

DIVINE SENTIMENT.

REV. DR. TALMAGE PREACHES A SERMON OF MERCY.

Condemn Not Your Neighbor For His Faults—You Have Weaknesses—Human Conduct Is Unfairly Criticized—The Golden Rule.

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WASHINGTON, March 27.—If the spirit of this sermon of Dr. Talmage were carried out, the world would be a better place to live in and the fallen would find it easier to recover themselves; text, Matthew vii, 2. "With what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again."

In the greatest sermon ever preached—a sermon about 15 minutes long according to the ordinary rate of speech—a sermon on the Mount of Olives, the preacher sitting while he spoke, according to the ancient mode of oratory, the people were given to understand that the same yardstick that they employed upon others would be employed upon themselves. Measure others by a harsh rule, and you will be measured by a harsh rule. Measure others by a charitable rule, and you will be measured by a charitable rule. Give no mercy to others, and no mercy will be given to you. "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

There is a great deal of unfairness in criticism in human conduct. It was to suite that unfairness that Christ uttered the words of the text, and my sermon will be a re-echo of the divine sentiment. In estimating the misbehavior of others we must take into consideration the pressure of circumstances. It is never right to do wrong, but there are degrees of culpability. When men misbehave or commit some atrocious wickedness, we are disposed immediately to tumble them all over the bank of condemnation. Suffer they ought and suffer they must, but in a difference of degree.

Hereditary Tendencies.

In the first place, in estimating the misdoing of others we must take into calculation the hereditary tendency. There is such a thing as good blood and there is such a thing as bad blood. There are families that have had a moral twist in them for a hundred years back. They have not been careful to keep the family record in that regard. There have been escapades and maraudings and scoundrelisms and moral deficits all the way back, whether you call it kleptomania or pyromania or dipsomania or whether it be in a milder form and amount to no mania at all. The strong probability is that the present criminal started life with nerve, muscle and bone contaminated. As some start life with a natural tendency to nobility and generosity and kindness and truthfulness, there are others who start life with just the opposite tendency, and they are born liars or born malcontents or born outlaws or born swindlers.

There is in England a school that is called the Princess Mary school. All the children in that school are the children of convicts. The school is under high patronage. I had the pleasure of being present at one of their anniversaries, presided over by the Earl of Kintore. By a wise law in England, after parents have committed a certain number of crimes and thereby shown themselves incompetent rightly to bring up their children, the little ones are taken from under pernicious influences and put in reformatory schools, where all gracious and kindly influences shall be brought upon them. Of course the experiment is young and it has got to be demonstrated how large a percentage of the children of convicts may be brought up to respectability and usefulness. But we all know that it is more difficult for children of bad parentage to do right than for children of good parentage.

In this country we are taught by the Declaration of American Independence that all people are born equal. There never was a greater misrepresentation put in one sentence than in that sentence which implies that we are all born equal. You may as well say that flowers are born equal, or trees are born equal, or animals are born equal. Why does one horse cost \$100 and another horse cost \$5,000? Why does one sheep cost \$10 and another sheep cost \$500? Difference in blood. We are wise enough to recognize it in horses, in cattle, in sheep, but we are not wise enough to make allowance for the difference in the human blood. Now, I demand by the law of eternal fairness that you be more lenient in your criticism of those who were born wrong, in whose ancestral line there was a blemish, or who came from a tree the fruit of which for centuries has been gnarled and worm eaten.

Pity the Weak.

Dr. Harris, a reformer, gave some marvelous statistics in his story of a woman he called "Margaret, the mother of criminals." Ninety years ago she lived in a village in upper New York state. She was not only poor, but she was vicious. She was not well provided for. There were no almshouses there. The public, however, somewhat looked after her, but chiefly scoffed at her and derided her and pushed her further down in her crime. That was 90 years ago. There have been 623 persons in that ancestral line, 200 of them criminals. In one branch of that family there were 20, and nine of them have been in state prison, and nearly all of the others have turned out badly. It is estimated that that family cost the county and state \$100,000, to say nothing of the property they destroyed. Are you not willing, as sensible, fair people, to acknowledge that it is a fearful disaster to be born in such an ancestral line? Does it not make a great difference whether one descends from Margaret, the mother of criminals, or from some mother in Israel, whether you are the son of Ahab or the son of Joshua?

