WORD OF THE LORD

Lessons Taught by Birth Dates and Holidays.

CHRISTMAS SHOULD BE HELD

Superior to All Other Anniversaries of the Year—Nature's Lesson of Progress and Decay.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 25.—The sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Talmage this morning was of a character especially appropriate to the holiday season, and was listened to with rapt attention by an audience that crowded the Tabernacle. Before beginning his discourse the preacher gave out the opening hymn:

Joy to the world! the Lord has come;
Let earth receive her king.

The text selected was Colossians ii, 16, "In respect of a holy day."

What the Bible here and elsewhere calls a holy day we, by change of one letter and change of pronunciation, call holiday. But by change of spelling and accentuation we cannot change the fact that holidays have great significance. As long as the world stands Christmas day and New Year's day and Easter day will be charged and surcharged with solemn suggestiveness and holy mirth. Whether you take the old style of my text and call them holy days, or the modern style and call them holidays, they somehow set all my nerves a-tingle and my deeper emotions into profoundest agitation. I am glad that this season we have the holidays completely bounded. For years, Christmas day starting in the midst of one week, and New Year's day starting in the midst of another week, we have been perplexed to know when the holidays began and when they ended, and perhaps we may have begun them too soon or continued them too long.

But this year they are bounded by two beaches of gold—Sabbath, Dec. 25, 1892, and Sabbath, Jan. 1, 1893. The one Sabbath this year commemorates the birth of the greatest being that ever walked the earth; the other celebrates the birth of that which is to be one of the greatest years of all time; the one day supernatural because of an unhinged star and angelic doxology, and the other day natural, but part of a procession that started with the world's existence and will go on until the world is burned up; both the first and the last days of these holidays coming in with Sabbatical splendor and solemnity, and girdling all the days between with thoughts that have all time and all eternity in their emphasis. How shall we spend them? At haphazard and without special direction, and they leaving, as they go away from us, physical fatigue and mental exhaustion, the effect of late hours and recklessness of diet adding another chapter to the moral and spiritual and eternal disasters which have resulted from misspent holidays? Oh, no! A stout and resounding no! for all the eight days.

I propose that we divide this holiday season, the two Sabbaths of the holiday and the six days between, into three chapters—the first part a chapter of illustrious birthday; the second part a chapter of annual decadence; the third part a chapter of chronological introduction.

BIRTHDAYS OF THE GREAT.

First, then, a chapter of illustrious birthday. Not a day of any year but has been marked by the nativity of some good or great soul. Among discoverers the birthday of Humboldt was Sept. 14 and of David Livingston March 19. Among astronomers the birthday of Isaac Newton was Dec. 25 and of Herschel Nov. 17. Among orators the birthday of Cicero was Jan. 3 and of Chrysostom Jan. 14. Among prison reformers the birthday of John Howard was Sept. 2 and of Elizabeth Fry May 1. Among painters the birthday of Raphael was March 28 and of Michael Angelo March 6. Among statesmen the birthday of Washington was Feb. 22, of Hamilton May 8 and of Jefferson April 2. Among consecrated souls the birthday of Mrs. Hemans was Sept. 25, of Lucretia Mott Jan. 3 and of Isabella Graham July 29. But what are all those birthdays compared with Dec. 25, for on or about that day was born one who eclipsed all the great names of all the centuries—Jesus of Bethlehem, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of Golgotha, Jesus of Olivet, Jesus of the heavenly throne?

The greatest pictures have been made about scenes in his lifetime. The greatest sacrifices on field of battle or in hospital or on long march or in martyrdom have been inspired by his self abnegation. The finest words of eloquence ever spoken have been uttered in the proclamation of his Gospel. The grandest oratorios that have ever rolled from orchestras were descriptive of his life and death. There have been other orators, but none like him who "spake as never man spake." There have been other reformers, but none like him who will not have completed his mission until the last prison is ventilated, and the last blind eye opened, and the last deaf ear unstopped, and the last lame foot bounds like a roe, and the last case of dementia shall come to its right mind. There have been other discoverers, but none like him able to find how man may be just with God. There have been other deliverers, but none like him, the rescuer of nations. There have been other painters, but none like him who put the image of God on a lost soul. No wonder we celebrate his birth. Protestant church, Catholic church, Greek church, St. Isaac's of St. Petersburg, St. Peter's at Rome, the Madeleine at Paris, St. Paul's in London joining all our American cathedrals and churches and log cabin meeting houses and homes in keeping this pre-eminent birth festival.

