NDAY'S SERMON.

BY DR. T. DEWITT TALMAGE. STERLING DISCOURSES.

Subject. "Fairest of the Fair."

TEXT. "He is altogether lovely."—Solo- ...g Songs v., 16.

The human race has during centuries been ...everior. For awhile it deflected and de- ...erated, and from all I can read for ages ...e whole tendency was toward barbarism, ...under the ever-widening and deepening ...ence of Christianity the tendency is now ...e upward direction. The physical ap- ...rance of the human race is seventy-five ...cent. more attractive than in the six- ...th, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. ...the pictures on canvas and the faces and ...es in sculpture of those who were consid- ...ed the grandest looking men and the attrac- ...e women of 300 years ago I conclude the ...eriority of the men and women of our ...n. Such looking people of the past cen- ...ies as painting and sculpture have pre- ...ved as fine specimens of beauty and dig- ...ty would be in our time considered deform- ...y and repulsiveness complete. The fact ...at many men and women in antediluvian ...mes were eight and ten feet high tended to ...ard the human race obnoxious rather than ...ractive. Such portable mountains of hu- ...anity. Such portable mountains of hu- ...an flesh did not add to the charms of the ...orld.

But in no climate and in no age did there ever appear any one who in physical at- ...ractiveness could be compared to Him ...whom my text celebrates thousands of years ...before He put His infantile foot on the hill ...ear Bethlehem. He was and is altogether ...ovely. The physical appearance of Christ ...is for the most part, an artistic guess. Some ...writers declare Him to have been a brunette ...of dark complexioned. St. John, of Damas- ...cus, writing 1100 years ago, and so much ...nearer than ourselves to the time of Christ, ...and hence with more likelihood of accurate ...information, represents Him with beard black, ...full of curly eyebrows joined together, and ...yellow complexion, and long fingers like ...a mother." An author, writing 1500 years ...ago, represents Christ as a blond: "His hair ...is the color of wine and golden at the root, ...bright and without luster, but from the ...level of the ears, curling and glossy, and ...parted down the center after the fashion of ...the Nazarenes. His forehead is even and ...smooth. His face without blemish and en- ...livened by a tempered bloom, His counten- ...ance ingenious and kind. Nose and mouth ...in no way faulty. His beard is full, of ...the same color as His hair and forked in ...shape; His eyes blue and extremely brill- ...iant."

My opinion is, it was a Jewish face. His ...mother was a Jewess, and there is no wo- ...manhood on earth more beautiful than Jew- ...ish womanhood. Alas that He lived so long ...before the daguerrean and photographic ...art! If we were born, or we might have known His ...very features. I know that sculpture and ...painting were born long before Christ, and ...we might have transferred from olden ...times to our times the forehead, the nostril, ...the eye, the lips of our Lord.

Phidias, the sculptor, put down his chisel ...in the fifteenth century before Christ came. ...Why did not some one take up that chisel ...and give us the side face or full face of our ...Lord? Polygnotis, the painter, put down ...his pencil 400 years before Christ. Why did ...not some one take it up and give us at least ...a face of our Lord—the eye, that sovereign ...of the face! Dionysius, the literary artist ...saw at Heliopolis, Egypt, the strange ...eclipse of the heavens at the time of ...Christ's crucifixion near Jerusalem, and not ...only saying what it was, but describing it as a ...stellar eclipse of the sun, and saying, ...either the Deity suffers or sympathizes ...with some sufferer," that Dionysius might ...have put his pen to the work and drawn the ...portrait of our Lord. But, no; the fine arts ...were busy perpetuating the form and ap- ...pearance of the world's favorites only, and ...not the form and appearance of the peasantry, ...among whom Christ appeared.

It was not until the fifteenth century, or ...still more than 1400 years after Christ, that ...talented painters attempted by pencil to give ...the idea of Christ's face. The pictures ...were at that time were so offensive that the ...Council at Constantinople forbade their ex- ...hibition. But Leonardo da Vinci, in the fif- ...teenth century, presented Christ's face on ...canvases, yet the one was a repulsive ...and the other an effeminate face. Raph- ...el's face of Christ is a weak face. Albert ...Durer's face of Christ was a savage face. ...Guido's face of Christ is an expressionless ...face. The mightiest artists, either with pen- ...cil or chisel, have made signal failure in at- ...tempting to give the forehead, the cheek, ...the eyes, the nostril, the mouth of our blessed ...Lord.

