

THE REV. DR. TALMAGE

THE BROOKLYN DIVINE'S SUNDAY SERMON.

Subject: "How to Save the Cities."

TEXT: "And the men of the city said unto Elisha: Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my Lord seeth; but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said: Bring me a cruse, and I will put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said: Thus, said the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day."—2 Kings ii., 19-23.

It is difficult to estimate how much of the prosperity and health of a city are dependent upon good water. We want more money well-laid pipes and from safe reservoir, an abundance of water from Croton, or Ridge-wood, or Schuylkill is brought into the city is appropriately celebrated with oration and pyrotechnic display. Thank God every day for clear, bright, beautiful sparkling water as it drops in the shower, or tosses up in the fountain, or rushes out at the hydrant.

The City of Jericho, notwithstanding all its physical and commercial advantages, was sinking in the mire of corruption. There was enough water, but it was diseased, and the people were crying out by reason thereof. Elisha, the prophet, comes to the rescue. He says: "Get me a new cruse; fill it with salt and bring it to me." So the cruse of salt was brought to the prophet, and so him was bringing out to the general reservoir, and lo! all the impurities depart, through a supernatural and divine influence, and the water above and fresh and clear, and all the people clap their hands and lift up their voices in gladness. Water for Jericho—clear, bright, beautiful, God-given water!

At different times I have pointed out to you the fountains of municipal corruption, and this morning I propose to show you what are the means for the rectification of these fountains. There are four or five kinds of salt that have a cleansing tendency. So far as God may help me, I shall bring a cruse of salt to the work, and empty it into the great reservoir of municipal crime, sin, and shame, ignorance and unbelief.

In this work of cleansing our cities, I have first to remark, that there is a work for the broom and shovel that nothing else can do. There always has been an intimate connection between iniquity and dirt. The cities of the great cities are always the most iniquitous parts. The gutters and the pavements of the Fourth Ward, New York, illustrate and symbolize the character of the people in the Fourth Ward.

The first thing that a bad man does when he is converted is thoroughly to wash himself. There were, this morning, on his way to the different churches, thousands of men in proper apparel who, before their conversion, were unfit in their Sabbath dress. Then on the Sabbath they wash themselves in his dress, my suspicions in regard to his moral character are aroused, and they are always well founded. So as to allow no excuse for lack of ablution, God has cleft the continents with rivers and has made the great oceans, and all the world ought to be clean. Away, then, with the dirt from our cities, not only because the physical health needs an ablation, but because all the great moral and religious interests of the cities demand it as a positive necessity.

Through the upturning of the earth for great improvement our city could not be expected to be as clean as usual, but for the illimitable dirt of Brooklyn for the last six months there is no excuse. It is not a matter of dust in the eyes, and mud for the shoes, and of stench for the nostrils, but of morals for the soul.

Another corrective influence that we would bring to bear upon the evils of a great city is the Christian literature of the newspapers of any place are the test of its morality. The newsboy who runs along his street with a roll of papers under his arm is a tremendous force that cannot be turned aside nor resisted. The city is elevated or degraded. This hungry, all-devouring American mind must have something to read, and upon editors and authors and book publishers and parents and teachers rests the responsibility of what they read. The city is elevated or degraded. This hungry, all-devouring American mind must have something to read, and upon editors and authors and book publishers and parents and teachers rests the responsibility of what they read.

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It is high time that all city and State authority, as well as the Federal Government, appropriate the awful statistics that while years ago in this country there was set apart forty-eight millions of acres for school purposes, there are now in New England one hundred and ninety-one thousand people who can neither read nor write, and in the State of Pennsylvania two hundred and twenty-two thousand who can neither read nor write, and in the State of New York two hundred and forty-one thousand who can neither read nor write, while in the United States there are nearly six millions who can neither read nor write. Statistics enough to stagger and confound any man who loves his God and his country. Now, in view of this fact, I am in favor of compulsory education. When parents are so bestial as to neglect this duty to the child, I say the State with a strong hand, at the same time with a gentle hand, ought to lead these little ones into the light of intelligence and good morals. It was a beautiful tableau when in our city a swarthy policeman, having picked up a lost child in the street, was found possessing it with a stick of candy he had bought at the apple stand. That was well done, and beautifully done. But, oh! these thousands of little ones who are crying for knowledge and intelligence. Shall we not give it to them? The officers of the law ought to go down into the cellars and into the garrets and bring out these benighted little ones, and put them under educational influences; and after they have passed through the bath and under the comb, putting before them the spelling book, and teaching them to read the Lord's Prayer and the Lord's Prayer and the Lord's Prayer.

outcast little ones. As a recipe for the cure of much of the woe, and want, and crime of our cities, I give the words which the Lord had chiseled on the open scroll in the hand of John Gutenberg, the inventor of the art of printing: "Let there be light!"

Still further: Reformatory societies are an important part in the reclamation of the public fountains. Without calling any of them by name, I refer more especially to those which recognize the physical as well as the moral woe of the world. There was penos and a great deal of common sense in what the poor woman said to Dr. Cutbush when he was telling her what a very good woman she ought to be. "Oh," she said, "if you were as hungry and cold as I am, you could think of nothing else." I believe the great want of our city is the Gospel and something to eat. Faith and repentance are of infinite importance; but they cannot satisfy an empty stomach! You have to go forth in this work with the bread of eternal life in your right hand, and the bread of this life in your left hand, and then you can touch the famishing multitude. Faith and repentance first broke the bread and fed the multitude in the wilderness, and then began to preach, recognizing the fact that while people are hungry they will not listen, and they will not repent. We want more common sense and more charity, and more hard work.

