

TALMAGE

Preaches a Sermon at Lakeside, O.

LESSON OF THE VACANT CHAIR IN THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

Mute Appeals to Our Better Nature From These Reminders of the Loved Ones Who Have Simply Gone Before.

The encampment grounds at Lakeside, Ohio, received a great influx of Sandusky, Toledo and Cleveland people Sunday, to hear the sermon by T. De Witt Talmage, and it was a vast multitude that he preached to at 11 a. m. His subject was the "Vacant Chair," and his text I Samuel xx, 18. "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty."

Set on the table the cutlery and the chased silverware of the palace, for King Saul will give a state dinner today. A distinguished place is kept at the table for his son-in-law, a celebrated warrior, David by name. The guests, jeweled and plumed, come in and take their places. When people are invited to a king's banquet they are very apt to go. But before the covers are lifted from the feast Saul looks around and finds a vacant seat at the table. He says within himself, perhaps audibly: "What does this mean? Where is my son-in-law? Where is David, the great warrior? I invited him. I expected him. What a vacant chair at the king's banquet!" The fact was that David, the warrior, had been seated for the last time at his father-in-law's table. The day before Jonathan had coaxed David to go and occupy that place at the table, saying to David in the words of my text, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty." The prediction was fulfilled. David was missed. His seat was empty. That one vacant chair spoke louder than all the occupied chairs at the banquet.

In almost every house the articles of furniture take a living personality. That picture—a stranger would not see anything remarkable either in its design or execution, but it is more to you than all the pictures of the Louvre and Luxembourg. You remember who bought it, and who admired it. And that hymn book—you remember who sang out of it. And that cradle—you remember who rocked it. And that Bible—you remember who read out of it. And that bed—you remember who slept in it. And that room—you remember who died in it. But there is nothing in all your house so eloquent and so mighty voiced as the vacant chair. I suppose that before Saul and his guests got up from this banquet there was a great clatter of wine pitchers, but all that racket was drowned out by the voice that came up from the vacant chair at the table.

Millions have gazed and wept at John Quincy Adams' vacant chair in the House of Representatives, and at Henry Wilson's vacant chair in the vice presidency, and at Henry Clay's vacant chair in the American Senate, and at Prince Albert's vacant chair in Windsor castle, and at Thiers' vacant chair in the councils of the French nation. But all these chairs are unimportant to you as compared with the vacant chairs in your own household. Have these chairs any lesson for us to learn? Are we any better men and women than when they first addressed us?

FATHER'S CHAIR.

First I point out to you the father's vacant chair. Old men always like to sit in the same place and in the same chair. They somehow feel more at home, and sometimes when you are in their place and they come into the room you jump up suddenly and say, "Here, father, here's your chair." The probability is it is an arm chair, for he is not so strong as he once was, and he needs a little upholding. His hair is a little frosty, his gums a little depressed, for in his early days there was not much dentistry. Perhaps a case chair and old fashioned apparel, for though you may have suggested some improvement, father does not want any of your nonsense. Grandfather never had much admiration for new fangled notions.

I sat at the table of one of my parishioners in a former congregation; an aged man was at the table, and the son was presiding, and the father somewhat abruptly addressed the son and said, "My son, don't try to show off because the minister is here!" Your father never liked any new customs or manners; he preferred the old way of doing things, and he never looked so happy as when, with his eyes closed, he sat in the arm chair in the corner. From the wrinkled brow to the tip of the slippers, what placidity! The wave of the past years of his life broke at the foot of that chair. Perhaps sometimes he was a little impatient, and sometimes told the same story twice; but over that old chair how many blessed memories hovered! I hope you did not crowd that old chair, and that it did not get very much in the way.

Sometimes the old man's chair gets very much in the way, especially if he has been so unwise as to make over all his property to his children, with the understanding that they are to take care of him. I have seen in such cases children crowd the old man's chair to the door, and then crowd it clear into the street, and then crowd it into the poor-house, and keep on crowding it until the old man fell out of it into his grave.

But your father's chair was a sacred place. The children used to climb up on the rungs of it for a good night kiss, and the longer he stayed the better you liked it. But that chair has been vacant now for some time. The furniture dealer would not give you fifty cents for it, but it is a throne of influence in your domestic circle. I saw in the French palace, and in the throne room, the chair that Napoleon used to occupy. It was a beautiful chair, but the monarchs and

part of it was the letter "N" embroiled on the back of the chair in purple and gold. And your father's old chair sits in the throne room of your heart, and your affections have embroidered on the back of that old chair in purple and gold the letter "F." Have all the prayers of that old chair been answered? Have all the counsels of that old chair been practiced? Speak out! old arm chair.

