

was the color of the big roses Aunt Keziah kept for her jar of leaves.

"What did she mean by a wedding?" I asked, presently. "Whose wedding was it?"

"Her own," said Aunt Keziah, winding her yarn; "it was *his* boat. That's when her mind went, that night. She set a light in the belfry every night for many a year, till she got so old the parson got her out o' it and had it done. She's got some sense left, but she likes to tell the story over and over. Now go to bed, both o' you!"

But Dolly could not get awake, and I took her in my arms. Her head dropped on my shoulder, and, as I started upstairs slowly, she murmured—

"Goin' to ride up 'n' up with the doves." Resting a minute on the steps, I kissed her rosy cheek, and looked back at Aunt Keziah.

"I wish I had known about it before," I said.

"Why?" she asked.

"Before I threw stones at Captain."

"Oh, yes; the cat's all she's got now."

Aunt Keziah looked up, with the hearth-broom in her hand.

"David," she said, "you'd best remember always that when folks are cranky in this world, there's most times been a heap to make 'em so, only other folks don't think o' that part."



## A Story About Nothing

By C. A. S. Dwight

My little sister Patience and I were going to write a story together. She was to write a few sentences and then I, whereupon we would send it to some magazine. When I proposed this to her, she thought it a very admirable plan; only there was one important question to be settled at the very outset: What was the story to be about?

This puzzled us; but then we soon decided that the tale should not be about anything, for in that case it would be much more apt to be published. If it was about something, then it would be like so many other stories sent to the papers that no editor would take it; but if you couldn't tell what it was about, or if it was about nothing at all, why, of course, it wouldn't be like anything else under the sun, in which case people *might* read it for the very novelty of the thing. It would thus serve as "light reading," since evidently people could not possibly weary their minds thinking about the things in it if there was nothing at all in it to think about. That is as clear as a fog in April.

This is what I told Patience, and she seemed to think so too (but perhaps that was just because I did)—and then we tried to start ahead with the story.

"But what people shall we put in it?" said I.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Patience, "must people always be in a story, as they are in a city, or on the cars?"

"Why, I suppose so, if they want to be," I replied, confusedly.

"But if we put them in, there will be somebody in the story; and the story, by our rules, cannot be about anybody any more than about anything—besides, it started out to be about nothing."

"Well, what is nothing, Patience?"

"Why, 'nothing' is what the bees in the orchard hum about all of an August day, and the cows in the meadow low about, and the birds in the branches carol about, and at which the dogs bark stormy nights; and that Bill, the chore-boy, does all day when Gran'ther isn't looking; and that idiot Jake is always thinking about; and that I learn at school when the weather is so hot the last days of the summer term; and that the parson said to father he was going to get for marrying old Pete the blacksmith and Widow Snapall; and—and—why, nothing is what lots of things do, and some things are, and others want to be, and that father says his 'spectyulations' always come to at last."

"Then, Patience, you are a Nihilist—for that, you know, means a 'nothing-man,' who says he comes from nothing

and believes in nothing, and declares that he gets nothing and hopes for nothing, and tries to think that he is going at last to become nothing."

"I know nothing about Nihilists," said Patience; "and, besides, we agreed that we would not put any people or any things into this story, because then there would be nothing original in it—so let us talk about nothing again!"

"But what, then, can we say but just nothing at all?"

"Why," rejoined my little sister, "you might tell them where nothing comes from."

"Oh, yes! Well, I don't know, unless it comes from somewhere (I mean nowhere) beneath the zero-point in the thermometer-tube, or out from the golden treasury at the end of the rainbow, or from the waters of the desert mirage, or out of the House that Jack Built (but I forgot: he is a person, and we must not put him in this story), or perhaps from the North Pole that nobody can find, or the Fourth Dimension that nobody can think."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Patience, "all that sounds so wise, especially the last part—too wise indeed to be put into our story; and it sounds so sensible, too, that it seems as though it must be about something instead of about nothing—but it can't be if *you* said it, for you are always so queer and never sensible! At any rate, I am so tired of talking about nothing that let's stop and begin talking—"

"About something?"

"Yes!"

"Why, then we could not go on with the story."