But about His face I can tell you something ...above and beyond controversy. I am sure ...it was a soulful face. The face is only the ...dial plate of the soul. It was impossible that ...the opposition like Christ's should not have ...demonstrated itself in His physiognomy. ...Sadness as an occasional impulse may give ...illumination to the features, but kindness ...as a lifelong, dominant habit will pro luce ...cheerfulness of countenance as certainly as ...the shining of the sun produces flowers. ...Those are afraid of a scowling or hard- ...visaged man. They cry out if he proposes to ...kiss them. If he try to caress them, he ...gives a slap rather than a kiss. All mothers ...know how hard it is to get their children to ...go to a man or woman of forbidding appear- ...ance. But no sooner did Christ appear in ...the domestic group than there was an in- ...stant excitement and the youngsters began ...to struggle to get out of their mothers' arms. ...Mothers could not hold the children back. ...Get back with those children!" scolded ...some of the disciples. Perhaps the little ones ...must have been playing in the dirt, and their ...faces may not have been clean, or they may ...not have been well clad, or the disciples may ...have thought Christ's religion was a religion ...only for big folks. But Christ made the ...whole excitement still livelier by His ex- ...pressed fondness for children better than grown ...people, declaring, "Except ye become as a ...little child ye cannot enter into the kingdom ...of heaven."

Now for those people who do not like chil- ...dren. They had better stay out of heaven, ...for the place is full of them. That, I think, ...is the reason why the vast majority of the ...children die in infancy. Christ is so ...fond of children that He takes them to Him- ...self before the world has time to despoil and ...ruin them, and so they are now at the ...right hand of the palace and on the doorsteps ...playing on the green. Sometimes ...Matthew or Mark or Luke tells a story of ...Christ and only one tells it, but Matthew, ...Mark and Luke all join in that picture of ...Christ girdled by children, and I know by ...what occurred at that time that Christ had a ...full share of geniality.

Why was Christ altogether lovely in ...His manner, but lovely in His habits. I ...know without being told, that the Lord who ...made the rivers and lakes and oceans was ...beautiful in His appearance. He disliked the ...dirt of leprosy not only because it was ...loathsome, but because it was not clean, and ...the words were, "I will, ...be thou clean." Himself ...[illegible] ...He delighted ...[illegible] ...when only ...[illegible]

...the Master," and Nicodemus, the ...[illegible] ...ruler, "How are we ...[illegible] ...questions to those who failed among other things, He says, "Wash thy face," and to a blind man whom He was doctoring, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," and He Himself actually washed His disciples' feet. I suppose not only to demonstrate His own humility, but probably their feet needed to be washed.

The fact is, the Lord was a great friend of water. I know that from the fact that most of the world is water. But when I find Christ in such constant commendation of water I know He was personally neat, although He mingled much among very rough populations and took such long journeys on dusty highways. He wore His hair long, according to the custom of His land and time, but neither trouble nor old age had thinned or injured His locks, which were never worn shaggy or unkempt. Yea, all His habits of personal appearance were lovely.

Sobriety was also an established habit of His life. In addition to the water, He drank the juice of the grape. When at a wedding party this beverage gave out. He made gallons on gallons of grape juice, but it was as unlike what the world makes in our time as health is different from disease and as calm pulses are different from the paroxysms of delirium tremens. There was no strychnine in that beverage or logwood or nux vomica. The tipplers and the sots who now quote the winemaking in Cana of Galilee as an excuse for the fiery and damning beverages of the nineteenth century forget that the wine at the New Testament wedding had two characteristics—the one that the Lord made it and the other that it was made out of water. Buy all you can of that kind and drink it at least three times a day and send a barrel of it round to my cellar.

You cannot make me believe that the blessed Christ who went up and down healing the sick would create for man that style of drink which is the cause of disease more than all other causes combined, or that He who calmed the maniacs into their right mind would create that style of drink which does more than anything else to fill insane asylums, or that He who was so helpful to the poor would make a style of drink that crowds the earth with pauperism, or that He who came to save the nations from sin would create a liquor that is the source of most of the crime that now stuffs the penitentiaries. A lovely sobriety was written all over His face, from the hair line of the forehead to the bottom of the bearded chin.

