

# CHRISTIAN HERALD

AND SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

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REFUGEES FROM SANTIAGO SEEKING FOOD AND SHELTER IN THE AMERICAN CAMP. (See page 623).

## THE METROPOLITAN PULPIT



## WRITING IN DUST.

A Sermon by Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D.D., } Jesus stooped down and with his  
on the Text: John 8: 6, . . . . . } finger wrote on the ground.



YOU must take your shoes off and put on the especial slippers provided at the door if you would enter the Mohammedan mosque, which stands now where once stood Herod's temple, the scene of my text. Solomon's temple had stood there, but Nebuchadnezzar had thundered it down. Zerubbabel's temple had stood there, but that had been prostrated. Now we take our places in a temple that Herod built, because he was fond of great architecture, and he wanted the preceding temples to seem insignificant. Put eight or ten modern cathedrals together, and they would not equal that structure. It covered nineteen acres. There were marble pillars supporting roofs of cedar, and silver tables, on which stood golden cups, and there were carvings exquisite, and inscriptions resplendent, glittering balustrades and ornamented gateways. The building of this temple kept 10,000 workmen busy forty-six years.

In that stupendous pile of pomp and magnificence sat Christ, and a listening throng stood about him when a wild disturbance took place. A group of men are pulling and pushing along a woman, who had committed a crime against society. When they have brought her in front of Christ, they ask that he sentence her to death by stoning. They are a critical, merciless, disingenuous crowd. They want to get Christ into controversy and public reprehension. If he say "Let her die," they will charge him with cruelty. If he let her go, they will charge him with being in complicity with wickedness. Whichever way he does, they would howl at him.

Then occurs a scene which has not been sufficiently regarded. He leaves the lounge or bench on which he was sitting, and goes down on one knee, or both knees, and with the forefinger of his right hand he begins to write in the dust of the floor, word after word. But they were not to be diverted or hindered. They kept on demanding that he settle this case of transgression, until he looked up and told them they might themselves begin the woman's assassination, if the complainant who had never done anything wrong himself would open the fire. "Go ahead, but be sure that the man who flings the first missile is immaculate." Then he resumed writing with his finger in the dust of the floor, word after word. Instead of looking over his shoulder to see what he had written, the scoundrels skulked away. Finally, the whole place is clear of pursuers, antagonists and plaintiffs, and when Christ has finished this strange chirography in the dust he looks up and finds the woman all alone.

The prisoner is the only one of the court-room left, the judges, the police, the prosecuting attorney having cleared out. Christ is victor, and he says to the woman, "Where are the prosecutors in this case? Are they all gone? Then I discharge you; go and sin no more." I have wondered what Christ wrote on the ground. For do you realize that is the only time that he ever wrote at all? I know that Erasmus says that Christ once wrote a letter to Abgarus, the King of Edessa, but there is no good evidence of such a correspondence. The wisest being the world ever saw, and the one who had more to say than any one who ever lived, never writing a book or a chapter or a paragraph or a word on parchment. Nothing but the literature of the dust, and one sweep of a brush or one breath of a wind obliterate it forever.

Among all the rolls of the volumes of the first library founded at Thebes there was not one scroll of Christ. Among the 700,000 books of the Alexandrian Library, which, by the infamous decree of Caliph Omar, were used as fuel to heat the 4,000 baths of the city, not one sentence had Christ penned. Among all the multitude

of volumes now standing in the libraries of Edinburgh, the British Museum, or Berlin, or Vienna, or the learned repositories of all nations, not one word written directly by the finger of Christ. All that he ever wrote he wrote in dust, uncertain, shifting dust.

My text says he stooped down and wrote on the ground. Standing straight up a man might write on the ground with a staff, but if with his fingers he would write in the dust he must bend clear over. Aye, he must get at least on one knee, or he cannot write on the ground. Be not surprised that he stooped down; his whole life was a stooping down. Stooping down from castle to barn. Stooping down from celestial homage to monocratic jeer. From residence above the stars to where a star had to fall to designate his landing-place. From heaven's front door to the world's back gate. From writing in round and silvered letters of constellation and galaxy on the blue scroll of heaven to writing on the ground in the dust which the feet of the crowd had left in Herod's temple.

