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## Our Pulpit.

## Words of Caution Against Self-Security.

SERMON PREACHED BY

REV. A. J. MOWATT

In St. Paul's Church Fredericton Sunday morning Nov. 11th 1888.

*And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*—LUKE XXI. 34-36.

The disciples had called our Lord's attention to the massive and splendid stones of which the foundations and walls of the temple were built, and with which it was adorned. Cotemporary writers tell us that some of the foundation stones of the sacred edifice were solid blocks sixty feet long, nine feet high, and some ten in thickness. To look at the pile of architecture as it towered up in its massive grandeur, and to look at the strong-walled city, with its castles and palaces, its gates and towers, around about, men felt and said that the temple and city were built to last forever, that no power on earth could overthrow Jerusalem, that no engines of war the nations could bring to bear upon it could destroy so strong, so impregnable a city. And that seems to have been the feeling of the disciples.

But the wise far-seeing Master felt differently, and He startled them with His ominous and terrible words. He told them the day was coming, and already near at hand, when those great stones, so immovable seemingly, would not be left standing one upon another, and when the whole city would be levelled with the ground, and all its power and glory clean swept away. And then He went on to tell them that the terrible event was to take place in their own day, and He gave them definite directions what to do to escape the unparalleled horror. They were not to wait until the city was in a state of siege. As soon as they learned of the approach of the invading army, they were to betake themselves to sudden and precipitous flight. If they were in the field at work, they were not to turn back for their clothes even. They were not to wait on one another, but each one was to flee and save himself as best he could. "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." And even then but one out of two would be able to make good his escape. "I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

And then in the text He cautions against self-security, and the careless ease and indulgence that beget self-security, and stand in the way of watchfulness, faithfulness, diligence, earnestness. "But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare; for so shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the earth. But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Now, my hearers, in further illustrating and applying the text, we are here cautioned in the first place, against self-security. It is a danger that lurks in every man's way, and in every relation of life, and it trips a man up and brings him down when he least suspects that there is anything wrong. It is so natural to us somehow to make ourselves believe that all is well with us when all is very far from being well.

We are sick sometimes. Disease has fastened upon us. But we do not want to believe we are sick. It is not a pleasant thought, and we cast it from us. Others can see it, but we cannot see it, for we do not want to see it. And so we live in our own wretched self-security, until suddenly some day we are prostrated and must die; whereas, if we had used timely precautions and ordinary care we might have lived and been useful for years.

We are in business perhaps, and our affairs are not in a sound state. But of course we do not like to think that, and we do not think it. We go on as we have been going on, getting farther and farther into trouble. We make ourselves self-secure. But some morning the crash comes, and our business goes all to pieces, and we are ruined, and we wake up to know when it is too late what a dangerous thing self-security is.

I find here a caution against national self-security. You see yonder the peo-

ple of Jerusalem self-secure. They are buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, living carelessly and easily, making themselves believe that all is well with them. They are trusting to their strong walls and gates. They look at the great stones of their temple, and they are not afraid of any invader. They laugh at the earnest Son of God as He goes up and down their streets telling them with tears in His eyes that doom is coming. They cannot see it, for they will not see it. But the Son of God was right, and they were wrong, and they found it out when it was too late.

And as a nation, may we not be making ourselves self-secure? We boast of our great war-ships and great guns just as the Jews of old did of the great stones of their temple. We pride ourselves in our military prowess, and call ourselves the foremost nation in the world to-day in war-making. As the lion among beasts, so is Britain among the nations. We point to our Gibaltars and Quebecs, and we laugh at the invader. We tell the nations that the sun never sets on British territory, and every breeze that blows flutters the meteor flag of Old England. Our forts and arsenals stand out on every headland, and our ships of war and commerce rock on every sea. And so we go on with our boast. But may not that boasted lion strength of ours be our weakness? All the beasts may rise against the lion because he is the lion, and then he will wish he were not the lion.

It is as a nation we are making ourselves secure behind walls of stone, plates of steel and oak planks, we are making a mistake that will prove our ruin. These things have a place as yet in national defence and greatness, too much of a place unhappily; but the true strength of a nation is the righteousness of its laws, the purity of its government, the piety and prosperity of its peoples, and the Lord of hosts in the midst. There is an invasion that comes from within, an invasion that betrays with a kiss, that steals the people's hearts, that puts suspicion to sleep and then shears away the locks of strength, that poisons the fountains of truth and puts out the eyes of right seeing; and against such an invasion, stone walls, and ironclads, and great guns, and armies of redcoats, are utterly powerless. That is the sort of invasion, it seems to me, the empire today has most to fear, an invasion of our liberties, an invasion of our blood-bought rights as a people, and the only safeguards against such an invasion are sleepless watchfulness and out-spoken faithfulness on the part of the nation's watchmen. Oh if ever the pulpits throughout the Empire should lose their power, if something else than the gospel should be preached in them, if the watchmen on Zion's walls should sleep in the night and fail to give timely warning of the enemy's stealthy approach; then alas! our greatness as a nation would depart, and our glory fade! And there is danger of it. It has taken centuries of toil and hard fighting to bring us up to what we are, but it may take less than a single century to bring us down. I have seen the glory of a summer blighted by a single night's frost, and let us be afraid of national self-security, for so soon it may blight us as a nation, fade our glory, and curse our prosperity, and there will come a sad end to us as a nation.

Again, I find here a caution against church self-security. It was that that wrecked the ancient Jewish church, that demolished the temple at Jerusalem—that more than anything else. The priests and people made themselves believe that their church, the church that God Himself had founded, would stand forever, and they made themselves quite easy about it. And as soon as priests and people began to do that, their church began to go down, its glory to fade, its light to go out, its life to die, and it went down—oh how down!

