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THE COMMERCIAL BANK.

(ESTABLISHED 1888.)

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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

THE GREAT PREACHER TALKS OF CONSOLING INFLUENCE.

To-day and One Hundred Years from Now—The Necessity of Death and Decay—Time Is Past, and It Is an Everlasting Now—Oblivion's Defeat.

The Tabernacle Pulpit.

Rev. Dr. Talmage last Sunday preached a sermon of unusual and marvelous consolation on the usual throngs after they had sung:

There is no sorrow that Heaven cannot cure. The subject was "Oblivion and Its Defeat." The texts selected were Job xxiv, 20, "He shall be no more remembered," and Psalm cxlii, 6, "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

"Oblivion and Its Defeat" is my subject to-day. There is an old monster that swallows down everything. It crunches individuals, families, communities, states, nations, continents, hemispheres, worlds. Its diet is made up of years, of centuries, of cycles, of millenniums, of eons. That monster is called by Noah Webster and all the other dictionaries oblivion. It is a steep down which everything rolls. It is a conflagration in which everything is consumed. It is a dirge in which all orchestras play and a period at which everything stops. It is the cemetery of the human race. It is the domain of forgetfulness. Oblivion! At times it throws a shadow over all of us, and I would not pronounce it to-day if I did not come armed in the strength of the eternal God on your behalf to attack it, to rout it, to demolish it.

Oblivion's Work.

Why, just look at the way the families of the earth disappear. For awhile they are together, inseparable and to each other indispensable, and then they part. Some by marriage, going to establish other homes, and some leave this life, and a century is long enough to plant a family, develop it, prosper it and obliterate it. So the generations vanish.

Walk up Broadway, New York; State street, Boston; Chestnut street, Philadelphia; the Strand, London; Princess street, Edinburgh; Champs Elysees, Paris; Unter den Linden, Berlin, and you will meet in this year 1893 not one person who walked there in the year 1793. What engulfment! All the ordinary efforts at perpetuation are dead failures. Walter Scott's "Old Mortality" may go round with his chisel to recut the faded epitaphs on tombstones, but Old Oblivion has a quicker chisel with which he can cut out a thousand epitaphs while "Old Mortality" is cutting in one epitaph. Whole libraries of biographies devoured of bookworms or unread of the rising generations.

All the signs of the stores and warehouses of great firms have changed, unless the grandsons think that it is an advantage to keep the old sign up because the name of the ancestor was more commendatory than the name of the descendant. The city of Rome stands to-day, but dig down deep enough and you come to another Rome, buried, and go down still farther and you will find a third Rome.

Jerusalem stands to-day, but dig down deep enough and you will find a Jerusalem underneath, and go on and deeper down a third Jerusalem. Alexandria on the top of an Alexandria, and the second on the top of the third. Many of the ancient cities are buried 30 feet deep, or 50 feet deep, or 100 feet deep. What was the matter? Any special calamity? No. The winds and waves and sands and flying dunes are all undertakers and grave-diggers, and if the world stands long enough the present Brooklyn and New York and London will have on top of them other Brooklyns and New Yorks and Londons, and only after digging and boring and blasting will the archaeologist of far distant centuries come down as far as the highest spires and domes and turrets of our present American and European cities.

Call the roll of the armies of Baldwin I. or of Charles Martel, or of Marlborough, or of Mithridates, or of Prince Frederick, or of Cortez, and not one answer will you hear. Stand them in line and call the roll of the 1,000,000 men in the army of Thebes. Not one answer. Stand them in line, the 1,700,000 infantry and the 200,000 cavalry of the Assyrian army under Nimus, and call the roll. Not one answer. Stand in line the 1,000,000 men of Sesostris, the 1,200,000 men of Artaxerxes at Cunaxa, the 2,641,000 men under Xerxes at Thermopylae, and call the long roll. Not one answer.

At the opening of our Civil War the men of the Northern and Southern armies were told that if they fell in battle their names would never be forgotten by their country. Out of the million men who fell in battle or died in military hospitals you cannot call the names of 1,000, nor the names of 500, nor the names of 100, nor the names of 50. Oblivion! Are the feet of the dancers who were at the ball of the Duchess at Richmond at Brussels the night before Waterloo all still? All still. Are all the ears that heard the guns of Bunker Hill all deaf? All deaf. Are the eyes that saw the coronation of George III. all closed. All closed. Oblivion! A hundred years from now there will not be a being on this earth that knew we ever lived.

Welcome to His Meal.