Whether the words he was writing were in Greek or Latin or Hebrew, I cannot say, for he knew all those languages. But he is still stooping down, and with his finger writing on the ground; in the winter in letters of crystals, in the spring in letters of flowers, in summer in golden letters of harvest, in autumn in letters of fire on fallen leaves. How it would sweeten up and enrich and emblazon this world, could we see Christ's caligraphy all over it.

This world was not flung out into space thousands of years ago, and then left to look out for itself. It is still under the divine care. Christ never for a half second takes his hand off it, or it would soon be a shipwrecked world, a defunct world, an obsolete world, an abandoned world, a dead world. "Let there be light," was said at the beginning. And Christ stands under the wintry skies and says, let there be snowflakes to enrich the earth; and under the clouds of spring and says, come ye blossoms and make redolent the orchards; and in September, dips the branches in the vat of beautiful colors, and swings them into the hazy air. No whim of mine is this. "Without him was not anything made that was made." Christ writing on the ground.

Let us wake from our stupidity and take the whole world as a parable. Then, if with gun and pack of hounds we start off before dawn, and see the morning coming down off the hills to meet us, we would cry out with the evangelist, "The day-spring from on high hath visited us;" or, caught in a snow-storm, while struggling home, eyebrows and beard and apparel all covered with the whirling flakes, we would cry out with David, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." In a picture gallery of Europe there is on the ceiling an exquisite fresco, but the people having to look straight up, it wearied and dizzied them and bent their necks almost beyond endurance; so a great looking-glass was put near the floor, and now visitors only need to look easily down into this mirror, and they see the fresco at their feet. And so, much of the high heaven of God's truth is reflected in this world as in a mirror, and things that are above are copied by things around us.

What right have we to throw away one of God's Bibles—aye, the first Bible he ever gave the race? We talk about the Old Testament and the New Testament, but the oldest Testament contains the lessons of the natural world. Some people like the New Testament so well they discard the Old Testament. Shall we like the New Testament and the Old Testament so well as to depreciate the oldest; namely, that which was written before Moses was put aloft on the boat of leaves which was calked with asphaltum; or reject the Genesis that was written centuries before Adam lost a rib and gained a wife?

No, no! When Deity stoops down and writes on the ground, let us read it.

I would have no less appreciation of the Bible on paper that comes out of the paper mill, but I would urge appreciation of the Bible in the grass, the Bible in the sand hill, the Bible in the geranium, the Bible in the asphodel, the Bible in the dust.

Some one asked an ancient king whether he had seen the eclipse of the sun. "No," said he. "I have so much to study on earth I have no time to look at heaven." And if our faculties were all awake in the study of God we would not have time to go much further than the first grass blade. I have no fear that natural religion will ever contradict what we call revealed religion. I have no sympathy with the followers of Aristotle, who, after the telescope was invented, would not look through it lest it contradict some of the theories of their great master. I shall be glad to put against one lid of the Bible the microscope and against the other lid of the Bible the telescope.

But what did Christ write on the ground? The Bible does not state. Yet as Christ never wrote anything except that once, you cannot blame us for wanting to know what he really did write. But I am certain he wrote nothing trivial or nothing unimportant. And will you allow me to say that I think I know what he wrote on the ground? I judge from the circumstances. He might have written other things, but kneeling there in the temple, surrounded by a pack of hypocrites who were a self-appointed constabulary, and having in his presence a persecuted woman, who evidently was very penitent for her sins, I am sure he wrote two words, both of them graphic and tremendous and reverberating. And the one word was "hypocrisy" and the other word was "forgiveness."