And here let us fear for our own beloved Zion, for that which ruined the ancient Jewish church will ruin ours. We belong to a church whose antiquity reaches back to the days of the apostles; a church that in the Piedmontese valleys defied the encroachments and persecutions of the Papacy, and kept burning on her altars the pure simple faith of the gospel; a church that to-day more than any other has a right to the title Catholic, for more than any other she reaches out to all lands and to all peoples with her glad helpfulness. And yet if we are satisfied with what our church is and has done, and if we settle down to a state of church self-security, the glory of our church will perish, and we will cease to be a living power in the world.

Again, I find here a caution against individual self-security. It is so easy for us all to fall into this dangerous spiritual state. We come to think after a while that we can afford to take it easier than we have been doing, that we need not go to church quite so regularly, that we need not work so hard for the church, that we need not give so much, nor be on our knees so often; and so we sleep when we should watch, and indulge when we should fast, and rejoice when we should weep, and be-

fore we know, we have fallen, and all but lost our souls.

"Take heed to yourselves," said the Master to His disciples. The secret of a nation's greatness and prosperity, and a church's life and power and growth, is for the individual members thereof to take heed to themselves, each and every one to do their own little part, to be faithful to their own trust, to do their own duty. It is because this one and that one slack off, and let things go, that great nations and strong churches go wrong, and languish and die. You keep your eye open, my hearer, to see how your neighbor does. You want in your busy meddlesome way to look after his politics, to see that he votes to suit you. And in church matters, too, you want to help him. You want him to think your way, to worship as you worship, to go to the church you go to, to kneel at the altar you kneel at, and to hold the faith you profess to hold. You call him a heretic if he does not, and think his chances of salvation are not good. But the best way to help others and to help the cause of truth, is to take heed to ourselves. Our being faithful goes a long way towards making others faithful. We are anxious about others, our children, our neighbors. We think them in the way of evil, and we talk to them, and pray for them, and agonize our souls about them; whereas, it may be, we are in their way, and we do not know it. Thus, how important for us to take heed to ourselves, lest while we preach to others we ourselves may be castaways, and lest we may be the chief hindrance in the way of others being what they ought to be.

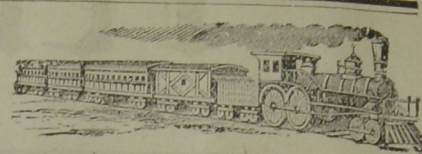
Then, in the next place, the Lord cautions us against those evil propensities and habits that tend to bring about self-security—such as, luxurious living, intemperate habits, worldliness, careless ease, slothful sleep. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."

If we enquire how it was the great nations and states and cities and families of antiquity came to go down, we will find that the cause was in themselves, their pride and indulgence. You see yonder the smoke of the prosperous cities of the plain of Jordan ascending to Heaven, and you want to know why it is. And the prophet tells us why; it was their pride, and fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, and their consequent lewdness. You ask how the great city of Tyre came to decline, and at last to perish utterly from the face of the earth, and you find it was for much the same reason. You ask again what has become of Egypt, and Babylon, and Nineveh, and Jerusalem, and Rome, and you find they have gone—gone because of their pride, and luxury, and intemperance, and idleness, and lust, and lewdness. And these same things are as ruinous to the nations and great cities and great families of to-day as in the long ago. And they are at work. The intemperance of the Anglo-Saxon peoples is appalling and ruinous. Drunkenness wallows on the streets of our cities. Luxurious living, and extravagance in dress, and abundance of idleness, and the pride that goes before a fall, and grasping greed and worldliness, and careless ease, and insatiable lust, are even now widely prevalent. As therefore it was said in other days, exultingly and triumphantly said: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen"—fallen because of her pride and drunkenness, her luxury and lust; so, is there not some fear that it may yet come to be said, and said with an exulting triumph-shout: "Britain the great is fallen, she who was so long the mistress of the sea, she upon whose wide empire the sun need never set, she who was once the glory and wonder of the world, the envy and terror of the nations—she has fallen, fallen because drunk, drunk with the excess of wine, beastly drunk?"

But it is His own people, you and me, the Lord cautions here against these evils. It is well enough to look out over the nations, and see, if we can, how it is there; but let us not forget to see how it is with ourselves. Intemperance may be creeping in upon us, and we may not know it. Every now and again we hear of pillars in the church falling into this snare of the devil. But intemperance is not the only danger we are to be on our guard against. We may not drink too much, but we may eat too much, or we may sleep too much, or we may be too fond of dress, or too much given to pleasure. Oh! in so many ways we may hurt our usefulness, wreck our souls. One man does it with his drinking, another with his eating, a third with his sleeping, a fourth with his working, a fifth with his idleness, a sixth with his care, a seventh with his carelessness, and so on, and so on.

We walk and work, we sleep and eat, amid snares, and when we think we are safest, then we are in the greatest danger. You see how it is with the silly birds. They alight, and greedily and heedlessly pick up the food that has been spread for them; but they see not the snare that has been set for them. Pre-

Continued on third page



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12.00 M.—For Fredericton Junction St. John and all points east.

3.15 P. M.—For Fredericton Junction, St. John and points East.

## ARRIVE AT FREDERICTON

9.25 A. M.—From Fredericton Junction St. John and all points East.

2.30 P. M.—From Fredericton Junction, Vanceboro, Bangor, Portland Boston, and points West, St. John St. Andrew's, St. Stephen, Houlton, Woodstock.

7.15 P. M.—Express from St. John, and intermediate points, St. Stephen, Houlton, Woodstock and points north.

## LEAVE GIBSON.

.00 A. M. Mixed for Woodstock, and points north.

## ARRIVE AT GIBSON.

5.55 P. M.—Mixed from Woodstock, and points north.

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