THE SUPERNAL LIGHT.

Elaborate and prolonged efforts have been made to show that the star that pointed to the manger in which Christ was born was not what it appeared to be, but a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Our wise men of the west say that the wise men of the east were mistaken. Astronomers, you know, can calculate backward as well as forward, and as they can tell what will occur a hundred years from now among the heavenly bodies, so they can accurately calculate backward and tell what occurred eighteen or nineteen hundred years ago. And it is true that seven years before Christ, in Chaldea, about three hours before day dawn, there was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Standing in Jerusalem and looking over toward Bethlehem, those two stars would have seemed to hang over that village, and it is suggested by a learned professor that the magi may have had weak eyes, so that the two stars may have looked like one. In order to take everything supernatural out of the story we have to blind the eyes of the magi and introduce a second star to help out the idea of the one star. But I prefer the simple story of the Bible, that a light of some kind—stellar or meteoric—pointed from the sky to the straw cradle. When it is so easy for God to make a world that he puts eighteen millions of them within one sweep of the telescope, he could certainly afford one silvery or fiery signal of some kind to point the world to the place where the sovereign of the universe lay incarnated and infantile.

If God could afford to make an especial earthquake at the crucifixion, the splint rocks on Mount Calvary still showing that there was a convulsion of nature at that particular spot which was felt in none of the surroundings, then he could afford something unusual, something brilliant, something positive, something tremendous at the nativity. If a king at the birth of a son can have the palace illumined and couriers sent with swift dispatch to announce the gladness at the gates and wake up an empire with cannonade, I am not surprised that, at the birth of the Son of God there was celestial agitation, and my only wonder is that, instead of one star or one meteor giving signal, all worlds did not make demonstration. Why not other worlds take interest in the event when Christ came from another world and another world was to get the souls that would be saved by this celestial descent? It would have been a stellar disgrace, an astronomical scandal, if, when the God-head lay compressed in the form of an infant, something from above had not pointed down, as much as to say: "There he is! Look, all earth and heaven! Look, all time and all eternity!"

CHRIST MUST NEEDS SUFFER.

You see, the birth at Bethlehem must have been more novel and startling to the heavens than the crucifixion on Calvary. It was expected that Christ would be maltreated. The world always had maltreated its good and great friends. Joseph hurled into the pit, Shadrach put into the fire, Jeremiah lowered into a dungeon, David hounded from the throne, Elijah compelled to starve or take his food from the beak of a filthy raven, and Socrates condemned to death, so that the Calvarian massacre was in the same old line of maltreatment. But the novelty of all the ages was the conjunction of divinity and humanity. Invisible deity, muscled and nerved and fleshed in masculine physique. A child and yet a God! Why, if the meteor had not pointed down that night, some angel would have rushed down and pointed with his glittering scepter. Isaiah and David and Ezekiel, who foretold the coming, would have descended from their thrones and stood on the roof of the barn or in some way designated the honored locality. As the finger of light that Dec. 25 pointed to the straw cradle, now all the fingers of Christendom this moment, fingers of childhood and old age, fingers of sermon and song and decoration and festivity, point to the great straw cradle. Am I not right in saying that the first of the three chapters of the holidays should be devoted to the illustrious birthday? By song and prayer and solemn reflection and charities today, and by gifts and trees that bear fruit in an hour after they are planted, and family gathering and hilarities sounding from cellar to garret tomorrow, keep Christmas.

As far as possible gather the children and the grandchildren, but put no estoppel on racket, whether of laughter or swift feet or toys in shape of rail trains or trumpets or infant effigy. Let the old folks for one day at least say nothing about rheumatism, or prospect of early demise, or the degeneracy of modern times, or the poison in confectionery. If you cannot stand the noise, retire from it for a little while into some other room and stop your ears. Christmas for children without plenty of noise is no Christmas at all. If children and grandchildren cannot have full swing during the holidays, when will they have it? They will be still soon enough, and their feet will slacken their pace, and the burdens of life will bear them down. Houses get awfully still when the children are gone. While they stay let them fill the room with such resounding mirth that you can hear the echoes twenty years after they are dead. By religious celebration today and by domestic celebration tomorrow keep Christmas. As for our beloved church, we tomorrow night mean to set the children of our Sabbath school wild with delight, and in The Christian Herald, with which I am connected, we are celebrating the holidays by sending out from two to four thousand Bibles a day, and they will continue to go out by express, by messengers and by mails until we have distributed at least one hundred thousand copies of the good old Book on which Christmas is built, and which gives the only healthful interpretation of these swift flying years.

