day are trying to blot out every thing material from their idea of heaven, and, so far as I can tell, their future state is to be a floating around somewhere between the Great Bear and the Dipper, I should not be surprised if at last I can pick up a daisy on the everlasting hills and hear it say, "I am one of the glorified flowers of earth. Don't you remember me? I worshipped with you one Sabbath morning in Brooklyn."

My text introduces us into a garden. It is a manor in the suburbs of Jerusalem, owned by a wealthy gentleman by the name of Joseph. He belonged to the Court of Seventy who had condemned Christ, but he had voted in the negative, or, being a timid man, had absented himself when the vote was to be taken. At great expense he laid out the garden. It being a hot climate, I suppose there were trees broad-branched, and there were paths winding under these trees, and here and there were waters dripping down over the rocks into fish-ponds, and there were vines and flowers blooming from the wall, and all around the beauties of kiosk and arboriculture. After the fatigues of the Jerusalem court-room, how refreshing to come into this suburban retreat, botanical and pomological!

Wandering in the garden, I behold some rocks which have on them the mark of the sculptor's chisel. I come nearer, and I find there is a subterranean recess. I come down the marble steps, and I come to a portico, over which there is an architrave, by the chisel cut into representations

of fruits and flowers! I enter the portico. On either side there are rooms—two or four or six rooms of rock, the walls of these rooms having niches, each niche large enough to hold a dead body. Here is one room that is especially wealthy of sculpture.

The fact is, that Joseph realizes he cannot always walk this garden, and he has provided this place for his last slumber. Oh! what a beautiful spot in which to wait for the coming of the resurrection! Mark well this tomb, for it is to be *the most celebrated tomb in all the ages*. Catacombs of Egypt, tomb of Napoleon, Mahal Taj of India, nothing compared with it. Christ has just been murdered, and His body will be thrown to the dogs and ravens, like other crucified bodies, unless there be prompt and efficient hindrance. Joseph, the owner of this mausoleum in the rock, begs for the body of Christ. He washes the poor mutilated frame from the dust and blood, shrouds it and perfumes it.

I think that regular embalment was omitted. When in olden times a body was to be embalmed, the priest, with some pretension of medical skill, would point out the place between the ribs where the incision must be made; and then the operator, having made the incision, ran lest he be slain for a violation of the dead. Then the other priests would come with salt of nitre and cassia, and wine of palm-tree, and complete the embalment. But I think this embalment of the body of Christ was omitted. It would have raised another contention and another riot. *The funeral* hastens on. Present, I think, Joseph, the owner of the mausoleum; Nicodemus, the wealthy man who had brought the spices; and the two Marys. No organ dirge, no plumes, no catafalque. Heavy burden for two men as they carry Christ's body down the marble stairs and into the portico, and lift the dead weight to the level of the niche in the rock, and push the body of Christ into the only pleasant resting-place it ever had. Coming forth from the portico, they closed the door of rock against the recess.

The government, afraid that the disciples may steal the body of Christ and play resurrection, ordered the seal of the Sanhedrim to be put upon the door of the tomb; the violation of that seal, like the violation of the seal of the Governments of the United States or Great Britain, to be followed with great punishment. A company of soldiers from the tower of Antonia is detailed to stand guard.

At the door of that mausoleum *a fight took place* which decides the question for all graveyards and cemeteries. Sword of lightning against sword of steel. Angel against military. No seal of letter was ever more easily broken than that seal of the Sanhedrim on the door of the tomb. The dead body in the niche in the rock begins to move in its shroud of fine linen, slides down upon the pavement, moves out of the portico, appears in the doorway, advances into the open air, comes up the marble steps. Having left his mortuary attire behind Him, He comes forth in workman's garb, as I take it from the fact that the women mistook Him for the gardener.

That day the grave received such a shattering it can never be rebuilt. All the trowels of earthly masonry can never mend it. Forever and forever it is

a broken tomb. Death, taking side with the military in that fight, received a terrible cut from the angel's spear of flame, so that he himself shall go down after a while under it. The King of Terrors retiring before the King of Grace. The Lord is risen. Let earth and heaven keep Easter to-day. Hossanna!

