

The Orphans' Friend.

VOLUME I.

OXFORD, N. C., MONDAY, JULY 19, 1875.

NUMBER 29.

THE SALE OF PEWS IN HEAVEN.

T. DE WITT TALMAGE.

We were in a street-car about noon. We had been thinking concerning the fact that many of the churches in our cities are adopting the habit of auctioneering their pews. We were weary and fell asleep, and our head rested in an uneasy position against the slats of the window, and our dreams, which are usually delightful, became unwonted.

We thought we were in a great church, by far the largest church we had ever seen. We were told it was twelve thousand furlongs in circumference, and the walls were a hundred and forty and four cubits high. We said to the janitor at the gate: "Is this Saint Paul's, or Saint Mark's, or Saint Peter's?" "Neither," said the janitor; "this is the Church of Heaven." As we were going in we found many people doing the same. There was a long line of carriages standing in front of the great church, one angel on the driver's box, and one angel standing on behind. As the people got out of their golden turn-outs, I saw that some of them wore robes with a trail of ten yards, and the trouble was that those behind were all the time treading on the trail of those who preceded. Some of us, however, came up on foot and went in. We cried out: "What is going on here to-day?" and were informed by an usher that this was the day on which the pews of the Church of Heaven were to be disposed of by auction. An angel, whom we were told was a converted and glorified Wall street broker, stood on a stand, and with a silver mallet called the meeting to order. He said that the church had been built at great expense, and it was a popular church; and as there would no doubt be a great rush, they had concluded to auction the pews off to the highest bidder.

"For this pew, No. 1, splendidly cushioned and easy-backed, how much?" cried the auctioneer. "One hundred thousand dollars," said the auctioneer, "is a small price for the best seat in this the greatest church in the universe. Am I offered any more?" "One hundred and fifty thousand dollars!" said some one else. "Two hundred thousand dollars!" cried another. "Going at that!" said the auctioneer. "Going at that! Gone! Who buys it?" "ASTOR VAN DERBELT?" is the response. "Bogus?" said some one. "We never heard of that name up here. Who is he? We have no record here of any of his prayers. He is not on the roll of the meek and quiet spirits."—"Never mind all that," says the purchaser; "here are the bonds that I brought along with me from the lower world. Here is the cash down." "Sold!" cries the auctioneer—"the first seat in heaven to ASTOR VAN DERBELT for two hundred thousand dollars."

As the auction went on, the excitement increased. There was a great struggle to get the best pews, and moral and religious character weighed nothing in the scale; he who had the most

earthly scrip won it. There was a slight interruption when an old elder from an earthly church demanded a seat. He said he had served God fifty years, and had held the first position on earth in churches and prayer-meetings; and while he was not ambitious for the first or second seat in heaven, he thought he ought to have a seat somewhere, because he had been journeying seventy years and was very tired, and would like to sit down. To quiet this old soldier of the cross, and to keep him from further interrupting the auction, some one said to him: "Old man, as you are used to camp-life in the Christian warfare, here is a camp-stool for you to sit on in the aisle, but sit as much aside as possible, and give room for those angels' dresses as they come sweeping through the aisle."

At this moment there was a great shout at the door, a huzza among the common saints who stood outside the building. "What is that noise about?" said the auctioneer, as he brought his silver mallet heavy on the stand before him. It was found to be two brothers, locked arms, coming in. All knew them outside the door, but inside they were comparatively strangers, and looked a little embarrassed. The one began to speak in application for a seat. "How much do you bid?" said the auctioneer. The man replied: "I bid nothing. When I left the earth I had but eight pounds; all the rest I had given to Christian objects." "Who are you?" said the auctioneer, "that you would disturb this sale?" "I am JOHN WESLEY!" said the applicant. "O," says the auctioneer. "It seems to me I have heard of you, but we have no pews as low as eight pounds." At this a man who had given seventy-five thousand dollars for his celestial pew, and who had on earth been known as much for his piety as his wealth, says: "Let me take JOHN WESLEY into my pew. Bless him! I was converted through reading one of his sermons!" "One more perplexing case got out of the way," cried the auctioneer. "But what," says JOHN WESLEY, "are you going to do with my brother CHARLES?" "O," said the auctioneer, "he can be in the choir, and stand among the singers, and he can pay his way in that manner. It will be worth some thousands to hear him in a solo singing 'A charge to keep I have.'" Another troublesome case ended, cries the auctioneer. At this an old Methodist back by the door burst right out and shouted "Glory!" and the silver gavel came down with an emphatic command of "silence!"