ALL THAT LIVE MUST DIE.

The second chapter of the holidays must speak of annual decadence. This is the last Sabbath of the year. The steps of the year are getting short, for it is old now. When it waved the springtime blossoms the year was young, and when it swung the scythe and cradle through the summer harvest fields the year was strong, but it is getting out of breath now, and after six more throbs of the pulse will be dead. We cannot stop this annual decadence. Set all the clocks back, set all the watches back, set all the chronometers back, but you cannot set time back. For the old family clock you might suppose that time would have especial respect, and that if you took hold of those old hands on the face of that centenarian of a timepiece and pushed them back you might expect that time would stop or retreat for at least a few minutes. "No, no!" says the old family clock. "I must go on. I saw your father and mother on their wedding day. I struck the hour of your nativity. I counted the festal hours of the day in which you brought home a bride. I sounded the knell at your father's death. I tolled at your mother's departure. Yea, I must sound your own going out of life. I must go on. I must go on. Tick, tock! Tick, tock!"

THE UNCEASING FLIGHT OF TIME.

But there is a great city clock high up in the tower. There are so many wrongs in all our cities to be righted, so many evils to be extirpated, so many prisons to be sanitaried—stop the city clock until all these things are done. Let common council and the people of the great town decree that the city hall clock shall stop. We do not want the sins of 1892 to be handed over to 1893. We do not want the young year to inherit the misfortunes of the old year. By ladders lifted to the tower and by strong hands take hold and halt the city clock. "No, no!" says the city clock. "I cannot wait until you correct all evils or soothe all sorrow or drive out all sin. I have been counting the steps of your progress as a city. I have seen your opportunities. I have deplored your neglects, but time wasted is wasted forever. I must go on. I must go on. Tick, tock! Tick, tock!" But in the tower of the capitols at Washington and London and Berlin and Vienna and all the great national capitals there are clocks.

Suppose that by presidential proclamation and resolution of senate and house of representatives our national clock in the Capitol turret be ordered to stop. "Stop, O clock, until sectional animosities are cooled off, until our Sabbaths are better kept, and drunkenness turns to sobriety, and bribery, fraud and dissipation quit the land! Stop, O clock, in the tower of the great United States Capitol!" "No, no!" says the clock. "I have been going on so long I cannot afford to stop. I sounded the birthday of American independence. I rang out the return of peace in 1865. I have seen many presidents inaugurated. I struck the hour of Lincoln's assassination. I have beat time for emancipation proclamation, and Chicago fire, and Charleston earthquake, and epidemics of fever and cholera. Nations never stop. They march on toward salvation or demolition. And why should I stop? I chime for the national holidays. I toll for the mighty dead. I must go on! I must go on! Tick, tock! Tick, tock!" There may be a difference of a few seconds or a few minutes in the timepieces, but it will be a serious occasion when next Saturday night about the same hour the family clocks, and the city clocks, and the national clocks strike one! two! three! four! five! six! seven! eight! nine! ten! eleven! twelve!

THE DEAD YEAR AND ITS DEAD.

Sorry am I to have 1892 depart this life. It has been a good year. What bright days! What starry nights! What harvests! What religious convocations! What triumphs of art and science and invention and enterprise and religion! But, alas, how sacred it has been with sorrows! What pillows hot with fever that could not be cooled! What graves opening wide enough to take down beauty and strength and usefulness! What octogenarians putting down the staff of earthly pilgrimage and taking the crown of heavenly reward! What children, as in Bible time, crying: "My head, my head! And they carried him to his mother, and he sat on her knees until noon and then died." This year went the chief poet of England and the chief poet of America. Our John G. Whittier—great in literature and simple as a child—for did I not spend an afternoon with him in a barn in the Adirondacks, and in the evening we played blindman's buff, he tying over my eyes the handkerchief while the hotel parlors rang with the merrymaking? And Tennyson, this year gone—he who for this particular season of the year wrote:

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light.
The year is dying in the night.
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

What mingling of emotions in this closing year! What orange blossoms for the marriage altar, and what myrtle for the tombs of the dead! Hosannas and lamentations in collision. Anthem and dead march mounting from the same ivory keys. Before this year quite leaves the earth let it hear our repentance for opportunities that can never return. Kind words spoken too late or not spoken at all. Means of getting good or doing good so completely gone by that the archangel's voice could not recall them. Can it be that this year is closing and our sins are unforgiven, and we have no certainty that when our last Dec. 31 has sped away we shall enter a blissful eternity? The most overwhelmingly solemn week of all the year is the last week of December.