History tells us of an old man whose three sons were victors in the Olympic games, and when they came back these three sons, with their garlands, put them on their father's brow, and the old man was so rejoiced at the victories of his three children that he fell dead in their arms. And are you, oh man, going to bring a wreath of joy and Christian usefulness and put it on your father's brow, or on the vacant chair, or on the memory of the one departed? Speak out, old arm chair! With reference to your father, the words of my text have been fulfilled, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat shall be empty."

MOTHER'S CHAIR.

I go a little further on in your house and I find the mother's chair. It is very apt to be a rocking chair. She had so many cares and troubles to soothe that she must have rockers. I remember it well; it was an old chair, and the rockers were almost worn out, for I was the youngest, and the chair had rocked the whole family. It made a creaking noise as it moved; but there was music in the sound. It was just high enough to allow us children to put our heads into her lap. That was the bank where we deposited all our hurts and worries. Ah! what a chair that was. It was different from the father's chair, it was entirely different. You ask me how? I can not tell; but we all felt it was different. Perhaps there was about this chair more gentleness, more tenderness, more grief when we had done wrong. When we were wayward father scolded, but mother cried. It was a very wakeful chair. In the sick days of children other chairs could not keep awake; that chair always kept awake—kept easily awake. The chair knew all the old lullabies and all those wordless songs which mothers sing to their sick children—songs in which all pity and compassion and sympathetic influences are combined.

That old chair has stopped rocking for a good many years. It may be set up in the loft or the garret, but it holds a queenly power yet. When at midnight you went into that grog shop to get the intoxicating draught, did you not hear a voice that said, "My son, why go in there?" And louder than the boisterous noise of the place of sinful amusement, a voice saying, "My son, what do you do here?" And when you went into the house of abandonment, a voice saying, "What would your mother do if she knew you were here?" And you were provoked with yourself, and you charged yourself with superstition and fanaticism and your head got hot with your own thoughts, and you went home and you went to bed, and no sooner had you touched this bed than a voice said: "What! a prayless pillow? Man! what is the matter?" This, you are too near your mother's rocking chair.

"Oh, pshaw," you say. There is nothing in that. I'm five hundred miles off from where I was born. I'm three thousand miles off from the church whose bell was the first music I ever heard. I cannot help that. You are too near your mother's rocking chair. "Oh, you say, 'there can't be anything in that.' That chair has been vacant a great while." I cannot help that. It is all the mightier for that. It is omnipotent, that vacant mother's chair. It whispers, it speaks, it weeps, it carols, it mourns, it prays, it warns, it thunders. A young man went off and broke his mother's heart, and while he was away from home his mother died, and the telegraph brought the son, and he came into the room where she lay and looked upon her face, and he cried out: "Oh, mother, mother, what your life could not do your death shall effect! This moment I give my heart to God." And he kept his promise. Another victory for the vacant chair. With reference to your mother the words of my text were fulfilled, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty."

THE INVALID'S CHAIR.

I go on a little further, and I come to the invalid's chair. What! How long have you been sick? "Oh! I have been sick ten, twenty, thirty years." Is it possible? What a story of endurance. There are in many of the families of my congregation these invalid's chairs. The occupants of them think they are doing no good in the world, but that invalid's chair is the mighty pulpit from which they have been preaching, all these years, trust in God. The first time I preached here at Lakeside, Ohio, amid the throngs present, there was nothing that so much impressed me as the spectacle of just one face—the face of an invalid who was wheeled in on her chair. I said to her afterward, "Madam, how long have you been prostrated?" for she was lying flat in the chair. "Oh!" she replied, "I have been this way fifteen years." I said, "Do you suffer very much?" "Oh, yes," she said, "I suffer very much; I suffer all the time; part of the time I was blind. I always suffer." "Well," I said, "can you keep your courage up?" "Oh, yes," she said, "I am happy, very happy indeed." Her face showed it. She looked the happiest of any one on the ground.

Oh, what a means of grace to the world, these invalid chairs. On that field of human suffering the grace of God gets its victory. Edward Payson, the invalid, and Richard Baxter, the invalid, and Robert Hall, the invalid, and the ten thousand of whom the world has never heard, but of whom all heaven is cognizant. The most conspicuous thing on earth for God's eye and the eye of angels to rest on, is not a throne of earthly power, but it is the invalid's chair. Oh, these men and women who are always suffering but never complaining—these victims of spinal disease, and neuritic torture, and rheumatic

constriction will answer to the roll call of the martyrs, and rise to the martyr's throne, and will wave the martyr's palm.