In some old family record a descendant studying up the ancestral line may spell out her name, and from the nearly faded ink, with great effort, find that some person of our name was born somewhere between 1810 and 1800, but they will know no more about us than we know about the color of a child's eyes born last night in a village in Patagonia. Tell me something about your great-grandfather. What were his features? What did he do? What year was he born? What year did he die? And your great-grandmother?

Will you describe the style of the hat that she wore, and how did she and your great-grandfather get on in each other's companionship? Was it March weather or June?

Oblivion! That mountain surge rolls over everything. Even the pyramids are dying. Not a day passes but there is chiseled off a chip of that granite. The sea is tripping over the land, and what is going on at Coney Island is going on all around the world, and the continents are crumbling into the waves. And while this is transpiring on the outside of the world the hot chisel of the internal fire is digging under the foundation of the earth and cutting its way out toward the surface.

It surprises me to hear people say they do not think the world will finally be burned up, when all scientists will tell you that it has for ages been on fire. Why, there is only a crust between us and the furnaces inside raging to get out. Oblivion! The world itself will roll into it as easily as a schoolboy's India rubber ball rolls down a hill, and when our world goes it is so interlocked by the law of gravitation with other worlds that they will go, too, and so far from having our memory perpetuated by a monument of Aberdeen granite in this world, there is no world in sight of our strongest telescope that will be a sure pedestal for any slab of commemoration of the fact that we ever lived or died at all. Our earth is struck with death. The axle-tree of the constellations will break and let down the populations of other worlds. Stellar, lunar, solar mortality. Oblivion! It can swallow and will swallow whole galaxies of worlds as easily as a crocodile takes down a frog.

Yet oblivion does not remove or swallow anything that had better not be removed or swallowed. The old monster is welcome to his meal. This world would long ago have been overcrowded if it had not been for the merciful removal of nations and generations.

A few days ago, visiting the place of my boyhood, I met one whom I had not seen since we played together at 10 years of age, and I had several pleasures in puzzling him a little as to who I was, and I can hardly describe the sensation as after awhile he mumbled out: "Let me see. Yes, you are De Witt." We all like to be remembered.

Now, I have to tell you that this oblivion of which I have spoken has its defeats, and that there is no more reason why we should not be distinctly and vividly and gloriously remembered five hundred million billion trillion quadrillion quintillion years from now than that we should be remembered six weeks. I am going to tell you how the thing can be done.

Something That Cannot Be Effaced.

We may build this "everlasting remembrance," as my text styles it, into the supernal existence of those to whom we do kindnesses in this world. You must remember that this infirm and treacherous faculty which we now call memory is in the future state to be complete and perfect. "Everlasting remembrance!" Nothing will slip the stout grip of that celestial faculty. Did you help a widow pay her rent? Did you find for that man released from prison a place to get honest work? Did you pick up a child fallen on the curbstone, and by a stick of candy put in his hand stop the hurt of his scratched knees? Did you assure a business man, swamped by the stringency of the money market, that times after awhile would be better?

Did you lead a Magdalen of the street into a midnight mission, where the Lord said to her, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more"? Did you tell a man, clear-discounted in his waywardness and hopeless and plotting suicide, that for him was near by a laver in which he might wash and a coronet of eternal blessedness he might wear? What are epitaphs in graveyards, what are eulogiums in presence of those whose breath is in their nostrils, what are unread biographies in the alcoves of a city library, compared with the imperishable records you have made in the illumined memories of those to whom you did such kindnesses? Forget them? They cannot forget them.

Notwithstanding all their might and splendor, there are some things the glorified of Heaven cannot do, and this is one of them. They cannot forget an earthly kindness done. They have no outlass to part that cable. They have no strength to hurl into oblivion that benefaction. Has Paul forgotten the inhabitants of Malta, who extended the island hospitality when he and others with him had felt, added to a shipwreck, the drenching rain and the sharp cold? Has the victim of the highwayman on the road to Jericho forgotten the Good Samaritan with a medicament of oil and wine and a free ride to the hostelry? Have the English soldiers who went up to God from the Crimean battlefields forgotten Florence Nightingale?

Through all eternity will the Northern and Southern soldiers forget the Northern and Southern women who administered to the dying boys in blue and gray after the awful fights in Tennessee and Pennsylvania and Virginia, and Georgia, which turned every vine and barn and shed into a hospital and incarnadined the Susquehanna, and the James, and the Chattahoochee, and the Savannah with brave blood? The kindness you do to others will stand as long in the appreciation of others as the gates of Heaven will stand as the "House of Many Mansions" will stand, as long as the throne of God will stand.

Character is Eternal.