From the way these Pharisees and scribes vacated the premises and got out into the fresh air, as Christ, with just one ironical sentence unmasked them, I know they were first-class hypocrites. It was then as it is now. The more faults and inconsistencies people have of their own, the more severe and censorious are they about the faults of others. Here they are—twenty stout men arresting and arraignment one weak woman! Magnificent business to be engaged in! They wanted the fun of seeing her faint away under a heavy judicial sentence from Christ, and then, after she had been taken outside of the city and fastened at the foot of the precipice, the Scribes and Pharisees wanted the satisfaction of each coming and dropping a big stone on her head, for that was the style of capital punishment that they asked for. Some people have taken the responsibility of saying that Christ never laughed. But I think as he saw those men drop everything, chagrined, mortified, exposed, and go out quicker than they came in, he must have laughed. At any rate it makes me laugh to read of it. All of those libertines, dramatizing indignation against impurity! Blind bats lecturing on optics! A flock of crows on their way up from a carcass, denouncing carrion!

Yes, I think that one word written on the ground that day by the finger of Christ was the awful word hypocrisy. What pretensions to sanctity are the part of those hypocritical Pharisees! When the fox begins to pray, look out for your chickens. One of the cruel magnates of olden times was going to excommunicate one of the martyrs, and he began in the usual form—"In the name of God, Amen." "Stop!" says the martyr, "don't say in the name of God!" Yet how many outrages are practiced under the garb of religion and sanctity! When in synods and conferences, ministers of the Gospel are about to say something unbrotherly and unkind about a member, they almost always begin by being ostentatiously pious, the venom of their assault corresponding to the heavenly flavor of the prelude. About to devour a reputation they piously say grace before meal.

But I am sure there was another word in that dust. From her entire manner I am sure that arraigned woman was repentant. She made no apology, and Christ in no wise belittled her sin. But her supplicatory behavior and her tears moved him, and when he stooped down to write on the ground he wrote that mighty, that imperial word, forgiveness.

When on Sinai God wrote the law, wrote it with finger of lightning tables of stone, each word cut as by chisel into the hard granite surface. I when he writes the offense of this woman he writes it in dust so that it can be eas rubbed out, and when she repents of oh, he was a merciful Christ! I was reading of a legend that is told in the far east about him. He was walking through the streets of a city and he saw a cro around a dead dog. And one man sa "What a loathsome object is that dog "Yes," said another, "his ears are maud and bleeding." "Yes," said another, "ev his hide would not be of any use to t tanner." "Yes," said another, "the of of his carcass is dreadful." Then Chr standing there, said: "But pearls can equal the whiteness of his teeth." Th the people, moved by the idea that o one could find anything pleasant conce ing the dead dog, said: "Why this m be Jesus of Nazareth!" Reproved a convicted, they went away.

Surely this legend of Christ is go enough to be true. Kindness in all words and ways and habits, Forgiveness Word of eleven letters, and some of th thrones, and some of them palm bran es. Better have Christ write close to names that one word, though he write in dust, than to have our name cut i monumental granite with the letters t the storms of a thousand years cannot literate. Bishop Babington had a be of only three leaves. The first leaf v black, the second leaf red, the third l white. The black leaf suggested sin; red leaf atonement; the white leaf pu cation. That is the whole story. C will abundantly pardon.

I must not forget to say that as Chr stooping down, with his finger wro the ground, it is evident that his sym thies are with this penitent woman, that he has no sympathy with her b critical pursuers. Just opposite to th the world's habit. Why didn't these clean Pharisees bring one of their c number to Christ for excoriation and c ital punishment? No, no. They over that in a man which they damnat woman. And so the world has had offending woman scourges and obju tion, and for just one offense she beca an outcast, while for men whose lives h been sodomic for twenty years the w swings open its doors of brilliant welc and they may sit in high places. Un the Christ of my text, the world wro man's misdemeanor in dust, but chisel woman's offense with great capitals u ineffaceable marble.

But while I speak of Christ of the his stooping down writing in the dust, do not think I underrate the literature of dust. It is the most tremendous of all literature. It is the greatest of all litera. When Layard exhumed Nineveh he only opening the door of his mighty d. The excavations of Pompeii have c been the unclasping of the lids of a ume of a nation's dust. When Adm Farragut and his friends visited that rected city, the house of Balbo, who l been one of its chief citizens in its p perous days, was opened, and a table spread in that house which 1,810 ye had been buried by volcanic eruption. Farragut and his guests walked over exquisite mosaics and under the beaut fresco, and it almost seemed like being entertained by those who eighteen centu ago had turned to dust.

