

THE TABERNACLE PULPIT.

A PRACTICAL SERMON BY DR. TALMAGE ON BUSINESS.

Some Lessons of Life Which Buyers and Sellers Are Too Apt to Be Slow to Learn. Work Without God Is Work Wasted.

BROOKLYN, April 18.—At the service in the Academy of Music this morning Dr. Talmage, after reading appropriate passages of Scripture, gave out the hymn:

So let our lips and lives express The holy Gospel we profess.

He announced as his text, Proverbs xx, 14: "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer, but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth." Following is his sermon in full:

Palaces are not such prisons as the world imagines. If you think that the only true kings and queens come forth from the royal gates in procession and gorgeously attended, you are mistaken. Inequity, by day or by night, and clothed in citizens' apparel or the dress of a working woman, they come out and see the world as it is. In no other way could King Solomon, the author of my text, have known everything that was going on. From my text I am sure he must, in disguise, some day have walked into a store of ready-made clothing, in Jerusalem, and stood near the counter and overheard a conversation between a buyer and a seller. The merchant put a price on the coat, and the customer began to dicker and said: "Ah, sir! that coat is not worth what you ask for it. Why, just look at the coarseness of the fabric! See that spot on the collar! Besides that, it does not fit. Twenty dollars for that! Why, it isn't worth more than ten. They have a better article than that, and for cheaper price, down at Clapham, Fitem & Brothers. Besides that, I don't want it at any price. Good morning." "H-h-h," says the merchant; "don't go off in that way. I want to sell you that coat. I have some payments to make and I want the money. Come now, how much will you give for that coat?"

"Well," says the customer, "I will split the difference. You asked twenty dollars, and I said ten. Now, I will give you fifteen." "Well," says the merchant, "it's a great sacrifice; but take it at that price." Then Solomon saw the customer with a roll under his arm start and go out and enter his own place of business; and Solomon, in disguise, followed him. He heard the customer as he unrolled the coat say: "Boys, I have made a great bargain. How much do you guess I gave for that coat?" "Well," says one, wishing to compliment his enterprise, "you gave thirty dollars for it." Another says, "I should think you got it cheap if you gave twenty-five dollars." "No," says the buyer in triumph; "I got it for fifteen dollars. I beat him down and pointed out the imperfections until I really made him believe it was not worth hardly anything. It takes me to make a bargain. Ha! Ha!" Oh, man, you got the goods for less than they were worth by positive falsehood; and no wonder, when Solomon went back to his palace and had put off his disguise, that he sat down at his writing desk and made for all ages a crayon sketch of you. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."

There are no higher styles of men in all the world than those now at the head of merchandise in Brooklyn and New York and in the other great cities of this continent. Their casual promise is as good as a bond with piles of collaterals. Their reputation for integrity is as well established as that of Petrarch residing in the family of Cardinal Colonna, and when there was great disturbance in the family the cardinal called all his people together and put them under oath to tell the truth, except Petrarch, for when he came to swear the cardinal put away his book and said: "As to you, Petrarch, your word is sufficient."

Never since the world stood have there been so many merchants whose transactions can stand the test of the Ten Commandments. Such bargain makers are all the more to be honored because they have withstood year after year temptations which have flung many so flat and flung them so hard they can never recover themselves. While all positions in life have powerful besetments to evil there are specific forms of allurements which are peculiar to each occupation and profession, and it will be useful to speak of the peculiar temptations of business men.

First, as in the scene of the text, business men are often tempted to sacrifice plain truth, the seller by exaggerating the value of goods, and the buyer by depreciating them. We cannot but admire an expert salesman. See how he first induces the customer into a mood favorable to the proper consideration of the value of the goods. He shows himself to be an honest and frank salesman. How carefully the lights are arranged till they fall just right upon the fabric!

Beginning with goods of medium quality, he gradually advances toward those of more thorough make and of more attractive pattern. How he watches the moans and whims of his customer! With what perfect calmness he takes the order and bows the purchaser from his presence, who goes away having made up his mind that he has bought the goods at a price which will allow him a living margin when he again sells them. The goods were worth what the salesman said they were, and were sold at a price which will not make it necessary for the house to fall every ten years in order to fix up things.

