

AN ISLAND VISION.

A Beautiful Sermon Preached Way Up Amid the Thousand Isles of the St. Lawrence.

Many of the Churches of To-Day Declined to Death—Millions of Souls Hanging for the Truth.

Heaven Not a Monopoly—Gates on All Sides for Every Nation Wide Open. The Necessary Password.

Special to the Gazette.

ALEXANDRIA, ILL., N. Y., June 27.—The congregation of the Brooklyn Tabernacle this year have made pilgrimage to this place, accompanied by the Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D. D., their pastor. Many hundreds of them left Brooklyn on Saturday, June 26, arriving here the evening of the same day, and will remain until Tuesday, June 29, and will remain until Tuesday. Special trains of cars were provided for them. A multitude from the surrounding villages joined them to-day, and Dr. Talmage preached the following sermon: His subject was, "An Island Vision," and his text, Revelation 1, 9: "I, John, was in the isle that is called Patmos," and Revelation xxi, 21: "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls."

The preacher said: Sabbath morning finds us amid the Thousand Isles of the St. Lawrence. Amid the enchantment of the scenery some of us are like Paul when he said: "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell." Not having read the geologists' account of how this region was formed, I may surmise that after the St. Lawrence began its majestic roll these islands were dropped into it out of the heavenly landscape. Islands above us, islands below us, islands all around us, I am reminded how much the islands of the world have had to do with sacred and profane history. Ibsa, from which Napoleon started for his last struggle, and St. Helena, where he ended it; Island of Guernsey, where the great soul of Victor Hugo chafed in exile until republicanism in France drove back despotism; Isle of Borneo, where Adamnan Judson stood, a flaming evangelist; the Mediterranean island, where Garibaldi rested after the emancipation of Italy; Island of Cyprus, where Barnabas preached; Island of Melita, on which Paul was shipwrecked; and, last of all, but mightier than all and more impressive than all, the Island of Patmos, of which my text speaks and from which St. John, the exiled Ephesian gospeller, saw the twelve pearl-gates. If God will help us, we can from these Thousand Isles, on this Sabbath morning, see the same glittering portals.

Our subject speaks of a great metropolis, the existence of which many have doubted. Standing on the wharf and looking off upon the harbor, and seeing the merchantmen coming up the bay, the flags of foreign nations streaming from the top masts, you immediately make up your mind that those vessels came from foreign ports, and that is from Hamburg, and that is from Marseilles, that is from Southampton, and that is from Havana, and your supposition is accurate. But from the city of which I am now speaking no weather-beaten merchantmen or frigates with scarred bulwarks have ever come. There has been a vast emigration into that city, but no emigration from it—so far as our natural vision can discern.

"There is no such city," says the undevout astronomer. "I have stood in high towers with a mighty telescope and have swept the heavens, and I have seen spots on the sun and caverns in the moon, but no towers have ever risen on my vision, no palaces, no temples, no shining streets, no massive walls. There is no such city." Even very good people tell me that heaven is not a material organism, but a grand spiritual fact, and that the bible descriptions of it are in all cases to be taken figuratively. I bring in reply to this what Christ said, and he ought to know: "I go to prepare"—not a theory, not a principle, not a sentiment—but "I go to prepare a place for you." The resurrected body implies this. If my foot is to be reformed from the dust it must have

SOMETHING TO TREAD ON. If my hand is to be reconstructed it must have something to handle. If my eye, having gone out in death, is to be rekindled, I must have something to gaze on. Your resurrection theory seems to imply that the resurrected body is to be hung on nothing, or to walk in air, or to float amid the intangibles. You may say: If there be material organisms, then a soul in heaven will be cramped and hindered in its enjoyments; but I answer: Did not Adam and Eve have plenty of room in the garden of Eden? Although only a few miles would have described the circumference of that place, they had ample room. And do you not suppose that God in the immensities can build a place large enough to give the whole race room, even though there be material organisms?