It is a very different thing to swim with the current from what it is to swim against the current, as some of

you have no doubt found in your summer recreation. If a man find himself in an ancestral current, where there is good blood flowing smoothly from generation to generation, it is not a very great credit to him if he turn out good and honest and pure and noble. He could hardly help it. But suppose he is born in an ancestral line, in a hereditary line, where the influences have been bad, and there has been a coming down over a moral declivity; if the man surrender to the influences he will go down under the overmastering gravitation unless some supernatural aid be afforded him. Now, such a person deserves not your exhortation, but your pity. Do not sit with the lip curled in scorn and with an assumed air of angelic innocence looking down upon such moral precipitation. You had better get down on your knees and first pray Almighty God for their rescue and next thank the Lord that you have not been thrown under the wheels of that juggernaut.

Benefit by Temptation.

In Great Britain and in the United States in every generation there are tens of thousands of persons who are fully developed criminals and incarcerated. I say in every generation. Then I suppose there are tens of thousands of persons not found out in their criminality. In addition to these there are tens of thousands of persons who, not positively becoming criminals, nevertheless have a criminal tendency. Any one of all those thousands by the grace of God may become Christian and resist the ancestral influence and open a new chapter of behavior, but the vast majority of them will not, and it becomes all men, professional, unprofessional, ministers of religion, judges of courts, philanthropists and Christian workers, to recognize the fact that there are these Atlantic and Pacific surges of hereditary evil rolling on through the centuries.

I say, of course, a man can resist this tendency, just as in the ancestral line mentioned in the first chapter of Matthew. You see in the same line in which there was a wicked Rehoboth and a desperate Manasseh, there afterward came a pious Josiah and a glorious Christ. But, my friends, you must recognize the fact that these influences go on from generation to generation. I am glad to know, however, that a river which has produced nothing but mistle for 100 miles may after awhile turn the wheels of factories and help support industrious and virtuous populations, and there are family lines which were poisoned that are a benediction now. At the last day it will be found out that there are men who have gone clear over into all forms of iniquity and plunged into utter abandonment who before they yielded to the first temptation resisted more evil than many a man who has been moral and upright all his life.

But supposing now that in this age, when there are so many good people, that I come down into this audience and select the very best man in it. I do not mean the man who would style himself the best, for probably he is a hypocrite, but I mean the man who before God is really the best. I will take you out from all your Christian surroundings. I will take you back to boyhood. I will put you in a depraved home. I will put you in a cradle of iniquity. Who is bending over that cradle? An intoxicated mother. Who is that swearing in the next room? Your father. The neighbors come in to talk, and their jokes are unclean. There is not in the house a Bible or a moral treatise, but only a few scraps of an old pictorial.

After awhile you are old enough to get out of the cradle, and you are struck across the head for naughtiness, but never in any kindly manner reprimanded. After awhile you are old enough to go abroad, and you are sent out with a basket to steal. If you come home without any spoil, you are whipped until the blood comes. At 15 years of age you go out to fight your own battles in this world, which seems to care no more for you than the dog that has died of a fit under the fence. You are kicked and cuffed and buffeted. Some day, rallying your courage, you resent some wrong. A man says: "Who are you? I know who you are. Your father had free lodgings at Sing Sing. Your mother, she was up for drunkenness at the criminal court. Get out of my way, you low lived wretch!" My brother, suppose that has been the history of your advent and the history of your earlier surroundings, would you have been the Christian man you are today, seated in this Christian assembly? I tell you nay. You would have been a vagabond, an outlaw, a murderer on the scaffold atoning for your crime. All these considerations ought to make us merciful in our dealings with the wandering and the lost.

Consider the Sinner.

Again, I have to remark that in our estimation the misdoing of people who have fallen from high respectability and usefulness, we must take into consideration the conjunction of circumstances. In nine cases out of ten a man who goes astray does not intend any positive wrong. He has trust funds. He risks a part of these funds in investment. He says, "Now, if I should lose that investment I have of my own property five times as much, and if this investment should go wrong I could easily make it up; I could five times make it up." With that wrong reasoning he goes on and makes the investment, and it does not turn out quite as well as he expected, and he makes another investment, and, strange to say, at the same time all his other affairs get entangled and all his other resources fail and his hands are tied. Now he wants to extricate himself. He goes a little further on in the wrong investment. He takes a plunge further ahead, for he wants to save his wife and children, he wants to save his home, he wants to save his membership in the church. He takes one more plunge and all is lost.