But with what burning indignation do you think of the iniquitous stratagems by which goods are sometimes disposed of. A glance at the morning papers shows the arrival at one of our hotels of a young merchant from one of the inland cities. He is a comparative stranger in the great city, and, of course, he must be shown around, and it will be the duty of some of our enterprising houses to escort him. He is a large purchaser and has plenty of time and money, and it will pay to be very attentive. The evening is spent at a place of doubtful amusement. Then they go back to the hotel. Having just come to town, they must, of course, drink. A friend from the same mercantile establishment drops in, and usage and generosity suggest that they must drink. Business prospects are talked over, and the stranger is warned against certain dilapidated mercantile establishments that are about to fail, and for such kindness and magnanimity of caution against the dishonesty of other business houses, of course, it is expected they will—and so they do—they take a drink.

Other merchants lodging in adjoining rooms find it hard to sleep for the clatter of decanters, and the coarse carolers of these "hand fellows well met" wax louder. But they sit not all night at the wine cup. They must see the sights. They stagger forth with cheeks flushed and eyes bloodshot. The outer gates of hell open to let in the victims. The wings of hell-souls fit among the lights, and the steps of the dancers sound with the rambling fancies of the damned. Farrowed to all the sanctities of home! Could mother, sister, father, slumbering in the inland home, in some vision of that night catch a glimpse of the rum wrought they would rend out their hair by the roots and bite the tongue till the blood spouted, shrieking out: "God save him!" What, suppose you, will come upon such business establishments and there are hundreds of them in the cities. They are by boat

of fabulous sales, and they may have an unprecedented run of buyers, and the name of the house may be a terror to all rivals, and from this thirty-foot there may spring up branch houses in other cities, and all the partners of the firm may move into their mansions and drive their full blooded ponies, and the families may sweep the street with the most elegant apparel that human art ever wove or earthly magnificence ever achieved. But a curse is gathering somewhere for those men, and if it does not seize hold of the pillars and in one wild run bring down the temple of commercial glory, it will break up their peace, and they will tremble with sickness and bleed with dissipation, and, pushed to the precipice of this life, they will try to hold back and cry for help, but no help will come, and they will clutch their gold to take it along with them, but it will be snatched from their grasp, and a voice will sound through their soul, "Not a farthing, thou beggarly spirit!" And the judgment will come and they will stand against before it, and all the business iniquities of a lifetime will gather round them, saying, "Do you remember this?" and "Do you remember that?" And clerks that they compelled to dishonesty, and runners and draymen and bookkeepers, who saw behind the scenes, will bear testimony to their nefarious deeds, and some virtuous soul that once stood against at the splendor and power of these business men will say, "Alas! this is all that is left of that great firm, that occupied a block with their merchandise and overshadowed the city with their influence, and made righteousness and truth and purity fall under the galling fire of avarice and crime."

While we admire and approve of all acuteness and tact in the sale of goods, we must condemn any process by which a fabric or product is represented as possessing a value which it really does not have. Nothing but sheer falsehood can represent as perfection goods that rip, silks that speedily lose their luster, calicoes that immediately wash out, stoves that crack under the first hot fire, books insufficiently bound, carpets that unravel, old furniture rejuvenated with putty and glue and sold as having been recently manufactured, gold watches made out of brass, barrels of fruit, the biggest apples on the top, wines adulterated with strychnine, hosiery poorly woven, cloths of domestic manufacture shined with foreign labels, imported goods represented as rare and hard to get, because foreign exchange is so high, rolled out on the counter with matchless display. Imported, indeed! but from the factory in the next street. A pattern already unfashionable and unsalable palmed off as a new print upon some country merchant who goes to town to make his first purchase of dry goods, and going home with a large stock of goods warranted to last.

Again, business men are often tempted to make the habits and customs of other traders their law of rectitude. There are commercial usages which will not stand the test of the last day. Yet men in business are apt to do as their neighbors do. If the majority of the traders in any locality are lax in principle, the commercial code in that community will be spurious and dishonest. It is a hard thing to stand close by the law of right when your next door neighbor by his looseness of dealing is enabled to sell goods at a cheaper rate and levy your customers. Of course, you do promptly meet all your business engagements, you pay when you promise to pay, will find it hard to compete with that merchant who is hopelessly in debt to the importer for the goods purchased, and to the landlord whose store he occupies, and to the clerks who serve him.