Herschel looked into the heavens. As a Swiss guide puts his Alpine stock between the glaciers and crosses over from crag to crag, so Herschel planted his telescope between the worlds and gilded from star to star, until he could announce to us that we live in a part of the universe but sparsely strewn with worlds; and he peers out into immensity until he finds a region no larger than our solar system in which there are fifty thousand worlds moving. And Prof. Lang says that by a philosophic reasoning, there must be somewhere a world where there is no darkness, but everlasting sunshine; so that I do not know but that it is simply because we have no telescope powerful enough that we cannot see into the land where there is no darkness at all and catch a glimpse of the burnished pinnacles. As a conquering army, marching on to take a city, comes at nightfall to the crest of a mountain from which in the midst of the landscape they see the castles they are to capture and rein in their war chargers, and halt and take a good look before

THEY PITCH THEIR TENTS for the night, so now, coming as we do on this mountain-top of prospect, I command this regiment of God to rein in their thoughts and halt, and before they pitch their tents for the night take one good, long look at the gates of the great city. "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls."

statuary; the bronze gate a representation of intertwining foliage, bird-banished, until the hand of architectural genius drops exhausted, all its life frozen into the stone. Babylon had a hundred gates, the stone. Gates of wood and iron and stone guarded nearly all the old cities. Moses has inscribed upon their gateways inscriptions from the Koran of the Mohammedan. There have been a great many fine gateways, but Christ set His hand to the work, and for the upper city swung a gate such as no eye ever gazed on, untouched by inscription. With the nail of His own cross He cut into its wonderful traceries stories of past suffering and of gladness to come. There is no wood or stone or bronze in that gate, but from top to base and from side to width it is all of pearl. Not one piece picked up from Ceylon banks, and another piece from the Persian gulf, and another from the Island of Margarite; but one solid pearl picked up from the beach of everlasting light by heavenly hands, and hoisted and swung amid the shouting of angels. The glories of alabaster vase and porphyry pillar fade out before this gateway. It puts out the spark feldspar and Bohemian diamond. You know how one little precious stone on your finger will flash under the gas-light. But, O, the brightness when the great gate of heaven swings, struck through and dripping with

THE LIGHT OF ETERNAL NOONDAY. Julius Cæsar paid a hundred and twenty-five thousand crowns for one pearl. The government of Portugal bought a pearl larger than that of Cæsar. Cleopatra and Philip III, dazzled by the world's vision with precious stones, but gather all these together and lift them, and add to them all the wealth of the pearl fisheries, and set them in the panel of one door, and it does not equal this magnificent gateway. An Almighty hand bowed this, strung this, polished this. Against this gateway on the one side dash all the splendors of earthly beauty. Against this gate on the other side beat the surges of eternal glory. O, the gate! the gate! It strikes an infinite charm through everyone that passes it. One step this side of that gate and we are paupers. One step the other side of that gate and we are kings. The pilgrim of earth going through sees in the one huge pearl all his earthly tears in crystal. O, gate of light, gate of pearl, gate of heaven, for our weary souls at last swing open.

"When shall these eyes thy heaven-built walls And poorly gaze behold, Thy bulwarks with aversion strong, And tread of admiring gold?"

O, heaven is not a dull place! Heaven is not a cramped place. Heaven is not a stupid place. "I saw the twelve gates and they were twelve pearls."

In the second place, I want you to count the number of these gates. Imperial parks and lordly manors are apt to have one expensive gateway, and the others are ordinary; but look around at these entrances to heaven and count them. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Hear it, all the earth and all the heavens! Twelve gates!

I admit this is rather hard on sharp sectarians. If a Presbyterian is bigoted he brings his Westminster assembly catechism and he makes a gateway out of that, and he says to the world: "You go through there or stay out." If a Methodist is bigoted he plants two posts and he says: "Now, you crowd in between those two posts or stay out." Or perhaps an Episcopalian may say: "Here is a liturgy out of which I mean to make a gate; go through it or stay out." Or a Baptist may say: "Here is a water-gate; you go through that or you must stay out." And so in all our churches and in our denominations there are men who make one gate for themselves and then demand that the whole world go through it. I abhor this contractedness in religious views. O, small-souled man, when did God give you the contract for making gates? I tell you plainly I will not go in that gate. I will go in at any one of the twelve gates I choose. Here is a man who says: "I can more easily and more closely approach God through a prayer-book." I say: "My brother, then use the prayer-book." Here is a man who says: "I believe there is only one mode of baptism, and that is immersion. Then I say: 'Let me plunge you.' Anyhow, I say: Away with the gate of rough panel and rotten posts and rusted latch, when there are twelve gates and

THEY ARE TWELVE PEARLS. The fact is that a great many of the churches in this day are being doctrined to death. They have been trying to find out all about God's decrees, and they want to know who are elected to be saved and who are reprobated to be damned, and they are keeping on discussing that subject when there are millions of souls who need to have the truth put straight at them. They're counting the number of teeth in the jawbone with which Samson slew the Philistines. They sit on the beach and see a vessel going to pieces in the offing, and instead of getting into a boat and pulling away for the wreck, they sit discussing the different styles of oarlocks. God intended us to know some things, and intended us not to know others. I have heard scores of sermons explanatory of God's decrees, but came away more perplexed than when I went. The only result of such discussion is a great fog. Here are two truths which are to conquer the world: Man, a sinner—Christ, a savior. Any man who adopts these two theories in his religious belief shall have his right hand in warm grip of Christian brotherhood.