Domesticity was also His habit. Though too poor to have a home of His own, He went out to spend the night at Bethany, two or three miles' walk from Jerusalem, and over a rough and hilly road that made it equal to six or seven ordinary miles, every morning and night going to and fro. I would rather walk from here to Central Park, or walk from Edinburgh to Arthur's Seat, or in London clear around Hyde Park, than to walk that road that Christ walked twice a day from Jerusalem to Bethany. But He liked the quietude of home life, and He was lovely in His domesticity.

How He enjoyed handing over the resurrected girl to her father, and reconstructing homesteads which disease or death was breaking up! As the song, "Home, Sweet Home," was written by a man who at that time had no home, so I think the homeless- ness of Christ added to His appreciation of domesticity.

Furthermore, He was lovely in His sympathies. Now, dropsy is a most distressful complaint. It inflames and swells and tortures any limb or physical organ it touches. As soon as a case of that kind is submitted to Christ, He, without any use of diaphoretics, commands its cure. And what an eye doctor He was for opening the long closed gates of sight to the blue of the sky, and the yellow of the flower and the emerald of the grass! What a Christ He was for cooling fevers without so much as a spoonful of febrifuge, and straightening crooked backs without any pang of surgery, and standing whole choirs of music along the silent galleries of a deaf ear, and giving healthful nervous system to cataleptics! Sympathy! He did not give them stoical advice or philosophize about the science of grief. He sat down and cried for them.

It is spoken of as the shortest verse in the Bible, but to me it is about the longest and grandest, "Jesus wept." Ah, many of us know the meaning of that! When we were in great trouble, some one came in with voluble consolation and quoted the Scripture in a sort of heartless way and did not help us at all. But after awhile some one else came in, and without saying a word sat down and burst into a flood of tears at the sight of our woe, and somehow it helped us right away. "Jesus wept." You see, it was a deeply attached household, that of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. The father and mother were dead, and the girls depended on their brother. Lazarus had said to them: "Now, Mary, now, Martha, stop your worrying. I will take care of you. I will be to you both father and mother. My arm is strong. Girls, you can depend on me!"

But now Lazarus was sick—yea, Lazarus was dead. All broken up, the sisters sit disconsolate, and there is a knock at the door. "Come in," says Martha. "Come in," says Mary. Christ entered, and He just broke down. It was too much for Him. He had been so often and so kindly entertained in that home before sickness and death desolated it that He choked up and sobbed aloud, and the tears trickled down the sad face of the sympathetic Christ. "Jesus wept." Why do you not try that mode of helping. You say, "I am a man of few words," or "I am a woman of few words." Why, your dear soul, words are not necessary. Imitate your Lord and go to those afflicted homes and cry with them.

John Murphy! Well, you did not know him. Once, when I was in great bereavement, he came to my house. Kind ministers of the gospel had come and talked beautifully and prayed with us and did all they could to console. But John Murphy, one of the best friends I ever had, a big souled, glorious Irishman, came in and looked into my face, put out his broad, strong hand and said not a word, but sat down and cried with us. I am not enough of a philosopher to say how it was or why it was, but somehow from door to door and from floor to ceiling the room was filled with an all pervading comfort. "Jesus wept.

I think that is what makes Christ such a popular Christ. There are so many who want sympathy. Miss Fiske, the famous Nestorian missionary, was in the chapel one day talking to the heathen, and she was in very poor health and so weak she sat upon a mat while she talked and felt the need of something to lean against, when she felt a woman's form at her back and heard a woman's voice saying, "Lean on me." She leaned a little, but did not want to be too cumbersome, when the woman's voice said, "Lean hard; if you love me, lean hard."

And that makes Christ so lovely. He wants all the sick and troubled and weary to lean against Him, and He says, "Lean hard; if you love Me, lean hard." Aye, He is close by with His sympathetic help. Hedley Vicars, the famous soldier and Christian of the Crimean war, died because when he was wounded his regiment was too far off [illegible] ...[illegible] ...[illegible] ...[