There are a hundred practices prevalent in the world of traffic which ought never to become the rule for honest men. Their wrong does not make your right. Sin never becomes virtue by being multiplied and admitted at brokers' board, or merchants' exchange. Because others smuggle few things in passenger trunks, because others take usury when men are in tight places, because others deal in fancy stocks, because others palm off worthless indorsements, because others do nothing but blow bubbles, do not, therefore, be overcome of temptation. Hollow pretension and fictitious credit and commercial gambling may awhile prosper, but the day of reckoning cometh, and in addition to the horror and condemnation of outraged communities the curse of God will come, blow after blow. God's will forever and forever is the only standard of right and wrong, and not commercial ethics.

Young business men, avoid the first business dishonor, and you will avoid all the rest. The captain of a vessel was walking near the mouth of a river when the tide was low, and there was a long, stout anchor chain, into one of the great links of which his foot slipped, and he began to wobble, and he could not withdraw it. The tide began to rise. The chain could not be loosened nor flung off in time, and a surgeon was called to amputate the limb, but before the work could be done the tide rolled over the victim and his life was gone.

And I have to tell you, young man, that just one wrong into which you slip may be a link of a long chain of circumstances from which you cannot be extricated by any intrinsic merit of your own or any help from others, and the tides will roll over you as they roll over many. When Pompey, the warrior, wanted to take possession of a city, and they would not open the gates, he persuaded them to admit a sick soldier. But the sick soldier after a while got well and strong, and he threw open the gates and let the devastating army come in. One wrong admitted into the soul may gain in strength until, after awhile, it flings open all the avenues of the immortal nature, and the surrender is complete.

Again, business men are sometimes tempted to throw off personal responsibility upon the moneyed institution to which they belong. Directors in banks and railroad and insurance companies sometimes shirk personal responsibility underneath the action of the corporation. And how often, when some banking house or financial institution explodes through fraud, respectable men in the board of directors say: "Why, I thought all was going on in an honest way, and I am utterly ignorant of this misdeed!" The banks, and the fire and life and marine insurance companies, and the railroad companies, will not stand up for judgment in the last day; but those who in them acted righteously will receive, each for himself, a reward, and those who acted the part of neglect or trickery will, each for himself, receive a condemnation.

Unlawful dividends are not clean before God because there are those associated with you who grab just as big a pile as you do. He who countenances the dishonesty of the firm, or of the corporation, or of the association, takes upon himself all of the moral liabilities. If the financial institution steals, he steals. If they go into wild speculations, he himself is a gambler. If they needlessly embarrass a creditor, he himself is guilty of cruelty. If they swindle the innocent, he himself is a defrauder. No financial institution ever had money and strong enough, or credit strong enough, or dividends large enough, or policy wide enough to hide the individual sin of its members. The old adage, that corporations have no souls, is misleading. Every corporation has as many souls as it has members.

Again, many business men have been tempted to postpone their enjoyments and duties to a future season of entire leisure. What a relative the Christian religion would be to all

our business men if, instead of postponing its uses to old age or death, they would take it into the store or factory or worldly engagements now! It is folly to go amid the uncertainties of business life with no God to help. A merchant in a New England village was standing by a horse, and the horse lifted his foot to stamp it in a pool of water, and the merchant, to escape the splash, stepped into the door of an insurance agent, and the agent said, "I suppose you have come to renew your fire insurance." "Oh," said the merchant, "I had forgotten that." The insurance was renewed, and the next day the house that had been insured was burned. Was it accidental that the merchant, to escape a splash from a horse's foot, stepped into the insurance office? No, it was providential. And what a mighty show for a business man to feel that things are providential! What peace and equilibrium in such a consideration, and what a grand thing if all business men could realize it!

Many, although now comparatively straitened in worldly circumstances, have a goodly establishment in the future planned out. They have in imagination built about twenty years ahead a house in the country not difficult of access from the great town, for they will often have business, or of old nature, to settle, and investments to look after. The house is large enough to accommodate all their friends. The halls are wide, and hung with pictures of hunting scenes and a branch of authors, and are comfortable with chairs that can be rolled out on the veranda when the weather is inviting, or set out under some of the oaks that stand sentinel about the house, and rustling in the cool breeze, and songful with the robins.