I. Some things strike my observation while standing in this garden with a new sepulchre. And first :

POST-MORTEM HONORS IN CONTRAST WITH ANTE-MORTEM IGNOMINIES.

If they could have afforded Christ such a costly sepulchre, why could not they have given Him an earthly residence? Will they give this piece of marble to a dead Christ instead of a soft pillow for the living Jesus? If they had expended half the value of that tomb to make Christ comfortable, it would not have been so sad a story. He asked bread; they gave Him a stone.

Christ, like most of the world's benefactors, was appreciated better after He was dead. Westminster Abbey and monumental Greenwood are the world's attempt to atone by honors for the dead for wrongs to the living. Poet's Corner, in Westminster Abbey, attempts to pay for the sufferings of Grub Street.

Go through that Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. There is Handel, the great musician, from whose music we hear to-day; but while I look at his statue, I cannot help but think of the discords with which his fellow-musicians tried to destroy him. There is the tomb of John Dryden, a beautiful monument; but I cannot help but think at seventy years of age he wrote of his being oppressed in fortune, and of the contract that he had just made for a thousand verses at sixpence a line. And there, too, you find the monument of Samuel Butler, the author of "Hudibras;" but while I look at his monument in Poet's Corner, I cannot but ask myself where he died? In a garret. There I see the costly tablet in the Poet's Corner—the costly tablet to one of whom the celebrated Waller wrote, "The old blind schoolmaster, John Milton, has just issued a tedious poem on the fall of man. If the length of it be no virtue, it has none." There is a beautiful monument to Sheridan. Poor Sheridan, if he could have only discounted that monument for a mutton-chop!

O you unfilial children! do not give your parents so much tombstone, but a few more blankets—*less funeral and more bedroom*. If five per cent of the money we now spend on Burns' banquets could have been expended in making the living Scotch poet comfortable, he would not have been harried with the drudgery of an exciseman. Horace Greeley, outrageously abused while living, when dead is followed toward Greenwood by the President of the United States and the leading men of the army and navy. Massachusetts tries to atone at the grave of Charles Sumner for the ignominious resolutions with which her Legislature denounced the living Senator. Do you think that the tomb at Springfield can pay for Booth's bullet?

Oh! do justice to the living. All the justice you do them, you must do this side of the gates of the necropolis. They cannot wake up to count the number of carriages at the obsequies, or to notice the polish of the Aberdeen granite, or to read epitaphal commemoration. Gentleman's mausoleum in the suburbs of Jerusalem cannot pay for Bethlehem manger, and Calvarian

cross and Pilate's ruffian judiciary. *Post-mortem* honors cannot atone for *ante-mortem* ignominies.

II. Again : Standing in this garden of the new sepulchre, I am impressed with the fact that floral and arborescent decorations are appropriate for the place of the dead. We are glad that among flowers and sculptural adornments Christ spent the short time of His inhumanation.

I cannot understand what I sometimes see in the newspapers where the obsequies are announced and the friends say in connection with them, "Send no flowers." Rather, if the means allow—I say if the means allow—strew the casket with flowers, the hearse with flowers, the grave with flowers. Put them on the brow—it will suggest coronation ; in their hand, it will mean victory.

Christ was buried in a garden. Flowers mean resurrection. Death is sad enough anyhow. Let conservatory and arboretum contribute to its alleviation. The harebell will ring the victory. The passion-flower will express the sympathy. The daffodil will kindle its lamp and illumine the darkness. The cluster of asters will be the constellation. Your little child loved flowers when she was living. Put them in her hand now that she can go forth no more to pluck them for herself. On sunshiny days take a fresh garland and put it over the still heart.

