

DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

SACRAMENTAL DAY AT THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

The Learned and Eloquent Divine Discourses on the Philosophy of the Chain. Its Battle Heed and Its Coil Seen from Genesis to Revelation.

BROOKLYN, Sept. 16.—Today was sacramental day at the Tabernacle, and the more than four thousand communicant members were joined by thousands from all parts of this country and from other lands in the sacred commemoration. The Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D. D., preached from Ezekiel vii, 20: "Make a chain!" He said:

At school and in college in announcing the mechanical powers, we glorified the lever, the pulley, the inclined plane, the screw, the axle and the wheel, but my text calls us to study the philosophy of the chain. These links of metal, one with another, attracted the old Bible authors, and we hear the chain rattle and see its coil all the way through from Genesis to Revelation, flashing as an adornment, or restraining as in captivity, or holding in conjunction as in case of machinery. To do him honor, Pharaoh hung a chain of gold about the neck of Joseph, and Belshazzar one about the neck of Daniel. The high priest had on his breastplate two chains of gold. On the camels' necks as the Ishmaelites drove up to Gideon jingled chains of gold.

The Bible refers to the church as having such glittering adornments, saying: "Thy neck is comely with chains of gold." On the other hand, a chain means captivity. David the psalmist exults that power had been given over his enemies "to bind their kings with chains." The old missionary apostle cries out: "For the hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain." In the prison where Peter is incarcerated you hear one day a great crash at the falling off of his chains. St. John saw an angel come down from heaven to manacle the powers of darkness, and having "a great chain in his hand," and the fallen angels are represented as "reserved in everlasting chains," while in my text for the arrest and limitation of the iniquity of the last, Ezekiel thunders out, "Make a chain!"

What I wish to impress upon myself and upon you is the strength in right and wrong directions, of consecutive forces, the superior power of a chain of influences, the great advantage of a congeries of links above one link, and in all family government and in all effort to rescue others and in all attempt to stop iniquity, take the suggestion of my text and make a chain!

That which contains the greatest importance, that which encloses the most tremendous opportunities, that which of earthly things is most watched by other worlds, that which has beating against its two sides all the eternities, is the cradle. The grave is nothing in importance compared with it, for that is only a gully that we step across in a second, but the cradle has within it a new eternity, just born and never to cease. When three or four years ago the Ohio river overflowed its banks and the wild freshets swept down with them harvests and cities, one day was found floating on the bosom of the waters a cradle with a child in it all unhurt, wrapped up snug and warm, and its blue eyes looking into the blue of the open heavens. It was mentioned as something extraordinary. But every cradle is, with its young passenger, floating on the swift currents of the centuries, deep calling to deep, Ohio and St. Lawrence and Mississippi of influence, bearing it onward. Now what shall be done with this new life recently launched? Teach him an evening prayer? That is important, but not enough. Hear him as soon as he can recite some gospel hymn or catechism? That is important, but not enough. Every Sabbath afternoon read him a Bible story? That is important, but not enough. Once in a while a lesson, once in a while a prayer, once in a while a restraining influence? All these are important, but not enough. Each one of these influences is only a link, and it will not hold him in the tremendous emergencies of life. Let it be constant instruction, constant prayer, constant application of good influences, a long line of consecutive impressions, reaching from his first year to his fifth, and from his fifth year to his tenth, and from his tenth year to his twentieth. "Make a chain!"