There is just land enough to keep them interested, and its crops of almost fabulous richness springing up under application of the best theories to be found in the agricultural journals. The farm is well stocked with cattle and horses, and sheep that know the value and have a kindly bleat when you go forth to look at them. In this blissful abode their children will be instructed in art and science and religion. This shall be the old homestead to which the boys at college will direct their letters, and the hill on which the house stands will be called Oakwood or Ivy Hill or Pleasant Retreat or Eagle Eyrie. May the future have for every business man here all that and more beside! But are you postponing your happiness to that time? Are you adjourning your joys to that consummation?

Suppose that you achieve all you expect—and the vision I mention is not up to the reality, because the fountains will be brighter, the house grander and the scenery more picturesque—the mistake is none the less fatal. What chance will there be in rural quiet for a man who has thirty or forty years been conforming his entire nature to the excitements of business? Will flocks and herds with their bleat and moan be able to silence the insatiable spirit of acquisitiveness which has for years had full swing in the soul? Will the hum of the breeze soothe the man who now can find his only enjoyment in the stock market? Will leaf and cloud and fountain charm the eye that has for three-fourths of a lifetime been chief beauty in logsheds and hills of sad? Will parents be competent to rear their children for high and holy purposes, if their infancy and boyhood and girlhood were neglected, when they are almost ready to enter upon the world and have all their habits fixed and their principles stereotyped? No, no; now is the time to be happy. Now is the time to serve your Creator. Now is the time to be a Christian. Are you too busy? I have known men as busy as you are who had a place in the store loft where they went to pray. Some one asked a Christian sailor where he found any place to pray in. He said: "I can always find a quiet place at masthead." And in the busiest day of the season, if your heart is right, you can find a place to pray. Broadway and Fulton street are good places to pray in as you go to meet your various engagements. Go home a little earlier and get introduced to your children. Be not a galley slave by day and night, lashed fast to the oars of business. Let every day have its hour for worship and intellectual culture and recreation. Show yourself greater than your business. Act not as though after death you would enter upon an eternity of railroad stocks and coffee and ribbons. Rejoice not in your mammoth before the perpetual fires of anxiety. With every yard of cloth you sell throw not in your soul to boot. Use ink and counting room desk and hardware crate as the step to glorious usefulness and highest Christian character. Decide once and forever who shall be master in your store, you or your business.

Again, business men are often tempted to let their calling interfere with the interests of the soul. God sends men into the business world to get educated, just as boys are sent to school and college. Purchase and sale, loss and gain, disappointment and rousing, prosperity, the dishonesty of others, pain and bank suspension are but different lessons in the school. The more business, the more lessons are given. Many have gone through the wildest part of the world. "Are you not afraid you will break?" said one to a merchant in time of great commercial excitement. He replied: "Yes, I shall break when the fiftieth Psalm breaks, in the fiftieth verse, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee.'"

The store and the counting house have developed some of the most stalwart characters. Perhaps originally they had but little spirit-like lines and form, but two or three hard business thumps woke them up from their lethargy, and there came a thorough development in their hearts of all that was good and holy and energetic and tremendous, and they have become the front men in Christ's great army, as well as light-houses in the great world of traffic. But business has been perpetual temptation to many a man. It first pulled out of him all benevolence, next all amiability, next all religious aspiration, next all conscience, and though he entered his vocation with large heart and noble character he goes out of it a skeleton, enough to scare a ghost.

Men appreciate the importance of having a good business stand, a store on the right side of the street or the right block. Now, every place of business is a good stand for spiritual culture. God's angels hover over the world of traffic to sustain and build up those who are trying to do their duty. Tomorrow, if in your place of worldly engagement you will listen for it, you may hear a sound louder than the rattle of drags and the shuffle of feet and the clink of dollars stealing into your soul, saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."

Yet some of the sharpest at a bargain are cheated out of their immortal blessedness by stratagems more palpable than any "drop game" of the street. They make investments in things overestimating below par. They put their valuables in a safe not fire-proof. They give full credit to influences that will not be able to pay one cent on a dollar. They plunge into a hazardous venture which no bankrupt law or any court in connection with will ever extricate them. They take into their partnership the world, the flesh and the devil, and the enemy of all righteousness will lead through eternal ages that the man who in all his business life could not be outwitted or overreached at last tumbled into spiritual defilement and was whirled out of heaven.

gared in description. Some stood on the housetops of Brooklyn, and looked at the red ruin that swept down the streets and threatened to obliterate the metropolis. But the commercial world will yet be startled by a greater conflagration, even the last. Bills of exchange, policies of insurance, mortgages and bonds and government securities will be consumed in one lick of the flame. The Bourse and the United States will turn to ashes. Gold will run molten into the dust of the street. Exchanges and granite blocks of merchandise will fall with a crash that will make the earth tremble.