Oh! this mighty literature of the d Where are the remains of Sennache and Attila and Epaminondas and Tan lane and Trajan and Philip of Mace and Julius Caesar? Dust! Where the heroes who fought on both sides t Charonea, at Hastings, at Marathon Cressy, of the 110,000 men who foug Agincourt, of the 250,000 men who death at Jena, of the 400,000 whose ar glittered in the sun at Wagram, of 1,000,000 men under Darius at Arbela the 2,641,000 men under Xerxes at T mopylae? Dust! Where are the gu who danced the floors of the Albanb the Persian palaces of Alhasuerus? D Where are the musicians who playe the orators who spoke, and the sculpt who chiseled, and the architects who in all the centuries except our own? D Where are the most of the books t once entranced the world? Dust! P wrote twenty books of history; all lost. most of Menander's writings lost. Of hundred and thirty comedies of Plau

gone but twenty. Euripides wrote a hundred dramas, all gone but nineteen. Ehylus wrote a hun red dramas, all gone but seven. Varro wrote the labori- biographies of 700 Romans, not a fragment left. Quintilian wrote his favor- book on the corruption of eloquence. almost. Thirty books of Tacitus lost. In Cassius wrote eighty books, only twenty remain. Berostus' history all lost. Were there is one living book there are a thousand dead books. The greatest library in the world, that which has the most shelves and longest aisles and the most multitudinous volumes and the vast- wealth is the underground library. It is the royal library, the continental library, the hemispheric library, the planetary library, the library of the dust. And all the library cases will be opened, and all the scrolls unrolled, and all these volumes unsped, and as easily as in your library we take up a book, blow the dust from it, and turn over its pages, so easily the Lord of the Resurrection pick out from this library of dust every volume of an life and open it and read it and say it. And the volume will be read, to be set in the royal library of the King's palace, or in the prison library of a well-destroyed.

But this mighty literature of the dust, is not so wonderful, after all, that Christ would stand on the floor of an ancient temple, and instead of a hard pen, put on his forefinger, with the same kind of strength and muscle and bone and flesh as which makes up our own forefinger, and wrote the awful doom of hypocrisy, and all and complete forgiveness for repentant sinners, even the worst. We talk of the ocean of Christ's mercy. Put four drops upon that ocean and let them sail in opposite directions a thousand years, and they can find the shore of the ocean of Divine mercy.

They sail to the east and the south and the east, and then to the thousand of voyagers come back they will remain "No shore, no to the ocean of mercy!" I know I can believe that which I have kept burning candle in the way every night for ten years, and I might, very late, for wait of the day entered. The woman said to her sister down by the side and the stranger, "Why do you weep that light window?" The aged woman said, "That is to my wayward when she was. Since she went away, ten years ago, my hair has turned white. Folks come for worry about her, but I see I am here, and some half a dozen one night, I open my door and look out into the darkness and cry, 'Lizzie! 'Lizzie!' but I must not tell you any more about the trouble, for I guess, from the way you look, you have trouble enough of your own. How cold and sick you seem! Oh, how can it be? Yes, you are Lizzie, my first child! Thank God that you are here again!" And what a time of rest there was in that house that night. Christ again stooped down, and in the eyes of that hearth, now lighted up, and more by the great blazing logs than by the fire of a reunited household, wrote the liberating words that had been spoken more than eighteen hundred years ago in the dust of the Jerusalem temple. "Lizzie!" A word broad enough and strong enough to let pass through it all the mercies of heaven, a million abreast, on the horses, nostril to nostril, flank to flank.

# ONE DAY'S DOINGS AT MONT-LAWN.

How Our Little Army of Tenement Children Spend the Hours from Breakfast to Bed-time—Golden Texts—Little Lambs Folded.



HE day's routine at Mont-Lawn begins with the early morning, when the children, waking after a refreshing night's sleep, are hungry for breakfast and eager for play. The dormitories are live bee-hives; little folks are busy getting into clothes as quickly as possible; caretakers and older children are helping. At last, with buttons secure, faces washed, heads combed and brushed, they assemble on the lawn in front of the porch. In the door their House-mother stands with her hand on the gong. At the first stroke, they fall in line; at the second, march off to the tent. Long white tables under the tent are set forth with many bowls of oatmeal or rice and mugs of rich creamy milk, and with many slices of buttered bread. Each little girl and boy takes his seat; little heads are bowed, little hands folded, and the children sing their pretty grace, beginning:

God is great, God is good,  
And we thank him for this food.