Some morning at 10 o'clock the bank door is not opened, and there is a card on the door signed by an officer of the bank, indicating there is trouble, and the name of the defaulter or the defrauder heads the newspaper column,

and hundreds of men say, "Good for him!" hundreds of other men say, "I'm glad he's found out at last!" hundreds of other men say, "Just as I told you;" hundreds of other men say, "We could not possibly have been tempted to do that; no conjunction of circumstances could ever have overthrown me," and there is a superabundance of indignation, but no pity; the heavens full of lightning, but not one drop of dew. If God treated us as society treats that man, we would all have been in hell long ago.

Condemn Not Hastily.

Wait for the alleviating circumstances. Perhaps he may have been the dupe of others. Before you let all the hounds out from their kennel to maul and tear that man find out if he has not been brought up in a commercial establishment where there was a wrong system of ethics taught; find out whether that man has not an extravagant wife who is not satisfied with his honest earnings, and in the temptation to please her he has gone into that ruin into which enough men have fallen, and by the same temptation, to make a procession of many miles. Perhaps some sudden sickness may have touched his brain, and his judgment may be unbalanced. He is wrong, he is awfully wrong, and he must be condemned, but there may be mitigating circumstances. Perhaps under the same temptation you might have fallen. The reason some men do not steal \$200,000 is because they do not get a chance. Have righteous indignation you must about that man's conduct, but temper it with mercy.

But you say, "I am sorry that the innocent should suffer." Yes, I am, too—sorry for the widows and orphans who lost their all by that defalcation. I am sorry also for the business men, the honest business men, who have had their affairs all crippled by that defalcation. I am sorry for the venerable bank president to whom the credit of that bank was a matter of pride. Yes, I am sorry also for that man who brought all the distress, sorry that he sacrificed body, mind, soul, reputation, heaven, and went into the blackness of darkness forever.

You defiantly say, "I could not be tempted in that way." Perhaps you may be tested after awhile. God has a very good memory, and he sometimes seems to say: "This man feels so strong in his innate power and goodness he shall be tested. He is so full of bitter invective against that unfortunate it shall be shown now whether he has the power to stand." Fifteen years go by. The wheel of fortune turns several times and you are in a crisis that you never could have anticipated. Now all the powers of darkness come around, and they chuckle and they chatter and they say: "Aha, here is the old fellow who was so proud of his integrity and who bragged he couldn't be overthrown by temptation and was so uproarious in his demonstrations of indignation at the defalcation 15 years ago! Let us see!"

It Shall Be Measured.

God lets the man go. God, who had kept that man under his protecting care, lets the man go and try for himself the majesty of his integrity. God letting the man go, the powers of darkness pounce upon him. I see you some day in your office in great excitement. One of two things you can do. Be honest and be paragonized and have your children brought home from school, your family detroned in social influence. The other thing is, you can step a little aside from that which is right, you can only just go half an inch out of the proper path, you can only take a little risk, and then you have all your finances fair and right. You will have a large property. You can leave a fortune for your children and endow a college and build a public library in your native town. You halt and wait and halt and wait until your lips get white. You decide to risk it. Only a few strokes of the pen now. But, oh, how your hand trembles, how dreadfully it trembles! The die is cast. By the strangest and most awful conjunction of circumstances any one could have imagined you are prostrated. Bankruptcy, commercial annihilation, exposure, crime. Good men mourn and devils hold carnival, and you see your own name at the head of the newspaper column in a whole congress of exclamation points, and while you are reading the anathema in the reportorial and editorial paragraph, it occurs to you how much this story is like that of the defalcation 15 years ago, and a clap of thunder shakes the window sill, saying, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again!"

Flesh Is Weak.

You look in another direction. There is nothing like ebullitions of temper to put a man to disadvantage. You, a man with calm pulses and a fine digestion and perfect health, cannot understand how anybody should be capzised in temper by an infinitesimal annoyance. You say, "I couldn't be unbalanced in that way." Perhaps you smile at a provocation that makes another man swear. You pride yourself on your imperturbability. You say with your manner, though you have too much good taste to say it with your words; "I have a great deal more sense than that man has. I have a great deal more equipage of temper than that man has. I never could make such a puerile exhibition of myself as that man has made."

