"THE ANGELS OF THE GRASS."

DR. TALMAGE'S EASTER MORNING DISCOURSE.

Easter Churches First Did Christ Embrace.

The Lily the Queen of Bible Flowers.

The Rose May Have a Wider Empire, But the Lily Designed in the Time of Esther, in the Time of Solomon, in the Time of Christ.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., April 1.—The platform and galleries of the Tabernacle were this morning profusely decorated with flowers. On the previous evening the church had been open to prepare the decorations, for which the congregation had been invited to bring flowers.

The immense audience room is not large enough to contain the people on ordinary occasions; it must be left to the imagination to suggest the throngs, both inside and outside the church, on this great festal day.

The Rev. DeWitt Talmage, D. D., took for his text Luke 12. 28: "If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you." He said:

The lily is the queen of Bible flowers. The rose may have climbed higher than in modern times, and won it; but the rose originally had only five petals. It was under the long-continued and intense gaze of the world that the rose blushed into its present beauty. In the Bible train, oasis and bysaer and frankincense and myrrh and spikenard and camphire and the rose follow the lily. Fourteen times in the Bible is the lily mentioned: only twice the rose. The rose may now have wider empire, but the lily reigned in the time of Esther, in the time of Solomon, in the time of Christ.

Cæsar had his throne on the hills. The lily had her throne in the valley. When the greatest sermon that was ever preached on earth was only a few words long—that a lily. The Bedford Tinkerer, John Bunyan, entered the House of the Interpreter, and there saw a cluster of flowers, and was told to "consider the lilies."

We may study or reject science at our own option. It is so with astronomy. It is so with chemistry. It is so with geology. But with the plays eology, it is so with geology, but the science of botany Christ commands us to study when He says: "Consider the lilies." Measure them from root to tiped petal. Inhale their fragrance. Notice how gracefully their poise. Hear the whisper of the white lips of the Eastern and of the red lips of the American lily.

Belonging to this royal family of lilies is the lily of the Nile, the Japan lily, the Lake Washington of the Sierras, the Golden Band lily, the Easter lily of Nepaul, the tiger lily, the African lily from the Cape of Good Hope. All these lilies have the royal blood in their veins. But I take the lilies of my text this morning as typical of all flowers, and this Easter day, garanded with all this opulence of floral beauty, seems to address us, saying: "Consider the lilies." The pink fuchsia, consider the geranium, consider the lilac, consider the hyacinth, consider the heliotrope consider the oleanders. With differential and grateful and intelligent eye worship God, consider these flowers. Not an insipid sentimentalism, or sophomoric vaporing, but for grant and practical and everyday, and, if need be, homely uses, consider them.

The flowers are the angels of the grass. They all have voices. When the clouds speak, they thunder, when the whirlwinds speak, they tear; when the cataracts speak, they roar; but when the flowers speak, they are in a whisper which we have to interpret their message. What have you to say, O angels of the grass, to this worshipful multitude?

This morning I mean to discuss what flowers are good for. That is why they grow. What are flowers good for?

I. I remark, in the first place, they are good for lessons of God's providential care. That was Christ's first use of them when flowers seem to address us in our hearing. "God will give you support and food. We have no wheat fields and no barns, but He who with which to weave his raiment which to harvest, which to reap, which to bind, which to water; but God shakes out that with the dew, and God feeds it with the warmth of the sunshine, and God has arganelled his with more than Solomonic regality. We are prophetesses of safety and of hardiness. If so clothed us, the grass of the field, will He not much more clothe you? O ye of little faith!"

Men and women of worldly anxieties, take this message home with you. How long has God taken care of your Quarter of the journey of life? half the journey? three quarters the journey of life? Can you not trust him the rest of the way? God has never promise you anything like that which the Roman emperor had on his table at a single expense—five hundred nightingales' tongues; but He has promised you the necessaries, not the luxuries—bread, not cake. If God so luxuriously clothes the grass of the field, will He not provide for you, his living and immortal children? He will.

No wonder Martin Luther always had a flower on his writing-desk for inspiration. Through the cracks of the pavement in front of grew up to cheer Piercon. Mungo Park, the great traveler and explorer, in Africa was saved by a flower. He sank down in the desert to die, but seeing a flower out by it, suggested God's merciful care, and he got up with new courage and traveled on to safety. I said the flowers are the sermons of the grass. I add now they are the preachers of the year.

II. I remark on sitting out the question: What are flowers good for? I respond, they are good for bridal day. The bride must have them on her brow, and she must have them in her hand. The marriage altar must be covered with them. A wedding without flowers would be as inappropriate as a wedding without music. At such a time I hear the voice of congratulation and prophecy of good. So much of the journey of life is crowded on the two thrones, we ought to cover the beginning with orange blossoms.

Flowers are appropriate on such occasions, for in a short time out of a hundred cases it is the very best time that could have been selected. The world may criticise and pronounce it an hepatitudes and may lift its eyebrows in surprise and think it might suggest something better; but the God who sees the twenty, forty, fifty years of wedded life before their long journey arranges all for the best. So that flowers, in almost all cases, are appropriate for the marriage day. The divergences of disposition will become correspondences, recriminations will become pendence, frivolity will be turned practically.