Spasmodic education, paroxysmal discipline, occasional fidelity, amount to nothing. You can as easily hold an anchor by one link as hold a child to the right by isolated and intermittent faithfulness. The example must connect with the instruction. The conversation must combine with the actions. The weekday consistency must conjoin with the Sunday worship. Have family prayers by all means; but be petulant and inconsistent and unreasonable in your household, and your family prayers will be a blasphemous farce. So great in our times are the temptations of young men to dissipation, and young women to social follies, that it is most important that the first eighteen years of their life be charged with a religious power that will hold them when they get out of the harbor of home into the stormy ocean of active life. There is such a thing as impressing children so powerfully with good that sixty years will have no more power to efface it than sixty minutes. What a rough time that young man has in doing wrong, carefully nurtured as he was! His father and mother have been dead for years, or over in Scotland, or England, or Ireland; but they have stood in the doorway of every dram shop that he entered, and under the chandelier of every house of dissipation, saying: "My son, this is no place for you. Have you forgotten the old folks? Don't you recognize these wrinkles, and this stoop in the shoulder, and this tremulous hand? Go home, my boy, go home! By the God to whom we consecrated you, by the cradle in which we rocked you, by the grass grown graves in the old country churchyard, by the heaven where we hope yet to meet you, go home! Go home, my boy, go home!" And some Sunday you will be surprised to find that young man suddenly asking for the prayers of the church. Some Sunday you will see him at the sacrament and perhaps drinking

from the same kind of chalice that the old folks drank out of years ago when they commemorated the sufferings of the Lord. Yes, my lad, you do not have such fun in sin as you seem to have. I know what spoils your fun. You cannot shake off the influences of those prayers long ago offered, or of those kind admonitions. You cannot make them go away, and you feel like saying: "Father, what are you doing here? Mother, why do you bother me with suggestions of those olden times?" But they will not go away. They will push you back from your evil paths, though they have to come down from their shining homes in heaven and stand in the very gates of hell, and with their hand on your shoulder, and their breath on your brow, and their eyes looking straight into yours, they will say: "We have come to take you home. O son of many anxieties!" At last that young man turns through the consecutive influences of a pious parentage, who out of prayers and fidelities innumerable, made a chain. That is the chain that pulls mightily this morning on five hundred of you. You may be too proud to shed a tear, and you may, to convince others of your imperturbability, smile to your friend beside you, but there is not so much power in an Alpine avalanche after it has slipped for a thousand feet and having struck a lower cliff is taking its second bound for fifteen hundred feet more of plunge, as there is power in the chain that pulls you this morning toward God and Christ and heaven. Oh! the almighty pull of the long chain of early gracious influences!

But all people between thirty and forty years of age, yes, between forty and fifty—aye, between fifty and sixty years, and all septuagenarians as well, need a surrounding conjunction of good influences. In Sing Sing, Auburn, Moyamensing, and all the other great prisons, are men and women who went wrong in middle life and old age. We need around us a cordon of good influences. We forget to apply the well known rule that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. If the chain be made up of 1,000 links and 999 are strong, but one is weak, the chain will be in danger of breaking at that one weak link. We may be strong in a thousand excellences and yet have one weakness which endangers us. That is the reason that we sometimes see men distinguished for a whole round of virtues collapse and go down. The weak link in the otherwise stout chain gave way under the pressure.

The first chain bridge was built in Scotland. Walter Scott tells how the French initiated it in a bridge across the river Seine. But there was one weak point in that chain bridge. There was a middle bolt that was of poor material, but they did not know how much depended on that middle bolt of the chain bridge. On the opening day a procession started, led on by the builder of the bridge; and when the mighty weight of the procession was fairly on it the bridge broke and precipitated the multitudes. The bridge was all right except in that middle bolt. So the bridge of character may be made up of mighty links strong enough to hold a mountain; but if there be one weak spot, that one point unlooked after may be the destruction of everything. And what multitudes have gone down for all time and all eternity because in the chain bridge of their character there was lacking a strong middle bolt. He had but one fault and that was avarice; hence, forgery. He had but one fault and that was a burning thirst for intoxicants; hence, his fatal debauch. She had but one fault and that was an inordinate fondness for dress, and hence her own and her husband's bankruptcy. She had but one fault and that was a quick temper; hence the disgraceful outburst. What we all want is to have put around us a strong chain of good influences. Christian association is a link. Good literature is a link. Church membership is a link. Habit of prayer is a link. Scripture research is a link. Faith in God is a link. Put together all these influences. Make a chain!

