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On the 7th inst. Congress convened in extraordinary session, which will most probably be extended into the regular term, and not adjourn for ten months. The two momentous questions which will engage its attention for most of the time are those of finance and the tariff. Its immediate object is the relief of the present financial stringency. What will be the outcome of its legislation could easily be predicted were our political parties more compact in their organization, and the representatives of these parties more faithful to their pledges. The Democratic party has control of the two necessary departments of our government, legislative and executive, and it is only natural to expect that this party will enact legislation as promised in the Chicago platform of June, 1892, which the people so overwhelmingly endorsed in November following. That is no more and no less than the people should ask. Whether it will fulfill its promises is not our part to say, but we can state that if it proves false to the people in this trying crisis, it has commanded their support for the last time. We would not attempt to solve the problem for the legislators—too many are thus engaged already—but we have simply taken this occasion to remind them

that the people are watching them, and that the people desire relief, and must have it sooner or later; and whether by means of the Democratic party, must be determined by that party within the next few months. It is an opportunity which is seldom presented to a political organization—which improved will perpetuate the party, and which disregarded cannot but result in complete and deserved annihilation of the party. This much: We must have legislation for a more substantial object than confidence.

The universal law of the survival of the fittest was never more strikingly exemplified than in the very recent action between France and Siam. For no other reason than that she was the more powerful, and wanted certain districts of Siam, France has demanded and secured by threats of war 100,000 acres of Siam's most fertile soil, reducing the revenue of that nation one half. The question of right received no consideration; it was altogether one of greed and might. And so it was when the Roman legions drove the barbarians from Europe and effected that grand civilization; and so it was when the white man drove the Indian from his home and made our powerful Union possible. So it has always been. 'Might makes right; the fittest survive,' is the universal law of nations as well as of the lower animals. There is no doubt but that this property recently acquired by France will be far more valuable in the French government's charge, and it does seem that barbarians should not own the earth when by so doing they hinder its progress; we know that the savage mind must give way before the superior light of intelligence and civilization, but there is a difference in this last case. Siam has a ruler that bids fair to increase his nation's power and his people's position—they are not savages, but on the other hand are well-governed, and there is something manly, honest, and straight forward in the King's last appeal to France, in which he recognizes his own weakness, and resolves to endure injustice and hardship rather than involve his people in hopeless war, that tells us that he knows as much of the ethics of nations as does the French ministry. Our sympathy is with the weak, and we yet hope that a jealousy may arise among the other nations that will enable Siam to take care of itself while those great 'fabrics of civilization' are disputing as to which shall make the next steal from the weak or friendless nation.

While our country is engaged in an all-pervading wrangle over the money question, England is having a contest no less severe in the Home Rule for Ireland discussion, lead by Gladstone for, and Chamberlain against. It has passed the committee of the whole after a three months' struggle, and will reach and pass the commons in the course of a few days. But this doesn't make it a law; it must pass a third ordeal of the Lords, which is practically impossible, and Ireland will be without home rule for many more months, possibly forever; for before the bill can become a law it must go before the people again, another general election must be held, and so many commoners, who favor its passage, must be elected, that the Lords will fear to fly in the face of so strong a popular verdict. So it must go through the process of the last year over again before Ireland can enjoy its benefits, and that it can live through such a test is extremely doubtful, in view of the fact that the Irish representatives are already sorely divided, and Gladstone's majority is threatened. More than this, Gladstone is very old, and liable to die at any time, and there is no man living who can pass the bill except the 'grand old man.' Ireland's sky is still dark.

The agitation of the question of the improvement of our country roads has at last reached the people, and is fast becoming of vital interest throughout the country. In the next few weeks the National League for Good Roads will hold a congress in Chicago, where it is intended that the ways and means of improving our roads shall be discussed by the ablest engineers. Our country roads are of as much importance to our commerce as the great railway and steamship lines, and we shall rejoice to see the day when they are paid the attention by our government that they deserve. For years and years money has been appropriated to widen and dredge our water ways, and we can see no reason why equal attention should not be paid to the maintenance of our more important public roads, which are of far greater commercial worth. We were glad to see a course of instruction in road-making established at Wake Forest last June. Such practical moves cannot but redound to the credit and success of the College, and in the end are of far more worth to humanity than many of the higher and much sought-after branches.

## The Young Man Absalom, or, Perils Imminent to Young Men.

PREACHED BY THE LATE REV. A. W. PRICE IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN WADESBORO—THE LAST SERMON OF HIS LIFE.

Text—"And they took Absalom and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him; and all Israel fled every one to his tent. Now Absalom in his life-time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance; and he called the pillar after his own name; and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place." 2 Samuel 18: 17, 18.

When a child is born into this world, who can prophecy its history or declare its destiny? Every infant is a prophecy, but a prophecy as obscure and undecipherable as an ancient oracle. It is either an embryo angel or an embryo devil; but which it is time only, and in some instances eternity only, will disclose.

How frequently parental expectation entertained so fondly at the birth and during the infancy and early years of a child are blighted by the subsequent career of that child! Thousand of years ago the glad tidings echoed through the royal palace in Jerusalem that a man child was born. Who can tell the fond hopes and expectations that thrilled the hearts of the parents when the event occurred? We only have an intimation of what their hopes were by the name they gave him. They called him "Absalom," which means "father of peace." They expected in him to have a prince of peace, but alas! how bitterly they were disappointed. He proved to be the father of discord, the author of strife and insurrection. My dear young friend, your name may not indicate the parental hopes so fondly entertained in your infancy, and yet you can imagine what those expectations were. How they expected that you would grow up an honest, thrifty, pious boy; that you would be the charm of their home and the pride of their life; that you would be successful and useful through life, and at last die in the triumphs of a holy faith. Young men, have you thus far met those expectations? O, blight not your parents' fond hopes! Bring not their gray hairs in sorrow to the grave!