Still further: The great remedial influence is the Gospel of Christ. Take that down through the lanes of suffering. Take that down amid the hovels of sin. Take that up amid the mansions and palaces of the city. That is the salt that can cure all the poisoned fountains of public iniquity. Do you know that in this cluster of three cities, New York, Jersey City and Brooklyn, there are a great multitude of homeless children. You see I speak more in regard to the youth and the children of the country, because old villains are seldom reformed, and therefore I talk more about the little ones. They sleep under the stoops, in the burned-out safe, in the wagons in the streets, on the barges, wherever they can get a board beneath them. And in the summer they mop all night long in the parks. Their destitution is well set forth by an incident. A city missionary asked one of them: "Where is your home?" Said he: "I don't have no home, sir." "Well, where are your father and mother?" "They are dead, sir." "Did you ever hear of Jesus Christ?" "No, I don't think I ever heard of Him." "Did you ever hear of God?" "Yes, I've heard of God. Some of the poor people think it kind of lucky at night to say something over about that bell that rings in the sky. Yes, sir, I've heard of Him." Think of a conversation like that in a Christian city.

How many are waiting for you to come out in the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ and rescue them from the wretchedness here! Oh, the Church of God has been so long reformed, and hearts warm enough to take them up! How many of them there are! As I was thinking of the subject this morning, it seemed to me as though there was a great brink, and that these little ones were coming toward it. And here is a group of orphans. O fathers and mothers, what do you think of these fatherless and motherless little ones? No hand at home to take care of their apparel, and no money to buy them the necessaries of life. "Who will take care of my clothes now?" The little ones are thrown out in this great cold world. They are shivering on the brink like lambs on the verge of a precipice. Does not your blood run cold when you hear of this?

And here is another group that come on toward the precipice. They are the children of besotted parents. They are worse off than orphans. Look at that pale cheek; we bleached it. Look at that gash across the forehead; the father struck it. Hear that wailing cry; the mother drank. And we come out and we say: "O you suffering, peeled, and blistered ones, we come to help you." "Too late," cry thousands of voices. "The path we have trodden is too late." "Too late!" "Too late!" And we catch our breath and we make a terrific outcry. "Too late!" is echoed from the garret to cellar, from the gin-shop and from brothel. "Too late!" It is too late, and they go over.

Here is another group, an army of neglected children. They come on toward the brink, and every time they step ten thousand hearts break. The ground is red with the blood of their feet. The air is heavy with the cries of their pain. Being filled up from all the houses of iniquity and shame. Skeleton Despair pushes them on toward the brink. The death-knell has already begun to toll and the angels of God hover like birds over the plunging children. One of the children says: "I am on the brink they halt, and throw out their hands, and cry: 'Help! help!' O Church of God, will you help? Men and women bought by the blood of the Son of God, will you help? While Christ cries from the heavens: 'Save them from going down; I am the ransom.'"

I stepped on the street and just looked at the face of one of those little ones. Have you ever examined the faces of the neglected children of the poor? Other children have a brightness in their faces. When a group of them rush across the road, it seems as though a spring gush had unloosed an orchard of apple blossoms. But these children of the poor. There is but little rite in their laughter, and but little quickness in their thought. Their memory is tripped. They have an old lumber. They do not skip or run up on the lumber just for the pleasure of leaping down. They never bathe in the mountain stream. They never wade in the brook for pebbles. They never butter their bread with butter. They never put their hat right down where it was just before. Childhood has been dashed out of them. Want waded his wizard wand above the manger of their birth, and withered leaves are lying where God intended a budding giant of hope. One of the children says: "I am on the brink they halt, and throw out their hands, and cry: 'Help! help!' O Church of God, will you help? Men and women bought by the blood of the Son of God, will you help? While Christ cries from the heavens: 'Save them from going down; I am the ransom.'"

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brother. "Don't you remember that a boy came in here six months ago and wanted to borrow five dollars to go into the newspaper business?" "O, yes, I remember; are you the lad?" "Yes," he replied, "I have got along nicely. I can get a nice home for my mother (she is sick yet, and I am as well clothed as you are, and there's your five dollars.) O, was he not worth saving? Why that lad is worth fifty such boys as I have sometimes seen working in elegant circles, never put to any use for God or man. Worth saving! I go farther than that, and tell you they are not only worth saving, but they are being saved. One of these lads picked up from our streets, and sent West by a benevolent society, wrote East, saying: 'I am getting along first rate. I am on probation in the Methodist Church. I shall be entered as a member the first of next month. I now teach a Sunday-school class of eleven boys. I get along first rate with it. This is a splendid country to make a living in. If the boys running around the street with a blacking box on their shoulder, or a bundle of papers under their arms, only knew what high old times we boys have out here, they wouldn't hesitate about coming West, but come the first chance they get.' I am getting along first rate. I am on probation in the Methodist Church. I shall be entered as a member the first of next month. I now teach a Sunday-school class of eleven boys. I get along first rate with it. This is a splendid country to make a living in. If the boys running around the street with a blacking box on their shoulder, or a bundle of papers under their arms, only knew what high old times we boys have out here, they wouldn't hesitate about coming West, but come the first chance they get.' I am getting along first rate. I am on probation in the Methodist Church. I shall be entered as a member the first of next month. I now teach a Sunday-school class of eleven boys. I get along first rate with it. 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