Another defeat of oblivion will be found in the character of those whom we rescue, uplift, or save. Character is eternal. Suppose by a right influence we aid in transforming a bad man into a good man, a dolorous man into a happy man, a disheartened man into a courageous man—every stroke of that work done will be immortalized. There may never be so much as one line in a newspaper regarding it, or no mortal tongue may ever whisper it into human ear, but wherever that soul shall

go, your work upon it shall go—wherever that soul rises your work on it will rise, and so long as that soul will last your work on it will last.

Do you suppose there will ever come such an idiotic lapse in the history of that soul in Heaven that it shall forget that you invited him to Christ; that you by prayer or gospel word turned him round from the wrong way to the right way? No such insanity will ever smite a heavenly citizen. It is not half as well known on earth that Christopher Wren planned and built St. Paul's as it will be known in all Heaven that you were the instrumentality of building a temple for the sky.

We teach a Sabbath class, or put a Christian tract in the hand of a passer-by, or testify for Christ in a prayer meeting, or preach a sermon and go home discouraged, as though nothing had been accomplished, when we had been character building with a material that no frost or earthquake or rolling of the centuries can damage or bring down.

Oh, this character building! You and I are every moment busy in that tremendous occupation. You are making me better or worse, and I am making you better or worse, and we shall through all eternity bear the mark of this benediction or blasting. Let others have the thrones of Heaven—those who have more mightily wrought for God and the truth—but it will be Heaven enough for you and me if ever and anon we meet some radiant soul on the boulevards of the great city who shall say: "You helped me once. You encouraged me when I was in earthly struggle. I do not know that I would have reached this shining place had it not been for you." And we will laugh with Heavenly glee and say: "Ha ha! Do you really remember that talk? Do you remember that warning? Do you remember that Christian invitation? What a memory you have! Why, that must have been down there in Brooklyn and New Orleans at least ten thousand million years ago." And the answer will be, "Yes, it was as long as that, but I remember it as well as though it were yesterday."

Oh, this character building! The structure lasting independent of crumbling mausoleums, independent of the whole planetary system. Aye, if the material universe, which seems all bound together like one piece of machinery, should some day meet with an accident that should send worlds crashing into each other like telescoped railway trains, and all the wheels of constellations and galaxies should stop, and down into the chasm of immensity all the suns and moons and stars should tumble like the midnight express at Ashtabula, that would not touch us and would not hurt God, for God is a spirit, and character and memory are immortal and over that grave of a wrecked material universe might truthfully be written, "The righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance."

O Time, we defy thee! O Death, we stamp thee in the dust of thine own sepulchers! O Eternity, roll on till the last star has stopped rotating, and the last sun is extinguished on the sapphire pathway, and the last moon has illumined the last night, and as many years have passed as all the scribes that ever took pen could describe by as many figures as they could write in all the centuries of all time, but thou shalt have no power to efface from any soul in glory the memory of anything we have done to bring it to God and heaven!

A Crown Followed by a Kiss.

There is another and a more complete defeat for oblivion, and that is in the heart of God himself. You have seen a sailor roll up his sleeve and show you his arm tattooed with the figure of a favorite ship—perhaps the first one in which he ever sailed. You have seen a soldier roll up his sleeve and show you his arm tattooed with the figure of a fortress where he was garrisoned, or the face of a great general under whom he fought. You have seen many a hand tattooed with the face of a loved one before or after marriage.

This tattooing is almost as old as the world. It is some colored liquid punctured into the flesh so indelibly that nothing can wash it out. It may have been there fifty years, but when the man goes into his coffin that picture will go with him on hand or arm. Now, God says that he has tattooed us upon his hands. There can be no other meaning in the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, where God says, "Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands."

It was as much as to say: "I cannot open my hand to help, but I think of you. I cannot spread abroad my hands to bless, but I think of you. Whenever you go up and down the heavens I take these two pictures of you with me. They are so invrought into my being that I cannot lose them. As long as my hands last the memory of you will last. Not on the backs of my hands, as though to announce you to others, but on the palms of my hands for myself to look at and study and love. I do not on the palm of one hand alone, but on the palms of both hands, for while I am looking upon one hand and thinking of you, I must have the other free to protect you, free to strike back your enemy, free to lift if you fall. Palms of my hands indelibly tattooed. And though I hold the winds in my fist no cyclone shall uproot the inscription of your name and your face, and though I hold the ocean in the hollow of my hand its billowing shall not wash out the record of my remembrance. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands."

