

OUR OWN GENERATION.

SERMON PREACHED BY REV. T. DE WITT TALMAGE FEB. 10.

Text, Acts xiii, 36: "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."

BROOKLYN, Feb. 10.—Before an audience gathered from all parts of the earth the Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D. D., expounded passages of Scripture descriptive of stirring scenes in David's life. Led by organ and cornet the multitudes joined in singing:

Time, like an ever rolling stream,
Bear all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

The subject of Dr. Talmage's sermon was "Our Own Generation," and his text, Acts xiii, 36: "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."

That is a text which has for a long time been running through my mind, but not until now has it been fully revealed to me. Sermons have a time to be born, as well as a time to die, a cradle as well as a grave. David, cowboy and stone slinger and fighter and czar and dramatist and blank verse writer and prophet, did his best for the people of his time, and then went and laid down on the southern hill of Jerusalem in that sound slumber which nothing but an angelic blast can startle. "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."

It was his own generation that he had served; that is, the people living at the time he lived. And have you ever thought that our responsibilities are chiefly with the people now walking abreast of us? There are about four generations to a century now, but in olden time life was longer and there was perhaps only one generation to a century. Taking these facts into calculation, I make a rough guess and say that there have been at least one hundred and eighty generations of the human family. With reference to them we have no responsibility. We cannot teach them, we cannot correct their mistakes, we cannot soothe their sorrows, we cannot heal their wounds. Their sepulchers are deaf and dumb to anything we might say to them. The last regiment of that great army has passed out of sight. We might halloo as loud as we could, not one of them would avert his head to see what we wanted.

SITE COULD NOT LEAVE HIM OUT.

I admit that I am in sympathy with the child whose father had suddenly died, and who in her little evening prayer wanted to continue to pray for her father, although he had gone into heaven and no more needed her prayers, and looking up into her mother's face said: "O, mother, I cannot leave him all out. Let me say, 'Thank God that I had a good father once, so I can keep him in my prayers.'" But the one hundred and eighty generations have passed off. Passed up. Passed down. Gone forever. Then there are generations to come after our earthly existence has ceased, perhaps a hundred and eighty generations more, perhaps a thousand generations more. We shall not see them, we shall not hear any of their voices; we will take no part in their convocations, their elections, their revolutions, their catastrophes, their triumphs. We will in no wise affect the one hundred and eighty generations gone, or the one hundred and eighty generations to come, except as from the galleries of heaven the former generations look down and rejoice at our victories, or as we may by our behavior start influences, good or bad, that shall roll on through the advancing ages. But our business is, like David, to serve our own generation, the people now living, those whose lungs now breathe and whose hearts now beat. And mark you, it is not a silent procession, but moving. It is a forced march at twenty-four miles a day, each hour being a mile. Going with that celerity, it has got to be a quick service on our part, or no service at all. We not only cannot teach the one hundred and eight generations past and will not see the one hundred generations to come, but this generation now on the stage will soon be off and we ourselves will be off with them. The fact is that you and I will have to start very soon for our work or it will be ironical and sarcastic for any one after our exit to say of us, as it was said of David, "after he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep."

Well, now, let us look around earnestly, prayerfully and in a common sense way and see what we can do for our own generation. First of all let us see to it that, as far as we can, they have enough to eat. The human body is so constituted that three times a day the body needs food as much as a lamp needs oil, as much as a locomotive needs fuel. To meet this want God has girded the earth with apple orchards, orange groves, wheat fields and oceans full of fish and prairies full of cattle. And notwithstanding this, I will undertake to say that the vast majority of the human family are suffering either for lack of food or the right kind of food. Our civilization is all askew on this subject and God only can set it right.

REMEMBER THE POOR.

Many of the greatest estates of today have been built out of the blood and bones of unrequited toil. In olden times, for the building of forts and towers, the inhabitants of Ispahan had to contribute seventy thousand human skulls and Bagdad ninety thousand human skulls, and that number of people were slain so as to furnish the skulls. But these two contributions added together made only one hundred and sixty thousand skulls, while into the tower of the world's wealth and pomp and magnificence have been wrought the skeletons of uncounted numbers of the half dead populations of the earth, millions of skulls.