When the bids on the pews began to slacken, GRAND ROTHCILD, a man who in the earth beneath had owned whole blocks of store-houses, bid in a number of pews partly in his own name and partly in the name of others, so that the aggregate might foot up to an amount that had never previously been known in heaven; and when the bids were all in, it was found that the pews had brought ninety-three million, seven hundred thousand, and fourteen dollars. But the scene

was not over. A wealthy Scotchman, who had an eighty-thousand-dollar pew, said: "I notice back there in the crowd young ROBERT MCCHEYNE, with a cluster of people from Dundee. What are they to do?" "Take those poor seats along by the wall," said the auctioneer. "And yonder is RICHARD BAXTER, with a crowd from Kidderminster," said an Englishman. "Well," said the auctioneer, "he can find his 'Saints everlasting rest in that further corner.'" When LATIMER and HUBLEY applied they declared that they had nothing to pay, as they had got burned out and the fire had taken everything. But finally the holders of the chief pews lost their patience, and said: "Drive those common people out. They vitiate the atmosphere. We will give something nice to have a mission chapel for them down on one of the back streets of heaven. Let them go there, and be by themselves. Send down to them some of those third-class harpers with their harps, and let that angel with the bronchitis go and preach to them. But get them out of this place. Away with them!" At this all the first-class pew-holders shouldered their gold-headed canes, and began to clear the promises; and ISAAC WATTS was shoved out, and HENRY MARTYN, and PHILIP DODDRIDGE, and ELIZABETH FRY, and a great multitude that no man could number. The aisles were finally cleared of all save two, who at first peremptorily refused departure. The one was roughly jostled and asked who he was that he dared thus to interfere with this auction; and he gave a startling announcement, which made all the chandeliers rattle, and the whole building quake as if under a clap of thunder: "I am the Apostle JAMES. If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay-clothing, and say unto him, 'Sit thou here in a good place;' and say to the poor, 'Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool;' are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" But this was considered impertinent, and two of the trustees of the Church of Heaven seized the Apostle JAMES by the collar of his robe, and marched him off to the fastness in the tower, asking the municipal authorities to take charge of him till next day.

There was now but one more case to be disposed of. He seemed weary, as if he had walked a great way, and leaned up against the wall. And when he was asked whether he wished to purchase, he said: "No; I had not on earth where to lay my head. I was born in a manger that did not belong to me, and was buried in a borrowed sepulchre, and I am consequently in full sympathy with the people whom you have shut out. Ye refuse the benediction I gave when I said 'The poor ye have always with you.' You will have none such, and hence ye cannot have my benediction. Inasmuch as ye did it

not to them ye did it not to me." With this he staggered in fatigue and faintness toward the door, and passing out, shut it so loudly behind him that the jar of the gate woke us. Then we found that there had been no auction sale of pews in heaven at all, but we had had a dream consequent upon our leaning our head against a slat in a car window.

An Irreverent Clucker:

They have had more trouble at our Methodist meeting-house. Last Sunday Rev. Mr. Moody was just beginning his sermon, and had uttered the words "Brethren, I wish to direct your attention this morning to the fourth verse of the twentieth chapter of Saint—" when a hen emerged from the recess beneath the pulpit. As she had just laid an egg, she interrupted Mr. Moody to announce the fact to the congregation; and he stopped short as she walked out in the aisle, screeching—

"Kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk—to-ho! Kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk—to-ho!"