But on opening this subject, "In respect of a holy day," as my text puts it, or a holiday, as we moderns write and pronounce it, I advised that you divide this season into three chapters—the first a chapter of illustrious birthday, the second a chapter of annual decadence and the third a chapter of chronological introduction—and this last chapter we have reached. In olden times there was a style of closing an old year and opening a new one that was very suggestive. The family would sit up until twelve o'clock at night, and when the clock struck twelve the family would all go to the front door of the house, take down the bar and turn back the lock and swing the door wide open to let the old year out and the new year in. And that is what we are going to do. With the same measured step that time has kept since it started it will come to our door in the closing night of this week. With what spirit shall we let the new year in? I have already indicated that it is to be one of the greatest years of all chronology. "Why?" you ask. "Have you any forebodings or premonitions?" No. "Are you expecting the millennium this year?" No! "Why, then, say this about the coming year?" For the simple reason that I find as the years go by they become more and more eventful. Compare the Nineteenth century with the Eighteenth century.

EACH YEAR MORE EVENTFUL.

Compare the first half of this century with the last half. The surges of the ocean of time are rolling higher and higher. The forces of right and wrong are rapidly maintaining, and their struggles must be intensified. It is a chronological fact that we are all the time coming nearer to the world's edenization first and then to its incineration, to its redemption and its demolition. And so I expect that 1893 will be a greater year than 1892. Its wedding bells will be merrier. Its obsequies will be sadder. Its scientific discoveries more brilliant. Its prosperities more significant. Its opening more grand. Its termination more stupendous. Look out for 1893! Let printers have in their cases of type plenty of exclamation points to set up a sudden paragraph. Let the conservatories have profusion of flowers that can be twisted into garlands. Let churches have plenty of room for increased assemblages. Let men and women have more religion to meet the vacillations, and the exigencies, and the demands, and the raptures, and the woes of this coming 1893. In what mood shall we open the door of the new year? With faith, strong faith, buoyant faith, triumphant faith. God will see you through. His grace will be sufficient if you trust him. You can go to him at any time and find sympathy.

My little child got hurt one morning during her mother's absence. We looked after the case as well as we could. Toward night her mother returned, and for the first time the child cried and cried vociferously. Some one said to her: "What do you cry for? You did not cry all day." Her reply was, "There was no one to cry to." And so you sometimes suppress your trouble because there is no full resource of earthly sympathy. But I rejoice to tell you that in God you always have some one to cry to. He will condole and help in every crisis. Come, now, let me unstrap that knapsack of care from your shoulders. Come prosperity or adversity, come wedding or burial, come health or sickness, come life or death, come time or eternity, all's well, all's well! Keep your heart right and all else will be right. Men and women have sometimes given strange and whimsical directions in regard to what shall be done with their hearts after death. Robert Bruce ordered his heart to be sent to the Holy Land for burial. The Earl of Leicester ordered his heart sent to Brackley hospital. Isabella, daughter of the Earl of Pembroke, died at Berkhampstead, but ordered her heart taken to Tewkesbury cathedral. Lord Windsor, dying in a foreign land, ordered his heart inclosed in lead and sent to England for burial in the chapel of Bradenham. Now what shall we decree for our heart? That it be the Lord's, and then it makes no difference what else becomes of it. Living and dying, may it all be his.

YOUTH HAS ITS LESSONS FOR AGE.