The flashing up of the great light will show the righteous the way to their thrones. The lost treasures in heaven, they will go up and take possession of them. The folds of business life, which racked their brains and cramped their nerves for so many years, will have forever ceased. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

At a shooting party of five guns recently given by Count Wrisbenburg the bag consisted of 2,208 hares and 219 pheasants, shot on one day.

The Bulgarian government proposes to adopt the Gregorian calendar instead of the old style Greek calendar still used in Russia and some weeks out of agreement with the rest of the world.

The rule of growth is that a child should increase two pounds in weight for every inch in height between three and four feet and two and one-half pounds for every inch between four and five feet.

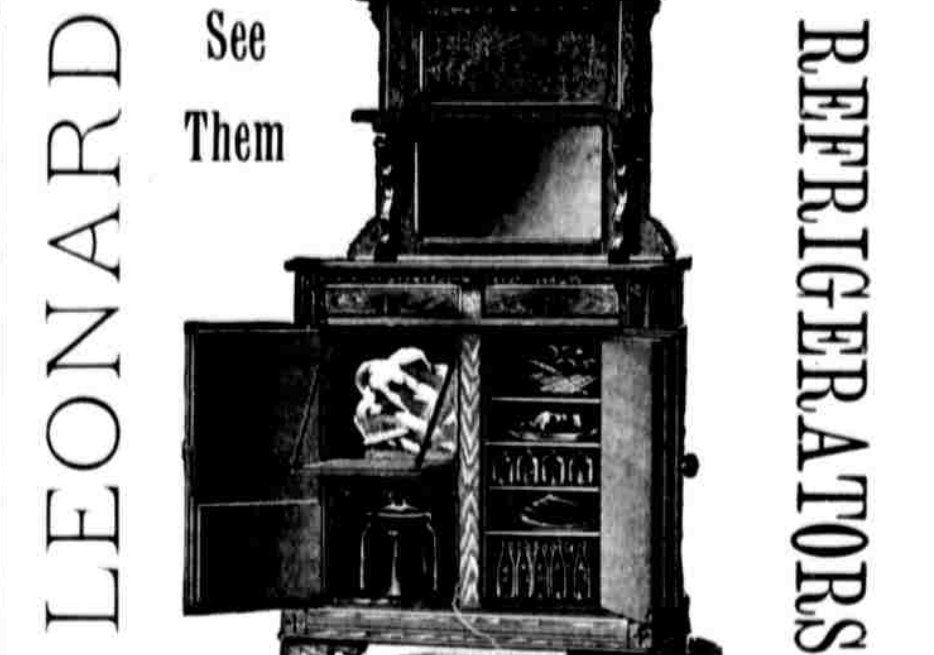
During a performance of "La Africaine" recently in Paris at the Opera the chorus became so fat that the director signaled for the orchestra to cease playing, and the prayer, "O, Grand Saint Dominique" was given without accompaniment. The explanation afforded was that the choristers were over-fatigued by rehearsal.

Cotton paper is used in the cheapest grades of cigarettes, and wrappers for 1,000 cigarettes cost only two cents. Rice paper is the choicest and most costly used in cigarette-making. Tobaccoized paper is made by saturating paper with an infusion of tobacco and pressing it in such a way as to produce an imitation of the veins of the tobacco leaf.

Some boys playing on the canal bank at Bedford found a hole full of silver coins. Nine of the lads filled their caps with the money, which they took to the police station. The treasure place was afterward thoroughly searched, and altogether 2,250 worth of coins were taken out. The coins had evidently been under ground for many years.

The dagger with which Bayanilla assassinated Henry IV of France has been found by a Berlin antiquary. He bought a curious stick cane from a peasant, and on examination the stick proved to be hollow and to contain an ancient poniard and tiny snuff box. In the latter was a paper stating that the owner of the stick had carried off the historical dagger from the Paris Palais de Justice in 1815.

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