Most excellent is it for us to get into company better than ourselves. If we are given to telling vile stories let us put ourselves among those who will not abide such utterance. If we are stingy let us put ourselves among the charitable. If we are morose let us put ourselves among the good natured. If we are given to little-tattle let us put ourselves among those who speak no ill of their neighbors. If we are dependent let us put ourselves among those who make the best of things. If evil is contagious, I am glad to say that good is also catching. People go up into the hill country for physical health; so if you would be strong in your soul get yourself up off the lowlands into the altitudes of high moral association. For many of the circumstances of our life we are not responsible. For our parentage we are not responsible. For the place of our nativity, not responsible; for our features, our stature, our color, not responsible; for the family relation in which we were born, for our natural tastes, for our mental character, not responsible. But we are responsible for the associates that we choose and the moral influences under which we put ourselves. Character seeks an equilibrium. A. B. is a good man. X. Y. Z. is a bad man. Let them now voluntarily choose each other's society. A. B. will lose a part of his goodness and Y. Z. a part of his badness, and they will gradually approach each other in character and will finally stand on the same level. One of the old painters refused to look at poor pictures because he said it damaged his style. A musician cannot afford to dwell among discords, nor can a writer afford to peruse books of inferior style, nor an architect walk out among disproportioned structures. And no man or woman was ever so good as to be able to afford to choose evil associations. Therefore I say, have it a rule of your life to go among those better than yourselves. Cannot find them? Then what a pink of perfection you must be! When was your character completed? What a misfortune for the saintly and angelic of heaven that they are not enjoying the improving influence of your society! Ah, if you cannot find those better than yourself, it is because you are ignorant of yourself. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

But, as I remarked in the opening, in sacred and in all styles of literature a

chain means not only adornment and royalty of future, but sometimes captivity. Let me suppose there are those in that sense deliberately and persistently making a chain. Now here is a young man of good physical health, good manners and good education. How shall he put together enough links to make a chain for the down hill road? I will give him some directions. First let him smoke. If he cannot stand cigars let him try cigarettes. I think cigarettes will help him on this road a little more rapidly because the doctors say there is more poison in them, and so he will be helped along faster, and I have the more confidence in proposing this because about fifty of the first young men of Brooklyn during the last year were, according to the doctors' reports, killed by cigarettes. Let him drink light wines first, or ale or lager, and gradually he will be able to take something stronger, and as all styles of strong drink are more and more adulterated, his progress will be facilitated. With the old time drinks a man seldom got delirium tremens before 30 or 40 years of age; now he can get the madness by the time he is 18. Let him play cards, enough money put up always to add interest to the game. If the father and mother will play with him that will help by way of countenancing the habit. And it will be such a pleasant thing to think over in old age, judgment when the parents give account for the elevated manner in which they have reared their children. Every pleasant Sunday afternoon take a carriage ride and stop at the hotels on either side the road for Sabbath refreshments. Do not let the old foggy prejudices against Sabbath breaking dominate you. Have a membership in some club where libertines go and tell about their vicious sins, and laugh as loud as any of them in derision of those who belong to the same sex as your sister and mother. Pitch your Bible overboard as old fashioned and fit only for women and children. Read all the magazine articles that put Christianity at disadvantage, and go to hear all the lectures that malign Christ, who, they say, instead of being the Mighty One he pretended to be, was an impostor and the implanter of a great delusion. Go, at first out of curiosity, to see all the houses of dissipation and then go because you have felt the thrill of their fascination. Getting along splendidly now!