But when one of these invalid's chairs becomes vacant how suggestive it is! No more bolstering up of the weary head. No more changing from side to side to get an easy position. No more use of the bandage and the cataplasm and the prescription. That invalid's chair may be folded up or taken apart or set away, but it will never lose its queenly power; it will always preach of trust in God and cheerful submission. Suffering all ended now. With respect to that invalid the words of my text have been fulfilled, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty."

THAT EMPTY HIGH CHAIR.

I pass on and I find one more vacant chair. It is a high chair. It is the child's chair. If that chair be occupied I think it is the most potent chair in all the household. All the chairs wait on it; all the chairs are turned toward it. It means more than David's chair at Saul's banquet. At any rate it makes more racket. That is a strange house that can be dull with a child in it. How that child breaks up the hard worldliness of the place and keeps you young to sixty, seventy and eighty years of age. If you have no child of your own adopt one; it will open heaven to your soul. It will pay its way. Its crowing in the morning will give the day a cheerful starting, and its glee at night will give the day a cheerful close. You do not like children? Then you had better stay out of heaven, for there are so many there they would fairly make you crazy. Only about five hundred millions of them. The old crusty Pharisees told the mothers to keep the children away from Christ. "You bother him," they said; "you trouble the Master." Trouble him! He has filled heaven with that kind of trouble.

A pioneer in California says that for the first year or two after his residence in Sierra Nevada county there was not a single child in all the reach of a hundred miles. But the Fourth of July came, and the miners were gathered together and they were celebrating the Fourth with oration and poem and a bolsterous brass band, and while the band was playing an infant's voice was heard crying, and all the miners were startled, and the swarthy men began to think of their homes on the eastern coast, and their wives and children far away, and their hearts were thrilled with homesickness as they hear the baby cry. But the music went on, and the child cried louder and louder, and the brass band played louder and louder, trying to drown out the infant's interruption, when a swarthy miner, the tears rolling down his face, got up and shook his fist and said, "Stop that noisy band, and give the baby a chance." Oh, there was pathos in it, as well as good cheer in it. There is nothing to arouse and melt and subdue the soul like a child's voice. But when it goes away from you the high chair become a higher chair and there is desolation all about you.

In three-fourths of the homes of this congregation there is a vacant high chair. Somehow you never get over it. There is no one to put to bed at night; no one to ask strange questions about God and heaven. Oh, what is the use of that high chair? It is to call you higher. What a drawing upward it is to have children in heaven! And then it is such a preventive against sin. If a father is going away into sin he leaves his living children with their mother; but if a father is going away into sin what is he going to do with his dead children floating about and hovering over his every wayward step. Oh, speak out, vacant high chair, and say: "Father, come back from sin; mother, come back from worldliness. I am watching you. I am waiting for you." With respect to your child the words of my text have been fulfilled, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty."

AN INVITATION UPWARD.

My hearers, I have gathered up the voices of your departed friends and tried to intone them into one invitation upward. I set in array all the vacant chairs of your homes and of your social circles, and I bid them cry out this morning: "Time is short. Eternity is near. Take my Saviour. Be at peace with my God. Come up where I am. We lived together on earth; come let us live together in heaven." We answer that invitation. We come. Keep a seat for us as Saul kept a seat for David, but that seat shall not be empty. And oh! when we are all through with this world, and we have shaken hands all around for the last time, and all our chairs in the home circle and in the outside world shall be vacant, may we be worshipping God in that place from which we shall go out no more forever.

I thank God there will be no vacant chairs in heaven. There we shall meet again and talk over our earthly heart-breaks. How much you have been through since you saw them last. On the shining shore you will talk it all over. The heartaches. The loneliness. The sleepless nights. The weeping until you had no more power to weep, because the heart was withered and dried up. Story of empty cradle and little shoe only half worn out never to be worn again, just the shape of the foot that once pressed it. And dreams when you thought the departed had come back again, and the room seemed bright with their faces, and you started up to greet them and in the effort the dream broke and you found yourself standing amid room in the midnight—alone.

Talking it all over, and then, hand in hand, walking up and down in the light. No sorrow, no tears, no death. Oh, heaven! beautiful heaven! Heaven where our friends are. Heaven where we expect to be. In the east they take a cage of birds and bring it to the tomb of the dead, and then they open the door of the cage, and the birds, flying out, sing. And I would today bring a cage of Christian consolations to the grave of your loved ones, and I would open the door and let them fill all the air with the music of their voices.

Oh, how they bound in these springs

before the throne! Some shout with gladness. Some break forth into uncontrollable weeping for joy. Some stand speechless in their shock of delight. They sing. They quiver with excessive gladness. They gaze on the temples, on the palaces, on the waters, on each other. They weave their joy into garlands, they spring it into triumphal arches, they strike it on timbrels, and then all the loved ones gather in a great circle around the throne of God—fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, lovers and friends, hand to hand around about the throne of God—the circle ever widening—hand to hand, joy to joy, jubilee to jubilee, victory to victory, "until the day break and the shadows flee away. Turn thou, my beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethor."