"Well, let's finish, anyway!" cried Patience, impatiently; "for I'm afraid to try in this style not to think about anything or anybody for so long a time, since, if I do, I may always go on thinking about nothing at all, like idiot Jake, and never be good for anything, and be treated by the people whom we couldn't put into the story just as though I wasn't of any use in the world, because I had lost what they call 'the power of thought' or something; and"—with a pretty little yawn—"do let's stop, even if we have said nothing at all, and don't see any use in having said it, and can't find any place to stop—for I am so tired of this 'Story about Nothing!'"



## Sunday Afternoon

### Which, Babylon or New Jerusalem?

By Lyman Abbott

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.—Revelation xviii., 2.  
And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.—Revelation xxi., 10, 11.

It will perhaps seem to us strange at first that this inspired prophet takes a city to illustrate two such diverse aspects of human life. On the one hand, the city stands for all that is evil—a city that is full of devils, foul and corrupting; and, on the other hand, the city stands for all that is noble, full of the glory of God, and shining with a clear and brilliant light. But, if we think a little more carefully, we shall see that the city has in all ages of the world represented both these aspects. It has been the worst; and it has been the best. Every city has been a Babylon, and every city has been a New Jerusalem; and it has always been a question whether the Babylon would extirpate the New Jerusalem or the New Jerusalem would extirpate the Babylon. It has been so in the past. It is so in the present. The greatest corruption, the greatest vice, the greatest crime, are to be found in the great city. The greatest philanthropy, the greatest purity, the most aggressive and noble courage, are to be found in the great city. San Francisco, St. Louis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Brooklyn, are full of devils—and also full of the glory of God. I wish to call your attention, then, this morning to these two aspects of city

<sup>1</sup> Sermon preached at Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N. Y., Sunday morning, October 22, 1893. Reported by Henry Winans, and revised by the author.

life, to what they involve, and what they mean of duty and opportunity to you and to me. And, leaving the past, letting that dead past bury its dead, and turning our eyes and our thoughts to the present, I propose to speak of our own American cities. Let us look, then, on the one hand, at the evil influences in our great cities—at the Babylon; then at the good influences in our great cities—at the New Jerusalem.

The growth of our cities has been in the last one hundred years something marvelous. We are familiar with the stories of the West, where yesterday was a prairie and to-day is a metropolis. But it is not only in the West that this growth has been so rapid. Fifty thousand people are added every year to the city of New York. A very considerable town is planted there annually. Only a hundred years ago Brooklyn was a little village of fifteen hundred inhabitants; to-day it has, perhaps, close upon a million. This enormous increase of population is not confined even to our own land. It is said that every night three hundred and fifty people more lie down to bed in London than rose in the morning. And the growth of Glasgow has been more rapid than that of Chicago. It is not necessary to enter into any consideration of the forces that have brought about this rapid growth; it is enough to say of it that the growth has been so rapid that it is almost impossible for philanthropy or religion to keep pace with it.

The official reports tell us that seventeen thousand miles of streets were cleaned last year in the city of Brooklyn—I wonder how many miles were left uncleared! Two-thirds of the globe was encircled, according to this report, by the street-cleaner of Brooklyn. It is an enormous undertaking, and this is only one fragment of the undertaking that devolves upon the citizens of this city. A growth so rapid is always accompanied, whether it be in the tree, or man, or community, with some incidental vices. These vices have been aggravated by the fact that in our American cities this growth has been very considerably a growth of foreign populations. More than half the population in all the great Northern cities of America is either foreign-born or the children of foreign-born parents. Thus a very large proportion of those that come into our cities come without the benefit of that inheritance and that training in the school of liberty which we native-born Americans enjoy. They come here not knowing what liberty means; they come here with the natural reaction against law that leads inevitably to lawlessness. But, more than that, the city opens irresistible attractions to the most undesirable elements in the population. The poor come to the great cities under the mistaken impression that they have only to come to the city to find employment. The incompetent flock to our great cities in order that they may find somebody to give them something to do. A large proportion of men are like the horse—they are willing to pull if you put on the harness, but they cannot put on the harness for themselves. And these men that stand in the market-place, saying, We have done nothing because no man has hired us, not knowing how to find their own vocation, flock to our great cities. And along with the poor and the incompetent come the criminals, the men who wish to prey upon society; who come to our great cities because here is greatest opportunity to prey, here is the greatest wealth, and because, strange as it may appear, the cities afford the best hiding-places. It is a great deal easier for a criminal to hide in a city than in the rural districts. And so our cities are the gathering-places of the impoverished, of the incompetent, and of the criminal. Add to this the fact that, because of these great centered populations, the conditions are necessarily unsanitary. It is not easy to put a million people together and give them even air or light or water, still less cleanly houses and cleanly streets. There are wards in the city of New York where the people are packed together more closely than the corpses of any cemetery in the land. How can it be otherwise than that, thus crowded together, they lack the conditions of physical health? It has always been so. In the reign of the Stuarts the evil of crowding in London was already so great that royal edicts were issued forbidding any more men to go to the city or any more houses to be built. In