Mr. Moody contemplated her for a moment, and then concluded to go on; but the sound of his voice seemed to provoke her to rivalry, so she put on a pressure of five or six pounds to the square inch, and made such a racket that the preacher stopped again, and said:

"Will Deacon Grimes please remove that disgraceful chicken from the meeting-house?"

The deacon rose and proceeded with the task. He first tried to drive her toward the door; but she dodged him, and, still clucking vigorously, got under the seat in the front pew. Then the deacon seized his umbrella and scooped her out into the aisle again, after which he tried to "shoo" her toward the door; but she darted into a pew, hopped over the partition, came down into the opposite pew and in the side aisle, making a noise like a steam planing-mill. The deacon didn't like to climb after her, so he went around, and just as he got into the side aisle the hen flew into the middle aisle again. Then the boys in the gallery laughed, and the deacon began to grow red in the face.

At last Mr. Binns came out of his pew to help, and, as both he and the deacon made a dash at the chicken in opposite directions, she flew up with a wild cluck to the gallery and perched on the edge, while, she gave excited expression to her views by emitting about five hundred clucks a minute. The deacon flung a hymn-book at her to scare her down again, but he missed her and hit Billy Jones, a Sunday-school scholar, in the eye. Then another boy in the gallery made a dash at her, and reached so far over that he tumbled and fell on Mrs. Miskey's spring bonnet, whereupon she said out loud that he was predestined to the gallows. The crash scared the hen, and she flew over and roosted on the stove-pipe that runs along just under the ceiling, fairly howling with fright. In order to bring her down the deacon and Mr. Binns both beat on the lower part of the pipe with their umbrellas,

and at the fifth or sixth knock the pipe separated, and about forty feet of it came down with a crash, emptying a barrel or two of soot on the congregation. There were women in that congregation who went home looking as if they had been working a coal mine, and wishing they could stab Deacon Grimes without being hung for murder. The hen came down with the stove-pipe, and as she flew by Mr. Binns he made a dash at her with his umbrella and knocked her clean through a fifteen-dollar pane of glass, whereupon she landed in the street, and hopped off clucking insanely. Then Mr. Moody adjourned the congregation. They are going to expel the owner of that hen from the church when they discover his identity.

PRAYING WITH CHILDREN.—A minister had been talking with a young mother on the importance of prayer for the children, and asked her whether she ever prayed with, as well as for, her little ones. She said she had not, as she feared they would be restless and she embarrassed; but nevertheless she promised to try. As evening came she noticed that her daughter seemed unusually peevish, and so she thought it best to take her little son first. Willie was a bright lad of only five years, but when his mother whispered her wish to pray with him, he gladly put his hand in hers and knelt by her side. As he heard his own name mentioned before the Lord, a tender hush seemed to fall upon his young spirit, and he clasped his mother's fingers more tightly as each petition for his special need was breathed into the ear of the Great Father. When they rose from their knees Willie's face was radiant. "Mamma, mamma," he said, "I'm glad you told Jesus my name; now He'll know me, when I get to heaven."

VELOCITY AND DURATION OF LIGHTNING.—A large flash of lightning, distinctly seen, often leaves upon the mind an impression that it has lasted fully a second or more, but it is proved that such is not the fact. Its velocity is at the rate of 288,000 miles per second. The utmost duration of a flash from beginning to end is estimated not to exceed the sixtieth part of a second, though retained upon the retina so much longer. This may be proved during a storm on a perfectly dark night by setting a wheel to work so rapidly that in a steady light its spokes appear to blend and become individually invisible. If being dark, and the wheel rapidly revolving as above, when a flash of lightning occurs the wheel will appear to the eye motionless, every spoke being distinctly and separately visible and still. This was first observed by Wheatstone, and is recorded by him, in conjunction with other similar experiments, as conclusive proof that the duration of the flash is excessively brief.

A coffin maker having apartment to let, posted his bills announcing the same upon the coffins in the window, "Lodging for single gentlemen."