Let me see what further can I suggest in that direction. Become more defiant of all decency, more loud mouthed in your atheism, more thoroughly alcoholized, and instead of the small stakes that will do well enough for games of chance in a ladies' parlor, put up something worthy. Put up more, put up all you have. Well done! You have succeeded! You have made a chain—the tobacco habit one link, the rum habit one link, the impure club another link, infidelity another link, Sabbath desecration another link, uncleanness another link, and altogether they make a chain. And so there is a chain on your hand and a chain on your foot and a chain on your tongue and a chain on your eye and a chain on your property and a chain on your soul. Some day you wake up and you say: "I am tired of this, and I am going to get loose from this shackles." You pound away with the hammer of good resolution, but cannot break the thrall. Your friends join you in a conspiracy of help, but fall exhausted in the unavailing attempt. Now you begin, and with the withering of a Laocoon, to try to break away, and the muscles are distended, and the great beads of perspiration dot your forehead, and the eyes stand out from the sockets, and with all the concentrated energies of body, mind and soul you attempt to get loose, but have only made the chain sink deeper in the devil that once made a wine flask and the rum jug and the decanter—for each one has a devil of its own—come out and sit around you and chatter. In some midnight you spring from your couch and cry: "I am fast, O God, let me loose! O ye powers of darkness, let me loose! Father and mother and brothers and sisters, help me to get loose!" And you turn your prayer to blasphemy and then your blasphemy into prayer, and to all the din and uproar there is played an accompaniment, not an accompaniment by key and pedal, but the accompaniment is rattle and the rattle is that of a chain. For five years, for ten years, for twenty years, you have been making a chain.

But here I take a step higher and tell you there is a power that can break any chain, chain of body, chain of mind, chain of soul. The fetters that the hammer of the Gospel have broken off, if piled together would make a mountain. The captives whom Christ has set free, if stood side by side, would make an army. Quicker than a ship chandler's furnace ever melted a cable, quicker than a key ever unlocked a handcuff, quicker than the bayonets of revolution pried open the Bastille, you may be liberated and made a free son or a free daughter of God. You have only to choose between serfdom and emancipation, between a chain and a coronet, between Satan and God. Make up your mind and make it up quick. When the king of Sparta had crossed the Hellespont and was about to march through Thrace, he sent word to the people in the different regions asking them whether he should march through their countries as a friend or an enemy. "By all means as a friend," answered most of the regions; but the king of Macedonia replied: "I will take time to consider it." "Then," said the king of Sparta, "let him consider it, but meantime we march—we march." So Christ, our King, gives us our choice between his friendship and his frown, and many of us have long been considering what we had better do; but meantime he marches on, and our opportunities are marching by. And we shall be the loving subjects of his reign or the victims of our own obduracy. So I urge you to precipitancy rather than slow deliberation, and I write all over your soul the words of Christ I saw inscribed on the monument of Princess Elizabeth in the Isle of Wight, the words which her index finger pointed in the open Bible when she was found dead in her bed after a lifetime of trouble: "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is there a drunkard here? You say, by the Savior's grace, have that fire of thirst utterly extinguished. Is there a defrauder here? You may be made a

liar. Is there a libertine here? You may be made as pure as the light. When a minister in an outdoor meeting in Scotland was eulogizing goodness, there were hanging around the edge of the audience some of the most depraved men and women, and the minister said nothing about mercy for prodigals. And a depraved woman cried out: "Your rope is not long enough for the like of us." Blessed be God, our Gospel can fathom the deepest depths and reach to farthest wanderings, and here is a rope that is long enough to rescue the worst: "Whosoever will."

But why take extreme cases, when we all have been or are now the captives of sin and death? And we may through the great Emancipator drop our shackles and take a throne. You have looked at your hand and arm only as being useful now, and a curious piece of anatomy, but there is something about your hand and arm that makes me think they are an undeveloped wing. And if you would know what possibilities are suggested by that, ask the eagle that has looked close into the eye of the noonday sun; or ask the albatross that has struck its claw into the black locks of the tempest; or ask the condor that this morning is descending to the highest peak of Chimborazo. Your right hand and arm and your left hand and arm, two undeveloped wings, better get ready for the empyrean.

Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wing. Thy better portion trace.

There have been chains famous in the world's history, such as the chain which fastened the prisoner of Chillon to the pillar, into the staple of which I have thrust my hand, on the isolated rock of the Lake of Geneva; such as the chain which the Russian exile clanks on his way to the mines of Siberia; such as the chain which Zenobia, the captive queen, wore when brought into the presence of Aurelian. Aye, there have been races in chains, and nations in chains, and there has been a world in chains; but, thank God, the last one of them shall be broken, and under the liberating power of the omnipotent Gospel the shackles shall fall from the last neck and the last arm and the last foot. But these shattered fetters shall all be gathered up again from the dungeons and the workhouses and the mines and the rivers and the fields, and they shall again be welded and again strung link to link, and polished and transformed until this world, which has wandered off and been a recreant world and a lost world, shall by that chain be lifted and hung to the throne of God, no longer the iron chain of oppression, but the golden chain of redeeming love. There let this old ransomed world swing forever! Roll on, ye years, roll on, ye days, roll on, ye hours, and hasten the glorious consummation!

Churches in the United States.

The Independent last year published statistics showing the numerical strength of the united churches of this country to be a little over 19,000,000. It recently gave its estimate for the present year, exhibiting an increase of 774,861, the exact figures representing 138,885 churches, 94,457 ministers, and 19,799,323 communicants variously divided among sixty-three denominations. Of these the Roman Catholic church is, of course, the strongest, with 7,200,000. Methodism, comprising fourteen branches, comes next with 4,699,529 communicants, an increase of 166,871. The Baptists, including thirteen different sects, follow with 3,971,685 members, an increase of 244,478. The Presbyterians, consisting of nine branches, are next in order with 1,136,685 members, a net gain of 54,240. The Congregationalists number 457,584, and have gained 21,205 members. The Episcopalians include 449,785, having gained 30,234 communicants.

Unfortunately, implicit reliance cannot be placed upon these estimates, which are given more to indulge the growing propensity for numbering the host and to cheer the hearts of the faithful than as examples of scientific accuracy. There is no uniform method of enumeration of members among the churches. The year books are published at different periods of the year, and some denominations make no returns whatever. The difficulty of collecting religious statistics is so great that, as is well known, the census authorities of 1880 have not yet been able to publish that part of their report. Until that appears we shall have no impartial estimate of the strength of churches in this country. It seems difficult to believe that nearly one-third of the people are members of the church, but the difficulty is partly removed by remembering that the large Roman Catholic population is almost entirely upon the communicant list of that church. Its members, however, can only be estimated. According to The Independent's estimate it has gained 200,000 during the last year; but the gain from emigration has undoubtedly been more than this, to say nothing of the natural increase. Methodism last year claimed an increase of 500,000; this year it falls below the Baptist denomination. On the whole the gains claimed are not unreasonable. A gain of 774,861 upon a membership last year of 19,015,462 is only a gain of 4 per cent. This is less than the increase of population, and ought not to be regarded as a satisfactory result, when the many agencies and activities maintained by the church are considered.—Detroit Free Press.

The Slang of Olden Times.

In the days of old the following language was used by coachmen, guards, ostlers, boots, etc., all along the coaching roads: An empty coach was called a mad woman; asking passengers for money, kicking them; a passenger not on the bill, a shoulder stick, a bit of fish, or a short one; a passenger who paid shabbily, a scaly one; not paying at all, tipping the double; a glass of spirits, a flash of lightning; a drop of short, or don't stop to mix it; a white hat, a billy shawl; a kicking horse, a miller; galloping horses, springing them; driving near to anything, feather edging it; a coach, a drag, reins, ribbons; horses, cattle; whip, a tool; a good coachman, an artist; a bad one, a spoon, or a lame hand; one just got to work, a fresh catched one.—New York Sun.

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