Such appetites they have—poor, half-famished little ones. Some who came, pinched and pale, and too weak and sick even to care for food, are hungry enough now, and march and play sturdily. "Teachers" (this is what they elect to call their caretakers), go from table to table, replenishing plates and mugs and serving out numberless slices of white and brown bread. It was only a moment ago when Miss Drane filled Tommy's mug and gave him his fourth or fifth slice of bread, and there is his lifted hand—one of a multitude behaving in the same way—and he is trying to enlist Miss Jones or Miss Trow-

sides, to gather berries, to weave daisy-chains and oak-wreathes, to listen to stories told by wise and loving caretakers, to sing many a happy song, play many a merry game until dinner time, and again until evening, when supper comes; and the little service follows, when the children hear short, loving talks from matron and caretakers about their "Child-King," Jesus, who put it into the hearts of kind friends to send them here; they sing little hymns of praise and thanksgiving and pray God to make and keep them good and to bless the dear, kind friends who sent them to this beautiful Home, whose loving kindness feeds and clothes them, and who are moved to do this through love of Jesus for poor little children whom they have never seen.

Cool dormitories fill with sleepy little folk; teachers and big children help the smaller ones to undress; all say "Our Father," and the little lambs are folded for the night; restless limbs are still;



TOTS RESTING AFTER PLAY.

hand; wants are attended to, and the little one is asleep again. If it is so fretful that she fears it may wake the others, she bears it to her own bed.

Harsh words are not in order at Mont-Lawn. The children are too busy and too happy to quarrel or "scrap." The atmosphere of the place tends to eradicate such tendencies. They are taught to do missionary work for each other, and to seek opportunities for doing little kindnesses. Another reason that they are so good, grateful and loving, is that poverty and suffering have prepared them to be appreciative of the unusual blessings they enjoy at the Home. Of course, all is not invariably smooth sailing; and sometimes a small man or woman comes, perplexed, indignant or weeping, to lay a problem or a grievance before matron or teacher—only to go away with a smiling face and a lesson learned. They are truly "mothered" by consecrated Christian women. Can any of our generous readers who have made this blessed work of THE CHRISTIAN HERALD's their own, doubt that they are laying up treasures in heaven, and that this bread which they cast upon the waters, will return to them after many days?

The following contributions for our Fresh-Air Fund have been received during the week:

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A GROUP OF OUR WEE GUESTS AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF THE NEW-COMERS.

bridge or Miss Thomas or Miss Parsons in his behalf, and is piping: "Teacher! can I have more bread—can I have more milk?" And you wonder if Tommy swallows bread whole and takes a mug of milk down in one gulp! Breakfast over, to the rat-a-tat tat of the drum they march under review again, and the House-Mother standing on the steps, asks:

"Children, what is the Golden Text?" They answer, giving as they were taught at Sunday School in the chapel the Golden Text for the week: the first week it was: "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous speech stirreth up anger." Every day they say the text and are bidden to remember it in their play, until the passing week brings a new Golden Text to be graven into their memories and lives. After the text they run off to the swings, the pool, to pluck flowers from the hill-

black heads and brown heads lie quiet on white pillows; through open windows sweet winds from the Rockland Hills on one side and the Hudson on the other sweep through and through the great dormitories; moon and stars shine down like a benediction on placid river and solemn hills. Silence falls on Mont-Lawn; even the busy caretakers, whose work has seemingly no end, may rest; 130 children are asleep—sleeping so sweetly and soundly after their healthy happy day, that, unless you peep into the dormitories it is difficult to realize that so many children are under the roof. May be, a cry breaks the stillness of the night: perhaps a child is dreaming or athirst; or has not yet recovered from the feverish fretfulness which the heat of the city had brought upon him. A caretaker, with loving words and soft touches, is instantly at