Thus in three chapters I have counseled that the holidays be grouped. May nothing interfere with their felicities. May they be so spent that they will be food for pleasant reminiscence further on. You know that after awhile the old homestead will be broken up. For years and years the children come home to spend the holidays, and the house is rummaged from garret to cellar, and the scenes of childhood are rehearsed, and we laugh till the tears come as we talk over some boyish or girlish freak or cry over some old trouble ended; but the heart swings back again to mirth, for it does not take half a second for a tear of the eye to strike the smile of the lip. For a few years the grandchildren make the holidays merry. One of the many uses of grandchildren is to keep the old folks young. Then after a few years the annual gathering at the old homestead is half broken up, for father or mother is gone.

About two years after (for there are generally about two years between the time of their going) the other half of the holiday season is broken up. Then the old house goes into the possession of strangers, and the sons and daughters by that time have homes of their own. They plant their own Christmas trees, and hang up their own children's stockings, and twine their own holly and mistletoe, and have their own good times. They will perhaps be riding out on some of those holidays either in sleigh or carriage twenty or thirty years from now along the places where we slumber the last sleep, and may we have been so considerate and sympathetic in our demeanor toward them now that they will then say one to another as they pass the silent mounds of the village graveyard or city cemetery, "There rest as kind a father and as kind a mother as ever wished their children a merry Christmas or a happy new year."

Meanwhile we, their parents and grandparents, will, I hope, through the atonement of our blessed Lord, be keeping holidays livelier and higher up; in the presence of the very Christ whose birth the earthly Christmas commemorates, and of the "Ancient of Days" who saw the first year open, and will see the last year close; in companionship with the ever widening circle of heavenly kindred, many already there and many soon to come, and the tables of that festivity will purple with the grapes of Eschol, and redden with "the new wine of the kingdom," and glow with "twelve manner of fruits" from the trees of life, and the gifts of those holidays will be mansions and thrones and crowns of glory that never fade away. Oh, that these delightful holidays of earth may fit us for those more delightful holidays of heaven!

CRAZED BY THE COMET.

The Prospective Arrival of Biela's Orb Left Its Influence Behind.

There are wise people to-day who believe that the proximity of a comet to the earth brings with it various diseases, mental as well as physical disturbances.

"I never took any stock in this comet business," said a practical friend of mine. "I've seen several comets in my time and read all sorts of rot about them, very little of which I believed. But this comet"——

He paused and drew me away from the crowd. Having glanced about him uneasily, he continued:

"This comet nearly drove my wife crazy! Yes, sir; fact! And she's nearly driven me crazy. Do you—have you seen anything queer about me lately?"

I told him I had not—that he looked as sane as his average fellow mortal.

"Well," he resumed, "I've run a mighty narrow chance, I tell you. But she's cured now. If this infernal comet hadn't gone away just when it did I should have been locked up by this time.

"My wife is ordinarily a quiet little woman and takes no particular interest in the newspapers except when there is a mysterious murder case like the great Maybrick poisoning case or the Carlyle-Harris case, or something like that—something mysterious, you know. Then she grabs the newspapers and reads up on it, and thinks about it, and talks about it, and advances theories about it, and thoroughly masters it, hanging the defendant every day. She can find more clews than the whole metropolitan police force. She pounces down upon me at breakfast with her theories and clews and suspicions, and as these are changed after reading the evening papers I get another dose at night.

"But this comet! She has been stricken—yes, sir, stricken—by the mysterious influence the comet is said to have upon the human mind! It was manifest in her the very day she read the dispatches and the differences of learned opinion as to whose comet it was and its probable orbit, its distance, the number of sparks in its tail, etc. If it had been a straightforward comet and come right out where everybody could see it and where everybody expected it, she would have been all serene. But the mystery of the thing, the uncertainty, the disagreement of astronomers—that settled her. She began reading up on the comet from the newspapers. As every newspaper differed, and every authority in every newspaper differed with every other authority in that or any other newspaper, she found herself suddenly plunged into a whirl of excitement.

"She sprang comet on me every hour in the day and swept the heavens with a 2-inch opera glass every night. She had a sort of idea that redhot chunks of iron were liable to drop into our flat. She went up on the roof to see the meteoric shower and got locked out up there by the janitor. If I hadn't missed her she'd have been frozen to death. She got up ten times a night to look out, and once she said she smelled sulphur. She slipped out of bed the first thing in the morning and read what the papers said about the comet, then went back to bed again. When I sat down to breakfast with my paper she was loaded for me. You could see a hazy red light hanging over the Jersey horizon from our windows, and she had those windows open so much at night we all got colds and snuffles. On Sunday night the sky over there was bright red at intervals. Well, she was just wild. Then she smelled the sulphur in the air. I never saw a woman get so excited. She scarcely slept a wink.