Don't sit down at your table with five or six courses of abundant supply and think nothing of that family in the next street who would take any one of those five courses between soup and almond nuts and feel they were in heaven. The lack of the right kind of food is the cause of much of the drunkenness. After drinking what many of our grocers call coffee, sweetened with what many call sugar, and eating what many of our butchers call meat, and chewing what many of our bakers call bread, many of the laboring classes feel so miserable they are tempted to put into their nasty pipes what the tobacconist calls tobacco, or go into the drinking saloons for what the rum sellers call beer. Good coffee would do much in driving out bad rum. Adulteration of food has got to be an evil against which all the health officers, and all the doctors, and all the ministers, and

all the reformers, and all the Christians need to set themselves in battle array. How can we serve our generation with enough to eat? By sitting down in embroidered slippers and lounging back in an arm chair, our mouth puckered up around a Havana of the best brand, and through clouds of luxuriant smoke reading about political economy and the philosophy of strikes! Not so! By finding out who in Brooklyn has been living on gristle and sending them a tenderloin beef-steak. Seek out some family who through sickness or conjunction of misfortunes have not enough to eat, and do for them what Christ did for the hungry multitudes of Asia Minor, multiplying the leaves and the fishes. Let us quit the surfeiting of ourselves until we cannot choke down another crumb of cake and begin the supply of others' necessities.

We often see on a small scale a recklessness about the welfare of others, which a great warrior expressed on a large scale, when his officers were dissuading him from a certain campaign, saying "it would cost two hundred thousand lives," replying with a diabolism that can never be forgotten, "What are two hundred thousand lives to me?"

So far from helping appease the world's hunger, there are those whom Isaiah describes as grinding the faces of the poor. You have seen a farmer or a mechanic put a scythe or an ax on a grindstone, while some one was turning it round and round, and the man holding the ax bore on it harder and harder while the water dropped from the grindstone, and the edge of the ax, from being round and dull, got keener and keener, and the mechanic lifted the ax glistening and sharp, and with edge so keen he must cautiously run his finger along, lest while examining the implement he cut his hand to the bone. So I have seen men who were put against the grindstone of hardship, and while one turned the crank another would press the unfortunate harder down and harder down until he was ground away thinner and thinner, his comforts thinner, his prospects thinner and his face thinner. And Isaiah shrieks out: "What mean ye that ye grind the faces of the poor?" It is an awful thing to be hungry. It is an easy thing for us to be in good humor with all the world when we have no lack. But let hunger take full possession of us and we would all turn into barbarians and cannibals and fiends. I am glad to know that the time is coming God hasten it, when every family in the round world will sit down at a full table and it will be only a question between lamb and venison, or between partridge and quail on toast, and out of spoons made out of Nevada silver or California gold the pastries will drop on tongues thrilling with thankfulness because they have full enough. I have no idea God is going to let the human race stay in its present predicament. If the world winds up as it now is, it will be an awful failure of a world. The barren places will be irrigated. The pomologists, helped of God, will urge on the fruits. The botanists, inspired of the Lord, will help on the gardens. The raisers of stock will send enough animals fit for human food to the markets, and the last earthquake that rends the world will upset a banqueting table at which are seated the entire human race. Meanwhile, suppose that some of the energy we are expending in useless and unavailing talk about the bread question should be expended in merciful alleviations.

THE GREATEST BATTLE FIELD.

I have read that the battle field on which more troops met than on any other in the world's history was the battle field of Leipzig, one hundred and sixty thousand men under Napoleon, two hundred and fifty thousand men under Schwarzenberg. No, no. The greatest and most terrible battle is now being fought all the world over. It is the struggle for food. The ground tone of the finest passage in one of the great musical masterpieces, the artist says, was suggested to him by the cry of the hungry populace of Vienna as the king rode through and they shouted, "Bread! Give us bread!" And all through the great harmonies of musical academy and cathedral I hear the pathos, the ground tone, the tragedy of uncouth multitudes, who with streaming eyes and wan cheeks and broken hearts in behalf of themselves and their families are pleading for bread.