What joy, what honor can there be comparable to that of being remembered by the mightiest and kindest and loveliest and tenderest and most affectionate being in the universe. Think of it—to hold an everlasting place in the heart of God. The heart of God! The most beautiful palace in the universe. Let the archangel build some palace as grand as that if he can. Let him crumple up all the stars of yesternight and to-morrow night and

put them together as mosaics for such a palace floor. Let him take all the sunrises and sunsets of all the days and all the auroras of all the nights and hang them as upholstery at its windows.

Let him take all the rivers, and all the lakes, and all the oceans, and toss them into the fountains of this palace court. Let him take all the gold of all the hills and hang it in its chandeliers, and all the pearls of the seas and all the diamonds of the fields, and with them arch the doorways of that palace, and then invite into it all the glories that Esther ever saw at a Persian banquet, or Daniel ever walked among in Babylonian castles, or Joseph ever witnessed in Pharaoh's throneroom, and then yourself enter this castle of archangelic construction and see how poor a palace it is compared with the greater palace that some of you have already found in the heart of a loving and pardoning God, and into which all the music and all the prayers, and all the sermonic considerations of this day are trying to introduce you through the blood of the slain Lamb.

Oh, where is oblivion now? From the dark and overshadowing word that it seemed when I began, it has become something which no man or woman or child who loves the Lord need ever fear. Oblivion defeated. Oblivion dead. Oblivion sepulchered. But I must not be so hard on that devouring monster, for into its grave go all our sins when the Lord for Christ's sake has forgiven them. Just blow a resurrection trumpet over them when once oblivion has snapped them down. Not one of them rises. Blow again. Not a stir amid all the pardoned iniquities of a lifetime. Blow again. Not one of them moves in the deep grave trenches. But to this powerless resurrection trumpet a voice responds, half human, half divine, and it must be part man and part God, saying, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Thank God for this blessed oblivion! So you see I did not invite you down into a cellar, but up on a throne—not into the graveyard to which all materialism is destined, but into a garden all abloom with everlasting remembrance. The frown of my first text has become the kiss of the second text. Annihilation has become coronation. The wringing hands of a great agony have become the clapping hands of a great joy. The remembrance with which we began has become the grand march with which we close. The tear of sadness that rolled down our cheek has struck the lip on which sits the laughter of eternal triumph.

Postage Stamps.

Postage stamps in the form of stamped envelopes were first issued by M. de Velay, who owned a private post in the city of Paris in the reign of Louis XIV. Over a century later, in 1758, M. de Chamouset, also the proprietor of a post, issued printed postage slips to be attached to letters. In Spain in 1610 and in Italy also stamped covers for mail matter were tried, but it was not until 1840 that stamps, as we know them now, were put in use. This was in England, the Government adopting the system devised by Rowland Hill. Brazil was the first country to take up the new invention.

Russia adopted the postage stamp next in 1845; then Switzer land in 1846, and March 3, 1847, the Congress of the United States authorized the issue of postage stamps. These were at first a 5-cent stamp and a 10-cent stamp. The reduction of rates in 1851 gave a new set of stamps, valued at 1, 3 and 12 cents respectively. Other stamps of different values were added from time to time to meet the exigencies of postal arrangements, reduction of postage to foreign countries, etc.

Before 1845 the postal rates on letters in the United States varied from 6 cents for carrying a distance of thirty miles to 25 cents for 6 or 400 miles. By the reduction of that year the postage was made 5 cents for 200 miles or less and 10 cents for any distance above that. In 1851 the rate was fixed at 3 cents for every half ounce for 3,000 miles and 6 cents for any greater distance within the United States. In 1853 the postage was reduced to 2 cents for half an ounce for letters sent less than 3,000 miles and in 1855 to 2 cents an ounce.

This is Vouched For.

Bronzed and brown the Colonel stood in the Queen street doorway of Eaton's emporium, waiting for his wife within. That morning the battalion, returning from Niagara camp, had marched proudly up the street, the Colonel in command. But now off duty he stood complacently stroking his tawny mustache and looking, as he is, every inch a soldier. When I shook hands with him and asked him to dine with me his eyes twinkled.

"Thank you, so much, but I can't. I must get home," and he glanced down at his regimentals. "What do you think a young woman just asked me? I saw her looking at me intently, but that seemed natural enough. She had one of those perambulators, and she said, with a comprehensive look at my uniform and a smile of relief, 'Are you the man who takes care of the baby carriages?' She did, upon my honor. I think I had better get home. Infantry, by jove, but not baby carriages!"—Toronto Saturday Night.

There is a deaf and dumb man in Kansas seven feet tall. This is what we might call a long silence.

It is scratching at the polls that makes the candidate's head sore.