A man comes down to a river in time of freshet. He wants to get across. He has to swim. What does he do? The first thing is to put off his heavy apparel and drop everything he has in his hands. He must go empty-handed if he is going to the other bank. And I tell you, when we have come down to the river of death and find it swift and raging, we will have to put off all our sectarianism and lay down our cambric creed, and, empty-handed, put out for the other shore. "What," say you, "would you resolve all the Christian church into one kind of church? Would you make all Christendom worship in the same way, by the same forms?" Oh, no, you might as well decide that all people shall eat the same kind of food without reference to appetites, or wear the same kind of apparel without reference to the shape of their body. Your country, your temperament, your surroundings, will decide whether you go to this or that church, and adopt this or that polity. One church will best get one man to heaven, and another church another man. I do not care which one of the gates you go through, if you only go through one of the twelve gates which Jesus lifted.

Looking out at the one hundred and forty and four thousand and you cannot tell at what gate they came in. One Lord. One faith. One baptism. One glassy sea. One doxology. One triumph.

One heaven. "Why, Luther, how did you get in?" "I came through the third gate." "Cranmer, how did you get in?" "I came through the eighth gate." "Adamirum Judson, how did you get through?" "I came through the seventh gate." "High McCall, the martyr, how did you get through?" "I came through the twelfth gate." Glory to God.

TWELVE GATES, BUT ONE HEAVEN! In the third place, notice the points of the compass towards which these gates look. They are not on one side, or on two sides, or on three sides, but on four sides. This is no fancy of mine, but a distinct announcement. On the north three gates, on the south three gates, on the east three gates, on the west three gates. What does that mean? Why, it means that all nationalities are included, and it does not make any difference from what quarter of the earth a man comes up; if his heart is right there is a gate open before him. On the north, three gates. That means mercy for Lapland and Siberia and Norway and Sweden. On the south, three gates. That means pardon for Hindoostan and Algiers and Ethiopia. On the east, three gates. That means salvation for China and Japan and Borneo. On the west, three gates. That means redemption for America. It does not make any difference how dark-skinned or how pale-faced men may be, they will all be a gate right before them. Those plucked bacross Russian snows behind reindeer. From Mexican plateaus, from Roman campagna, from Chinese tea field, from Holland dyke, from Scotch highlands, they come, they come. Heaven is not a monopoly for a few precious souls. It is not a Windsor Castle for royal families. It is not a small town with small population, but John saw it, and noticed that an angel was measuring it, and he measured it this way, and then he measured it that, and whichever way he measured it, it was fifteen hundred miles; so that Babylon and Thebes, and Tyre and Nineveh, and St. Petersburg and Canton, and Pekin and Paris, and London and New York, and all the dead cities of the past and all the living cities of the present, added together, would not equal the census of that great metropolis.

Walking along the street, you can, by the contour of the dress or of the face, guess where a man came from. You say: "That is a Frenchman; that is a Norwegian; that is an American." But the gates that gather in the righteous will bring them in irrespective of nationality. Foreigners sometimes get homesick. Some of the tenderest and most pathetic stories have been told of those who left their native clime and longed for it until they died. But the Swiss coming to the high residence of heaven will not long any more for the Alps, standing in the eternal hills. The Russian will not long any more for the luxuriant harvest-fields he left, now that he hears the hum and rustle of the harvests of everlasting light. The royal ones from earth will not long to go back again to the earthly court, now that they stand in the palaces of the sun. Those who once lived amid the groves of spice and oranges will not long to return, now that they stand under the trees of life that bear