"The next morning, when she found that it was the Jersey meadows on fire and that she hadn't seen the comet at all, she was the most disgusted woman you ever saw. She won't touch a newspaper now. She says the newspapers are the biggest liars—next to the astronomers—on earth. If I say 'comet' at her now she is as mad as a hornet.

"In my opinion, it's been a confounded fraud all along. This man Biela, or Beely, ought to get six months on the island."—New York Herald.

Rare Relics Unearthed.

Four of the most remarkable relics discovered have just been found in the western Egyptian oasis of Theba and sent to the Louvre in Paris for exhibition. They are plaster casts busts. These busts originated during the brief era of prosperity at the close of the Second and the beginning of the Third century of our time. They are not, as it would seem, detached pieces of statues, but are complete in themselves. They are masks used for a special class of mummies, and like most of the Egyptian curiosities come from the grave. The departed members of wealthy families were provided not only with sepulchers, but with a sort of armor composed of several pieces, which completely incased the dead body. The feet were thrust into a pocket shaped affair like a carriage foot warmer, and separate pieces were made for chest and neck, as well as the hair, with a mask for the face, which often resembled the features of the dead.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

A Yarn from Red Bluff.

A few days ago James R. Holt went for a quail hunt along the banks of the Sacramento river. Under a cover of brush he discovered a nice flock of birds, but when he raised his gun to have a shot they disappeared. He felt satisfied that there were quite a number under a particular bush and he blazed away. The noisy fluttering which followed told him the result and he ran for his prize, and just as he was reaching out his hand to catch a wounded quail he was suddenly shocked to discover an enormous rattlesnake in the line of the bird.

He approached the birds again with his gun cocked and ready for a sudden shot, and learned that the snake was dead. When he fired at the birds he killed the snake and six quail, although none of the birds or the serpent were in view. The snake had eight rattles and a button and was 5½ feet in length.—Red Bluff (Cal.) News.

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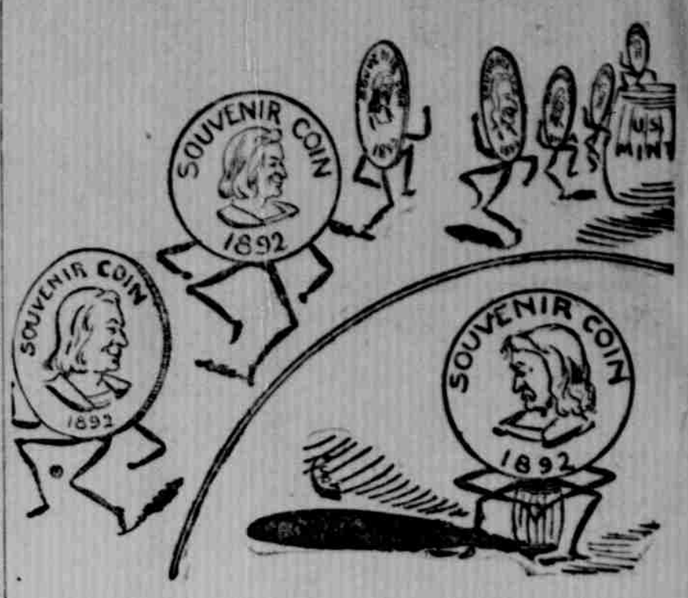

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A WASHINGTON LETTER.

How Them in Buffalo Spends More Money at the Buffalo Postoffice than all the Banks and Newspapers combined.

A Washington (D. C.) letter says that the postoffice authorities at Washington report that one firm in Buffalo—the World's Dispensary Medical Association—sends annually one hundred thousand dollars worth of stamps alone, in carrying on their extensive patent medicine business. This is more than all the banks and newspapers of Buffalo combined spend for postage.

Here's a firm which has grown, step by step, through many years to greatness. The reason for this wonderful growth has been that they have faith in what they sell, so much faith that if they can't benefit or cure, they don't want your money.

For many years they have been selling Dr. Pierce's Favorite—one, Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery, for regulating and invigorating the liver and purifying the blood; the other, Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, the hope of weakly women and girls, and they've been sold for years, and for the million but after all, only under a positive guarantee of benefiting or curing, or your money will be refunded.