Let us take another look around to see how we may serve our generation. Let us see, as far as possible, that they have enough to wear. God looks on the human race and knows just how many inhabitants the world has. The statistics of the world's population are carefully taken in civilized lands, and even few years officers of government go through the land and count how many people there are in the United States or England, and great accuracy is reached. But when people tell us how many inhabitants there are in Asia or Africa, at best it must be a wild guess. Yet God knows the exact number of people on our planet, and he has made enough apparel for each, and if there be fifteen hundred million, fifteen thousand, fifteen hundred and fifteen people, then there is enough apparel for fifteen hundred million, fifteen thousand, fifteen hundred and fifteen. Not sloshy apparel, not ragged apparel, not insufficient apparel, but appropriate apparel. At least two suits for every being on the earth, a summer suit and a winter suit. A good pair of shoes for every living mortal. A good coat, a good hat or a good bonnet and a good shawl and a complete masculine or feminine outfit of apparel. A wardrobe for all nations adapted to all climates and not a string or a button or a pin or a hook or an eye wanting. But, alas! where are the good clothes for three-fourths of the human race? The one-fourth have appropriated them. The fact is, there needs to be and will be a redistribution. Not by anarchist violence. It outlawed had its way, it would rend and tear and diminish until instead of three-fourths of the world not properly attired, four-fourths would be in rags. I let you know how the redistribution will take place. By generosity on the part of those who have a surplus and increased in luxury on the part of those suffering from dearth. Not all, but the large majority of cases of poverty in this country, are a result of idleness or drunkenness, either on the part of present sufferers or their ancestors. In most cases the rum jug is the melstrom that has swallowed down the livelihood of those who are in rags. But things will change and by generosity on the part of the crowded wardrobes, and industry and sobriety on the part of the empty wardrobes, there will be enough for all to wear. God has done his part toward the dressing of the human race. He grows a surplus of wool on the sheep's back

and flocks roam the mountains and valleys with a burden of warmth intended for transfer to human comfort, when the shutters of the factories reaching all the way from the Chattahoochee to the Merrimac shall have spun and woven it. And here come forth the Rocky Mountain goat and the cashmere and the beaver. Here are the merino sheep, their origin traced back to the flocks of Abraham and Davide times. In white letters of snowy fleece, God has been writing for thousands of years his wish that there might be warmth for all nations. While others are discussing the effect of high or low tariff, or no tariff at all on wool, you and I had better see if in our wardrobes we have nothing that we can spare for the shivering, or pick out some poor lad of the street and take him down to a clothing store and fit him out for the winter. Don't think that God has forgotten to send ice and snow because of this wonderfully mild January and February. We shall yet have deep snows and so much frost on the window pane that in the morning you cannot see through it; and whole flocks of blizzards, for God long ago declared that winter, as well as summer, shall not cease, and between this and the spring crocus we may all have reason to cry out with the psalmist: "Who can stand before his cold?"

HOW MAY WE SERVE OUR GENERATION?

Again, let us look around and see how we may serve our generation. What short sighted mortals we would be if we were anxious to clothe and feed only the most insignificant part of man, namely, his body, while we put forth no effort to clothe and feed and save his soul. Time is a little piece broken off a great eternity. What are we doing for the souls of this present generation? Let me say it is a generation worth saving. Most magnificent men and women are in it. We make a great ado about the improvements in navigation and in locomotion and in art and machinery. We remark what wonders of telegraph and telephone and stethoscope. What improvement is electric light over a tallow candle! But all these improvements are insignificant compared with the improvement in the human race. In older times, once in a while, a great and good man or woman would come up and the world has made a great fuss about it ever since, but now they are so numerous we scarcely speak about them. We put a halo about the people of the past, but I think if the times demanded them it would be found we have now living in this year 1889 fifty Martin Luthers, fifty George Washingtons, fifty Lady Huntingtons, fifty Elizabeth Frys. During our civil war more splendid warriors in the north and south were developed in four years than the whole world developed in the previous twenty years. I challenge the four thousand years before the flood and the eighteen centuries after the flood to show me the equal of charity on a large scale of George Peabody. This generation of men and women is more worth saving than any of the one hundred and eighty generations that have passed off.

