# SUNDAY'S SERMON

## TALMAGE'S DISCOURSE.

## STERLING DISCOURSE.

**Subject: "The Lightning of the Sea."**

TEXT: *"He maketh a path to shine after him."*—Job xli., 32.

If for the next thousand years ministers of religion should preach from this Bible, there will yet be texts unexpounded and unexplained and unappreciated. What little has been said concerning this chapter in Job from which my text is taken bears on the controversy as to what was really the leviathan than described as disturbing the sea. What creature it was I know not. Some say it was a whale. Some say it was a crocodile. My own opinion is it was a sea monster now extinct. No creature now floating in Mediterranean or Atlantic waters corresponds to Job's description.

What most interests me is that as it moved on through the deep it left the waters flashing and resplendent. In the words of the text, "He maketh a path to shine after him." What was that illumined path? It was phosphorescence. You find it in the wake of a ship in the night, especially after rough weather. Phosphorescence is the lightning of the sea. That this figure of speech is correct in describing its appearance I am certified by an incident. After crossing the Atlantic the first time and writing from Basle, Switzerland, to an American magazine an account of my voyage, in which nothing more fascinated me than the phosphorescence in the ship's wake, I called it the lightning of the sea. Returning to my hotel I found a book of John Ruskin, and the first sentence my eyes fell upon was his description of phosphorescence, in which he called it "the lightning of the sea."

Down to the postoffice I hastened to get the manuscript, and with great labor and some expense got possession of the magazine article and put quotation marks around that one sentence, although it was as original with me as with John Ruskin. I suppose that nine-tenths of you living so near the seacoast have watched this marine appearance called phosphorescence, and I hope that the other one-tenth may some day be so happy as to witness it. It is the waves of the sea diamonded; it is the inflorescence of the billows; the waves of the sea crimsoned as was the deep after the sea fight of Lepanto; the waves of the sea on fire.

There are times when from horizon to horizon the entire ocean seems in conflagration with this strange splendor as it chances every moment to tamer or more dazzling color on all sides of you. You sit looking over the taffrail of the yacht or ocean steamer, watching and waiting to see what new thing the God of beauty will do with the Atlantic. It is the ocean in transfiguration; it is the marine world casting its garments of glory in the pathway of the Almighty as He walks the deep; it is an inverted firmament with all its stars gone down with it. No picture can present it, for photographer's camera cannot be successfully trained to catch it, and before it the hand of the painter drops its pencil, overawed and powerless.

This phosphorescence is the appearance of myriads of the animal kingdom rising, falling, playing, flashing, living, dying. These luminous animalcules for nearly 150 years have been the study of naturalists and the fascination and solemnization of all who have brain enough to think. Now, God, who puts in His Bible nothing trivial or useless, calls the attention of Job, the greatest scientist of his day, to this phosphorescence, and as the leviathan of the deep sweeps past points out the fact that "he maketh a path to shine after him."

Is that true of us now, and will it be true of us when we have gone? Will there be subsequent light or darkness? Will there be a trial of gloom or good cheer? Can any one between now and the next 100 years say of us truthfully as the text says of the leviathan of the deep, "He maketh a path to shine after him?" For we are moving on. While we live in the same house, and transact business in the same store, and write on the same table, and chisel in the same studio, and thrash in the same barn, and worship in the same church, we are in motion and are in many respects moving on, and we are not where we were ten years ago, nor where we will be ten years hence. Moving on!

Look at the family record, or the almanac, or into the mirror, and see if any one of you is where you were. All in motion. Other feet may trip and stumble and halt, but the feet of not one moment for the last sixty centuries has tripped or stumbled or halted. Moving on! Society moving on! The world moving on! Heaven moving on! The universe moving on! Time moving on! Eternity moving on! Therefore it is absurd to think that we ourselves can stop, as we must move with all the rest. Are we like the creature of the text, making our path to shine after us? It may be a peculiar question, but my text suggests it.

What influence will we leave in this world after we have gone through it? "None," answer hundreds of voices; "we are not one of the immortals. Fifty years after we are out of the world it will be as though we never inhabited it." You are wrong in saying that. I pass down through this audience and up through these galleries, and I am looking for some one whom I cannot find.

I am looking for one who will have no influence in this world 100 years from now. But I have found the man who has the least influence, and I inquire into his history, and I find that by a yes or a no he decided some one's eternity. In time of temptation he gave an affirmative or a negative to some temptation which another, hearing of, was induced to decide in the same way.

Clear on the other side of the next million years may be the first you hear of the long reaching influence of that yes or no, but hear of it you will. Will that father make a path to shine after him? Will that mother make a path to shine after her? You will be walking along these streets or along that country road 200 years from now in the character of your descendants. They will be affected by your courage or your cowardice, your purity or your depravity, your holiness or your sin. You will make the path to shine after you or blacken after you.

Why should they point out to us on some mountain two rivulets, one of which passes down into the rivers which pour out into the Pacific Ocean, and the other rivulet flowing down into the rivers which pass out into the Atlantic Ocean? Every man, every woman, stands at a point where words uttered, or deeds done, or prayers offered, decide opposite destinies and opposite eternities. We see a man planting a tree, and treading sod on either side of it, and watering it in dry weather, and taking a great care in its culture, and he never plucks any fruits from its branches. But his children will. We are all planting trees that will yield fruit hundreds of years after we are dead—orchards of golden fruit or groves of deadly upas.

I am so fascinated with the phosphorescence in the track of a ship that I have sometimes watched for a long while and have seen nothing on the face of the deep but blackness. The mouth of watery chasms that looked like gaping jaws of hell. Not a spark as big as a firefly; not a white scroll of foam; not a taper to illuminate the ebony pavements of dead ships; darkness that could be felt. Suddenly there appears in the distance a faint light, like a star dropped into the sea. It comes nearer and nearer, and it flashes and it blazes and it burns, and it is a path of fire, and it is a path of glory, and it is a path of splendor, and it is a path of lightning, and it is a path of God, and it is a path to shine after him.

Now, what is the cause of this phosphorescence? Why, it is the presence of myriads of animalcules, and they are the creatures of God, and they are the messengers of God, and they are the illustrations of God, and they are the lightning of God. Now, I am going to show you that the path of God's providence and the path of God's grace are illuminated with the same splendor, and that the path of God's providence and the path of God's grace are illuminated with the same splendor, and that the path of God's providence and the path of God's grace are illuminated with the same splendor, and