Let me see. Did you not say that you could not be tempted to an ebullition of temper? Some September you come home from your summer watering place and you have inside, away back in your liver or spleen, what we call in our day malaria, but what the old folks called chills and fever. What take quinine until your ears are first buzzing and then roaring. You take roots and herbs; you take everything. You get well. But the next day you feel uncomfortable, and you yawn, and you stretch, and you shiver, and you consume, and you suffer. Vexed more than you can tell, you cannot sleep, you cannot eat, you cannot bear to see anything that looks happy, you go out to

kick the cat that is asleep in the sun. Your children's mirth was once music to you; now it is deafening. You say, "Boys, stop that racket." You turn back from June to March. In the family and in the neighborhood your popularity is 95 per cent off. The world says: "What is the matter with that disagreeable man? What a weebegone countenance! I can't bear the sight of him." You have got your pay at last—got your pay. You feel just as the man felt, that man for whom you had no mercy, and my text comes in with marvelous appositeness, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

Victims of Circumstance.

In the study of society I have come to this conclusion—that the most of the people want to be good, but they do not exactly know how to make it out. They make enough good resolutions to lift them into angelhood. The vast majority of people who fall are the victims of circumstances. They are captured by ambuscade. If their temptations should come out in a regiment and fight them in a fair field, they would go out in the strength and the triumph of David against Goliath. But they do not see the giants and they do not see the regiment. Temptation comes and says, "Take these bitters, take this nerve, take this aid to digestion, take this night-cap." The vast majority of men and women who are destroyed by opium and by rum first take them as medicines. In making up your dish of criticism in regard to them, take from the caster and the crust of sweet oil and not the crust of cayenne pepper.

Do you know how that physician, that lawyer, that journalist became the victim of dissipation? Why, the physician was kept up night by night on professional duty. Life and death hovered in the balance. His nervous system was exhausted. There came a time of epidemic and whole families were prostrated and his nervous strength was gone. He was all worn out in the service of the public. Now he must brace himself up. Now he stimulates. The life of this mother, the life of this child, the life of this father, the life of this whole family must be saved and all these families must be saved, and he stimulates and he does it again and again. You may criticize his judgment, but remember the process. It was not a selfish process by which he went down. It was magnificent generosity through which he fell.

Do Not Be Hard.

That attorney at the bar for weeks has been standing in a poorly ventilated courtroom, listening to the testimony and contesting in the dry technicalities of the law, and now the time has come for him to wind up, and he must plead for the life of his client, and his nervous system is all gone. If he fails in that speech, his client perishes. If he have eloquence enough in that hour, his client is saved. He stimulates. That journalist has had exhausting midnight work. He has had to report speeches and orations that kept him up till a very late hour. He has gone with much exposure working up some case of crime in company with a detective. He sits down at midnight to write out his notes from a memorandum scrawled on a pad under unfavorable circumstances. His strength is gone. Fidelity to the public intelligence, fidelity to his own livelihood, demand that he keep up. He must keep up. He stimulates. Again and again he does that, and he goes down. You may criticize his judgment in the matter, but have mercy. Remember the process. Do not be hard.

My friends, this text will come to fulfillment in some cases in this world. The huntsman in Farmstead was shot by some unknown person. Twenty years after the son of the huntsman was in the same forest, and he accidentally shot a man, and the man in dying said, "God is just; I shot your father just here 20 years ago." A bishop said to Louis XI of France, "Make an iron cage for all those who do not think as we do—an iron cage in which the captive can neither lie down nor stand straight up." It was fashioned—the awful instrument of punishment. After awhile the bishop offended Louis XI and for 14 years he was in that same cage and could neither lie down nor stand up. It is a poor rule that will not work both ways. "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

Oh, my friends, let us be resolved to scold less and pray more! What headway will we make in the judgment if in this world we have been hard on those who have gone astray? What headway will you and I make in the last great judgment when we must have mercy or perish? The Bible says, "They shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy."

I see the scribes of heaven looking up into the face of such a man, saying: "What, you plead for mercy, you whom in all your life never had any mercy on your fellows? Don't you remember how hard you were in your opinions of those who were astray? Don't you remember when you ought to have given a helping hand you employed a hard heel? Mercy! You must mis-speak yourself when you plead for mercy here. Mercy for others, but no mercy for you. Look," says the scribe of heaven, "look at that inscription over the throne of judgment, the throne of God's judgment." See it coming out letter by letter, word by word, sentence by sentence, until your startled vision reads it and your remorseful spirit appropriates it: "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again. Depart, ye cursed!"

A Zola Coincidence.

An extraordinary coincidence connected with the Zola trial was the fact that while the novelist was being so pluckily defended in one court by Maitre Labori in another and adjoining court a man named Zola was condemned to three years' hard labor for forging the signature of a certain Mme. Labori, neither the convict nor his victim being in any way connected with M. Emile Zola or his advocate.

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