But where shall we begin? With ourselves. That is the pillar from which we must start. Prescott, the blind historian, tells us how Pizarro saved his army for the right when they were about deserting him. With his sword he made a long mark on the ground. He said: "My men, on the north side are desolation and death, on the south side is victory; on the north side Panama and poverty, on the south side Peru with all its riches. Choose for yourselves, for my part I go to the south." Stepping across the line one by one his troops followed, and finally his whole army. The sword of God's truth draws the dividing line today. One side of it are sin and ruin and death, on the other side are pardon and usefulness and happiness and heaven. You cross from the wrong side to the right side, and your family will cross with you and your friends and your associates. The way you go will go. If we are not saved we will never save any one else. How to get saved! Be willing to accept Christ, and then accept him instantaneously and forever. Get on the Rock first and then you will be able to help others upon the same Rock. Men and women have been saved quicker than I have been talking about it. What, without a prayer! Yes. What, without time deliberately to think it over! Yes. What, without a tear? Yes, Believe! That is all. Believe what? That Jesus died to save you from sin and death and hell. Will you? Do you? You have. Something makes me think you have. New light has come into your countenances. Welcome! Welcome! Hail! Hail! Saved yourselves, how are you going to save others? By testimony. Tell it to your family. Tell it everywhere. We will successfully preach no more religion and will successfully talk no more religion than we ourselves have.

BEHAVE WELL YOURSELFES.

The most of that which you do to benefit the souls of this generation, you will effect through your own behavior. Go wrong and that will induce others to go wrong. Go right and that will induce others to go right. When the great centennial exhibition was being held in Philadelphia, the question came up among the directors as to whether they could keep the exposition open on Sundays, when a director, who was a man of the world, from Nevada, arose and said, his voice trembling with emotion and tears running down his cheeks: "I feel like a returned prodigal. Twenty years ago I went west and into a region where we had no Sabbath, but today old memories come back to me and I remember what my glorified mother taught me about keeping Sunday, and I seem to hear her voice again and feel as I did when every evening I knelt by her side in prayer. Gentlemen, I vote for the observance of the Christian Sabbath." And he carried everything by storm, and when the question was put, "Shall we open the exhibition on Sabbath?" it was almost unanimous, "No." "No." What one man can do if he does right, boldly right, emphatically right! What if we could get this whole generation saved! These people who are living with us the same year and amid the same stupendous events and dying toward the future swifter than eagles to their prey. We cannot stop. They cannot stop. We think we can stop. We say, "Come now, my friend, let us stop and discuss this subject;" but we do not stop. The year does not stop, the day does not stop, the hour does not stop. The year is a great wheel, and there is a band on that wheel that keeps it revolving, and as that wheel turns it turns three hundred and sixty-five smaller wheels, which are the days, and then each of these three hundred and sixty-five wheels turn twenty-four smaller wheels, which are

the hours, and these twenty-four smaller wheels turn sixty smaller wheels, which are the minutes, and these sixty smaller wheels turn sixty more smaller wheels, which are the seconds, and we keep rolling, rolling, rolling, mounting, mounting, mounting, swiftening, swiftening, swiftening. Oh, God! If our generation is going like that and we are going with them, we are to the short but tremendous opportunity. I confess to you that my one wish is to save this generation, not to antagonize it, not to damage it, not to rule it, but to serve it. I would like to do something toward helping unstrap its load, to stop its tears, to balsam its wounds, and to induce it to put foot on the upward road that has at its terminus acclamation rapturous and gates pearline, and garlands dominions enthroned and coroneted, for I cannot forget that lullaby in the closing words of my text: "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."

And what a lovely sleep it was. Unfilled Absalom did not trouble it. Ambitious Adonijah did not worry it. Persecuting Saul did not harrow it. Exile did not fill it with nightmare. Since a red headed boy amid his father's flocks at night, he had not had such a good sleep. At 70 years of age he lay down to it. He had had many a troubled sleep, as in the caverns of Adulam or in the palace at the time his enemies were attempting his capture. But this was a peaceful sleep, a calm sleep, a restful sleep, a glorious sleep. "After he had served his generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep."

Again, how may we serve our generation? Again, let us look around and see how we may serve our generation. What short sighted mortals we would be if we were anxious to clothe and feed only the most insignificant part of man, namely, his body, while we put forth no effort to clothe and feed and save his soul. Time is a little piece broken off a great eternity. What are we doing for the souls of this present generation?

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