There has been many an aged widowed soul who has carefully locked bureau, and in the bureau a trunk, and in the trunk a box, paper, and in the folded paper a half-blown rose, elegant, fragrant, discolored, withered, pressed. She put it there forty or fifty years ago. On the anniversary day of her wedding she will go to the bureau, she will lift the box, she will unfold the paper, and to her eyes will be exposed the half-blown bud, and the deep colories of the past will rush upon her, and a tear will drop upon the flower, and suddenly it is transformed a... there is a stir in the dust of the ambier, and it stands out, and it is full of life, and it begins to tremble in the sunshine, up the stairway, and the dead music of a half century ago comes throbbing through the air; and vanished faces reappear, and right hands are joined, and a mazy dance proceeds. "I will for better or for worse," are the wedding words spoken a half century ago at the departing crowd; but a sigh on that silver anniversary day ends the scene. Under the deepfetched breath, the altar, the flowers, the congratulating group are scattered, and there is a wrinkled hand and a wrinkled hand instead of a faded rosebud, which is put into the paper, and then into the box, and then carefully placed in the bureau, and with a shut, the dead child is dead, and the scene is over.

Ah, my friends, let the loot perfumes of the flowers on your wedding day be false promotion. Let them be the earth either's fault, but let the most of each other's excellences. Above all do not let the flowers of your love remember the vows, the ring on the third finger of the left hand, and the benediction of the calls illic.

III. If you insist on asking me the question: What are flowers good for? I answer that they are good to honor and comfort the obsequies. We weep over the casket, flowers for the bearer, flowers for the sexton.

What a contrast between a graveyard in a country church, with the flowers once broken down and the tombstone aslant, and the neighboring cattle browsing amid the mullein stalks, and the Greenwood, Hillside, and Spring Grove morning in Greenwood, the wave of roses and lilies rolling in the front of the mounds, and then breaking into foam of sprays of white flowers all around the pillows of dust. It is the difference between sleeping under a tattered blanket and under an embroidered blanket. We want Old Mortality with his chisel to go through all the graveyards of Christendom, and while he carves the head in one hand, we want Old Mortality to have some flowers to be put in the other hand.

"Oh," you say, "the dead don't know; it makes no difference to them." I think you are mistaken. There are not so many steamers and rail trains coming to any city in the world that are conveys coming from heaven to earth; and if there be instantaneous and constant communication between this world and the better world, do you not suppose your departed friends know what you do with their bodies? Why has God planted "golden rod" and wild flowers in the forest and fields? There is no human eye or ear to see them! He planted them for the heavenly host to have to look at and admire, and when invited, the intelligences come to look at the wild flowers of the woods and the tablelands, will they not make excursion and see the flowers which you have planted in affectionate remembrance of them?

When I am dead, I would like to have a handful of violets—anyone could pluck them out of the grass, or some one could lift from the edge of the pond a water-lily—nothing rarely expensive or insane display, as sometimes at funeral rites where the display takes the bread from the children's mouths, and the clothes from their backs, or something from the great democracy of flowers. Rather the humble, insignificant of Russian Czar, I ask some one whom I may have helped by Gospel sermon or Christian deed to bring a sprig of arbutus or handful of China asters.

It was left to modern times to spell respect for the departed and comfort for the living in pictures of floral pomp. Pillow flowers, meaning rest for the pilgrim who has got to the end of his journey. Anchor of flowers, suggesting the Christian hope which we have as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Cross of flowers, suggesting the tree on which our sins were slain.

If I had my way, I would cover up all the dreariness sleepers, whether in golden-hued caskets or pine box, whether a king's mausoleum or Potter's Field, with radiant and aromatic arborescence. The Bible says, in the midst of the garden there was a sepulchre. I wish that every sepulchre might be in the midst of a garden.

IV. If you insist on asking me the question: What are flowers good for? I say you will quote from Isaiah: "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." Or you will quote from James the Apostle: "As the flower of the grass he shall passeth away." What graphic Bible symbolism!

But the cut flowers of this Easter day will soon be dead, whatever care you take of them. Though morning and noon you pagtize them in the name of the shower, the baptism will not long delay the saving ordinance. They have been fatally wounded with the knife that cut them. They are bleeding their life away; they are dying now. The fragrance in the air is their departing and lastsing sigh.

Oh yes! flowers are almost human. Botanists tell us that flowers have sensibility, have enjoyment, they say, they drink. They are sensitive. Here is a flower that is afraid of the cold sleep, they wake. Here is a flower that will have their ancestors and their descendants, their birth, their burial, their crash, their grave. The zephyrs rocks the one, and the storm rocks the trunk for the other. The same slips must leave its seed, the lily must leave its bulb, the rose must leave its diamond necklace of morning dew. The flowers must die, we come up, we recover, we speak and shout, we are the flowers of God.

DO THE NEXT THING.

From an old English Parsonage
Down by the sea,
There came in the twilight
A mes age to me:
Its words were few and simple,
Deeply engraven,
Hath, as it seems to me,
Its lesson for all.

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Change seldom comes in a day.
O Thou who wouldst
Flowers are often small nights; submission of faith, who would have the fairest and purest queen, the lily and the modern queen, the rose, when in bloom? Into the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley, and the bread of the one, bunches like the other. Like unto a people's life, the lives in families. Their children are