RELIGIOUS NOTES.

The average pay of the Presbyterian ministers of the country is \$3 0 a year according to the official report.

The mission for lepers in India has established a new center of their own in Neyoor, Travancore, South India.

The first Hebrew bible published in America was issued in Philadelphia in 1814, by Thomas Dobson, at the Stone House.

The women of the Baptist churches in this country have contributed for foreign missions during the past year the sum of \$102,629.02.

M. David Montezinos has presented his library, comprising 8,000 volumes, to the Beth Hamedash belonging to the Portuguese congregation at Amsterdam.

According to the *Hebrew Journal* there are in New York city 30 Hebrew places of worship, 20 charitable institutions, eight benefit societies, and seven clubs and libraries.

Asia, the cradle of the human race, has 103 Young Men's Christian Associations. "Darkest Africa" has 13, and Oceania, comprising the islands of the sea, has 16.

A movement is on foot for a mission on a gigantic scale to the young men of London, its object being to urge upon them the claims of the heathen and Mohammedan world.

The progress of toleration in Spain was illustrated recently by the presence of reporters from the principal Madrid papers of all shades at the opening of the new depot of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Seven years ago the Jews in Jerusalem were situated at 19,000. The British consul thinks they have now increased to 40,000, while some local authorities believe they reach 60,000. The trade of the city is passing rapidly into their hands.

In the year 1816 Matthew Carey, of Philadelphia, issued over 20 separate editions of the bible complete and New Testaments. These were printed from his standing types and were similar to previous editions of Carey's bible in former years.

Miss Binswanger, of Philadelphia, is credited with the idea of founding and sustaining that useful charity, the Young Women's Union. This flourishing society of only six or seven years' growth gathers the little ones of the great city out of attics and basements in narrow, filthy alleys and courts, washes them, feeds them, instructs them, and amuses them.

The American Congregational Union, organized in 1853, has aided in erecting 2,044 houses of worship and 270 parsonages in 48 States and Territories. From loans and grants on churches and parsonages \$298,454.82 have been paid back to the union, and the insurance and sales of churches have increased the amount to \$309,597.62, which has been reallocated to other new church organizations.

The Wesleyans and Congregationalists of London are relieving the outcast poor of the metropolis by thousands. In one week the London Congregational Union gave shelter to 3,447 homeless beings, most of them from the rural districts, for "over a third of the population was not born within its bounds." The "shelter" halls give "a little coffee and a few buns to the most needy" on Sunday, and then the gospel is preached to these people, who never enter churches, in the same halls where sleep and food have been afforded.

EIG THOUGHTS IN SMALL SPACE.

Age is a matter of feeling, not of years. —George W. Curtis.

We may give advice, but we can not give conduct. —Franklin.

No act, however long, is safe that does not match a thought that is still longer. —Parkhurst.

He removes the greatest ornament of friendship who takes away from it respect. —Lycero.

It is by presence of mind in untried emergencies that the native mettle of a man is tested. —Lowell.

The product of gold in the United States during the last 16 years has aggregated the enormous amount of \$572,900,000.

The first proof of a man's incapacity for anything is his endeavoring to fix the stigma of failure upon others. —B. R. Haydon.

To judge human character rightly a man may sometimes have a very small experience provided he has a very large heart. —Bulwer Lytton.

Equality is the life of conversation; and he is as much out who assumes to himself any part above another as he who considers himself below the rest of the society. —Steels.

Josh Billings' Philosophy.

Try generosity consists in giving what you can afford to those who deserve it.

My young friend, look out for the men who shut up one eye and talks to you with the other.

Happiness seems to consist in—wanting nothing.

Health will bring mummy, but mummy won't bring health.

We may get wiser as we get older, but we never get better.

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The firm of Nurney & Jackson having been dissolved I will continue the Undertakers business at the old stand on Washington street. All orders will receive my prompt attention.

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Apr-12-07

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One single bottle is guaranteed to do all claimed for it. Its price, 50 cents, is within the reach of all, and this amount will be returned to any buyer who is dissatisfied with the medicine.

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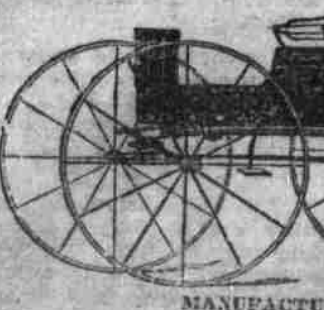
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