Brooklyn has no grander glory than its Greenwood ; nor Boston than its Mount Auburn ; nor Philadelphia than its Laurel Hill ; nor Cincinnati than its Spring Grove ; nor San Francisco than its Lone Mountain. But what shall we say of those country graveyards, with the vines broken down and the slabs aslant, and the mound caved in, and the grass the pasture-ground for the sexton's cattle ? Indeed, were your father and mother of so little worth that you cannot afford to take care of their ashes ? Some day turn out all hands, and straighten the slab, and bank up the mound, and cut away the weeds, and plant the shrubs and flowers.

Some day you will want to lie down to your last slumber. You cannot expect any respect for your bones if you have no deference for the bones of your ancestry. Do you think these relics are of no importance ? You will see of how much importance they are in the day when the archangel takes out his trumpet. Turn all your cemeteries into gardens.

III. Again : Standing in this garden of the new sepulchre, I am impressed with

THE DIGNITY OF PRIVATE AND UNPRETENDING OBSEQUIES.

Joseph was mourner, sexton, liveryman, had entire charge of every thing. Only four people at *the burial of the King of the universe*. Oh ! let this be consolatory to those who through lack of means, or through lack of large acquaintance, have but little demonstration of grief at the graves of their loved ones. Long line of glittering equipage, two rows of silver handles, casket of richest wood, pall-bearers gloved and scarfed, are not necessary. If there be six at the grave, Christ looks down from heaven and remembers that is two more than there were at His obsequies.

Not recognizing this idea, how many small properties are scattered, and

widowhood and orphanage go forth into cold charity. The departed left a small property, which would have been enough to keep the family together until they could take care of themselves, but the funeral expenses absorbed everything. That went for crape which ought to have gone for bread. A man of moderate means can hardly afford to die in any of our great cities. By all means do honor to the departed, but do not consider funeral pageant as necessary. No one was ever more lovingly and tenderly put away to sepulchre than Christ our Lord, but there were only four people in the procession.

IV. Again : Standing in this garden with a new sepulchre, I am impressed with the fact that

YOU CANNOT KEEP THE DEAD DOWN.

Seal of Sanhedrim, regiment of soldiers from the tower of Antonia, floor of rock, roof of rock, walls of rock, door of rock, cannot keep Christ in the crypts. Come out and come up He must. Come out and come up He did. Prefiguration. First-fruit of them that slept. Just as certainly as we come down into the dust, just so certainly we will come up again. Though all the granites of the mountains were piled on us we will rise. Though buried among the corals of the deepest cavern of the Atlantic Ocean, we will come to the surface.

With these eyes we may not look into the face of the noonday sun ; but we shall have stronger vision, because the tamest thing in the land to which we go will be brighter than the sun. We shall have bodies with the speed of the lightning. Our bodies improved, energized, swiftened, clarified—mortality, immortality. The door of the grave taken off its hinges and flung flat into the dust.

O my brethren ! *death and the grave are not so much as they used to be ;* for while wandering in this garden with the new sepulchre, I find that the vines and flowers of the garden have completely covered up the tomb. Instead of one garden there are *four gardens*, opening into each other—garden of Eden, garden of the world's sepulchre, garden of the earth's regeneration, garden of heaven. Four gardens. Bloom, O earth ! Bloom, O Heaven ! O my hearers, wake up to gladness. This day, if I interpret it right, means joy—it means peace with Heaven, and it means peace with all the world.

Oh ! bring more flowers. Wealth of flowers here to-day. Bring forth more flowers. Wreathe them around the brazen throat of the cannon ; plant them in the desert that it may blossom like the rose ; braid them into the main of the returned war-charger. No more red dahlias of human blood. Give us white lilies of peace. All around the earth strew flowers. And soon the rough voyage of the Church Militant will be ended, and she will sail up the heavenly harbor, scarred with many a conflict, but the flag of triumph floating from her top gallants. All Heaven will come out to greet her into port, and with long-reverberating shout of welcome will say : "There she comes up the bay, the ship Zion, the glorious old Constellation."

If it were a week-day and I were on that ship's deck, I would shout "Huzza !" but as I am on the deck of the Gospel ship, and on the Lord's day, I will shout "Hosanna !"