the thirteenth century the great towns of England were the centers of leprosy. In the seventeenth century London was swept by that great plague which turned the city into a vast charnel-house.

But these physical unsanitary conditions are less deleterious than the moral unsanitary conditions which go with them. In the great cities are the low theaters, the liquor-shops, the saloons, the gambling-holes, and worse places. All that ministers to the worst in man is to be found in these great cities. The men who live by tempting their fellow-men into vice, who appeal to their appetites, who appeal to their lusts, who appeal to the animal that is within them, gather; because the temptable also gather in the great cities. And add to these considerations the still further one that in our great cities the populations are segregated. There is an Italian quarter, and a Chinese quarter, and a Polish quarter, and a Jewish quarter, and an Irish quarter. Men, perhaps by a natural instinct, hedge themselves round about, and the influence which would naturally flow from one class in the community fails to ameliorate the conditions and better the character of another class—fails because the other classes in the community are walled up. Every city has its Ghetto, and the walls are not less difficult to penetrate because they are impalpable. Add to this the fact that every year those who are most active and earnest in missionary and Christian effort leave the great cities, for two, three, four, sometimes five or six months. We cannot maintain our home Sunday-school; we have difficulty in maintaining our Bethel Sunday-school and Mayflower Sunday-school.

Every church has the same difficulty. The men who carry on the churches are absent. The newspapers criticize the ministers for not staying and preaching to empty pews; but the minister is the captain of a host, and when the host has gone away, it is almost idle for the captain to stand alone in the field. The power and efficiency and missionary activity of the church is stopped for from two to four months. Add to these considerations that one of the great virtues produces great vice in our great cities. All vices are unregulated virtue. All vices are virtue out of proportion, and unbalanced by other virtues. We are living in an age of thrift; in an age of not only great increase of wealth, but of great increase of division of wealth. Not only are there a few men who have become millionaires—that is a fact with which we are all familiar—but also there are great strata of society that have begun to have the appetite for wealth. A century ago there were thousands of men in the Old World who never dreamed of having anything more than food and raiment; they were beasts of burden, and they were contented to be beasts of burden. In America this spirit of dull despair, miscalled content, is almost wholly lacking. Great classes of population that never dreamed of possessing wealth are now inspired by a desire for more money, or for the things which money will procure. They want better houses, better furniture, better clothes, better food. Is not that good? Capital! But along with that good is evil, for evil and good always go together in this world of ours. And so you will find in our great cities men thrifty beyond the point of virtue and to the point of greed, yet divided on two sides of a line. On the one side are men so prosperous that they would rather attend to their private business than to public affairs; would rather make money and pay a bigger tax than take the trouble to reduce the taxes. Their desire for prosperity makes them politically indifferent. On the other side are men who want an opportunity to make money out of the Government. Last year \$10,000,000 was expended in the city of Brooklyn by the Government; and there are a great many men in Brooklyn who would like a share in the expenditure of that \$10,000,000, partly desiring to give honest service therefor, partly desiring illegitimate and dishonest share in what they term public plunder.

And so this greed, this covetousness, this fever for larger wealth and greater prosperity, produces these two classes in the community. In the best citizens it produces political indifference, and in the other class political greed. It is the same vice at the bottom. The one sinner is the