TWELVE MANNER OF FRUIT. While I speak an ever-increasing throng is passing through the gates. They are going up from Senegambia, from Patagonia, from Madras, from Hong Kong. "What," say you, "do you introduce all the heathen into glory?" I tell you the fact is, that the majority of the people in those climes die in infancy and the infants all go straight into eternal life, and so the vast majority of those who die in China and India, the vast majority of those who die in Africa, go straight into the skies—they die in infancy. One hundred and sixty generations have been born since the world was created, and so I estimate that there must be fifteen thousand million children in glory. If at a concert two thousand children sing, your soul is raptured within you. O, the transport, when fifteen thousand million little ones stand up in white before the throne of God, their chanting drawing out all the stupendous harmonies of Düsseldorf and Leipzig and Boston! Pour in through the twelve gates, O ye redeemed banner lifted, rank after rank, saved battalion after saved battalion, until all the city of God shall bear the tramp, tramp. Crowd all the twelve gates. Room yet. Room on the thrones. Room in the mansions. Room on the river bank. Let the trumpet of invitation be sounded until all earth's mountains hear the shrill blast and the glens echo it. Let missionaries tell it in pagoda and colporteurs sound it across the Western prairies. Shout it to the Laplander on his swift sled; hullo it to the Bedouin careering across the desert. News! news! A glorious heaven and twelve gates to get into it! Hear it, O you thin-blooded nations of eternal winter, on the north three gates. Hear it, O you bronzed inhabitants panting under equatorial heat, on the south three gates.

But I notice when John saw these gates they were open—wide open. They will not always be so. After awhile heaven will have gathered up all the intended population, and the children of God will have come home. Every crown taken. Every harp struck. Every throne mounted. All the glories of the universe harvested in the great garner. And heaven being made up, of course the gates will be shut. Austria in, and the first gate shut. Russia in, and the second gate shut. Italy in, and the third gate shut. Egypt in, and the fourth gate shut. Spain in, and the fifth gate shut. France in, and the sixth gate shut. England in, and the seventh gate shut. Norway in, and the eighth gate shut. Switzerland in, and the ninth gate shut. Hindostan in, and the tenth gate shut. Siberia in, and the eleventh gate shut. All the gates are closed but one. Now, let America go in with all the islands of the sea and all the other nations that have called on God. The captives all freed. The harlots all gathered. The nations all saved. The flashing splendor of this last pearl begins to move on its hinges. Let two mighty angels put their shoulders to the gate and heave it to with a very clang. "This done! It thunders!"

THE TWELFTH GATE SHUT! Once more, I want to show you the gate-keeper. There is one angel at each one of these gates. You say that is right. Of course it is. You know that no earthly palace, or castle, or fortress would be safe without a sentry pacing on and down by night and by day; and if there were no defenses before heaven, and the doors set wide open with no one to guard them, all the vicious of earth would go up after a while, and all the abandoned of hell would go up after a while, and heaven, instead of being a world of light, and joy, and peace, and blessedness, would be a world of darkness and horror. So I am glad to tell you that while these gates stand open to let a great multitude in, there are twelve angels to keep some people out. Robbers cannot go through there, nor Hildebrand, nor Nero, nor any of the de-

bauched of earth who have not repented of their wickedness. If one of these nefarious men who despised God should come to the gate one of the keepers would put his hand on his shoulder and push him into outer darkness. There is no place in that land for thieves, and liars, and whoremongers, and defrauders, and all those who disgraced their race and fought against their God. If a miser should get in there, he would pull up the golden pavement. If a house-breaker should get in there, he would set fire to the mansion. If a libertine should get in there, he would whipe his abominations standing on the white sand of the sea-beach. Only those who are blood-washed and prayer-lipped will get through. O, my brother, if you should at last come up to one of the gates and try to get through, and you had not a pass written by the crushed hand of the Son of God, the gate-keeper would, with one glance, wither you forever.

There will be a password at the gate of heaven. Do you know what that password is? Here comes a crowd of souls up to the gate and they say: "Let me in. I was very useful on earth. I endowed colleges. I built churches and was famous for my charities, and having done so many wonderful things for the world, now I come up to get my reward." A voice from within says: "I never knew you." Another great crowd comes up and they try to get through. They say: "We were highly honorable on earth and the earth bowed very lowly before us. We were honored on earth and now we come to get our honors in heaven." A voice from within says: "I never knew you." Another crowd advances and says: "We were very moral people on earth, very moral indeed, and we came up to get appropriate recognition." A voice answers: "I never knew you."

After awhile I see another throng approach the gate, and one seems to be spokesman for all the rest, although their voices ever and anon cry: "Amen! Amen!" This one stands at the gate and says: "Let me in. I was a wanderer from God. I deserve to die. I have come up to this place, not because I deserve it, but because I have heard that there is a saving power in the blood of Jesus." The gate-keeper says: "That is the password, Jesus! Jesus!" and they press in and they surround the throne, and the cry is: "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Oh, when heaven is all done and the troops of God shout, "The castle taken," how grand it will be if you and I are among them! Blessed are all they who enter it through the gates into the city.

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