But if Absalom in his career and destiny disappointed parental expectations, how much more so did he disappoint his own! "Now Absalom in his life-time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar in the king's dale; for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance; and he called the pillar after his own name, and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place." This is what he expected, this what he laid out for himself—to be laid away with great honors and ceremonies beneath a magnificent monument which would tell to future generations of his achievements and fame. What did he realize? Let the record answer: "And they took Absalom and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him."

Now, the question is, why this disparity between what this young man planned and what he realized? What was the secret of his failure? What forces conspired to work his temporal and eternal ruin. These are practical questions. These are appropriate questions. The same perils that confronted Absalom, the same forces that wrought his ruin, are the perils and forces which are confronting our young men to day. Human nature is the same in all ages. The forms of temptation may vary, the essence remains the same. And the forces which wrought the destruction of King David's handsome and gifted son are the same moral elements that are conspiring against our young men of the present generation. And allow me further to premise this: that while surroundings had a great deal to do with Absalom's unfortunate career and destiny, the essential forces that wrought his ruin were internal and self-evolved. And to-day, as much as we deplore the unwholesome surroundings of our young men, as much as we lament the impure moral atmosphere which they breathe, the real and most to be dreaded dangers which threaten them are internal not circumstantial. What were the causes that wrought Absalom's ruin?

I. The first element in his destruction was vanity in and misuse of his personal endowments. "But in all Israel there were none to be so much praised for his beauty as Absalom; from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he polled his head (for it was every year's end that he polled it, because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it), he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight." This is but another way of saying that Absalom was a young man of rare personal endowments. This is but another way of saying that he was a fine specimen of physical young manhood. He had a sound body, a graceful form, a handsome face, and winsome manner. And these are no mean endowments. They are not to be despised nor depreciated. When properly directed, they are elements of successes. They made Absalom popular with the people, and that popularity he might have used as a lever to lift them up to higher lines. The power of these attractions may be seen in the way that he insinuated himself into the good graces of the people and stole their hearts from their rightful sovereign. Had these endowments been exerted to nobler ends, they might have lifted Absalom to the highest pinnacle of honorable success. But alas! they were prostituted to the base arts of the demagogue, became the instruments of trea-

son, and the agents of impiety, so that which was his glory proved to be his everlasting shame.

Thus it is, young friends, that our noblest endowments may prove our greatest snares. This is true both of endowments of body and endowments of mind. Bodily strength is a glorious endowment. Without it, however brilliant and vigorous may be our mental power, we are to a great extent hampered all through life. The man with strong mind and frail body is like having a strong wagon with a weak horse to draw it. The Bible says: "The glory of a young man is his strength." And yet how easy it is for that which is his chief glory to become his chief snare. His strength may but furnish the fuel that feeds the fires of his carnal passions. His manhood may be prostituted to the lowest sensuality. And though, like Absalom, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, there is no blemish in him, yet that unblemished physique may be the medium of moral rottenness.

Even physical beauty which Absalom possessed in so marked a degree is an element of power. A well proportioned body, a graceful carriage, a captivating voice, give us influence over our fellows, and for that reason should be appreciated and cultivated. At the same time they are susceptible to abuse and may prove a snare instead of a blessing. The winsome face and captivating voice may be used to sugar coat the demagogue's schemes and the libertine's designs as well as commend the reforms of the patriot and the entreaties of the Christian.

Our mental endowments constitute our chief distinction, yet perhaps also our chief snares. The old saying that "Knowledge is power" is true. But it may be a power for evil as well as for good. Fire is power. When rightly controlled, it cooks our food and heats our homes, and generates the steam which propels our locomotives and whirrs our machinery. But when let loose on a prairie, it is a grim monster, the terror of man and beast. And so whether knowledge is power for good or evil depends entirely upon the principle that lies behind it. Hence it is that some men's greatest snares lie in their extraordinary mental capacity. They sometimes tempt to indolence upon the presumption that the man will succeed any how on the ground of their great capacity. And sometimes as in the case of Absalom, they tempt their possessor to chicanery and bold enterprises in guilt.

But personal endowments, whether physical or mental, become a snare whenever they lead to vanity in them or abuse of them. This was the case with Absalom. He was so much praised for his beauty and flattered of his endowments that it turned his head and made him giddy. They tempted him to a bold and godless enterprise which he dare not have undertaken but for the infatuation which they threw over him. He prided himself in his personal charms and especially in his luxuriant head of hair which he took so much pains to poll and to weigh, yet remarkable that by a retributive Providence that which was his greatest pride became the source of his greatest humiliation and the immediate occasion of his ignominious death. For on the day of battle when he fled for his life, these very locks which had been his charm, proved a halter which hanged him. How sad that strength and beauty should be turned to such bad account! How deplorable that God's gracious gifts should be prostituted to the purposes of godless ambition! As some one has put it, "No wonder that his hair turned traitor to him who turned traitor to his own father." That part which man uses to sin, God uses to revenge. The solemn warning in this history for young men is against vanity in and the misuse of the endowments which God has given you.

II. Another secret of Absalom's failure and destruction was the temptation to short cuts to success in life, to which he yielded. His ambition was to be king of Israel. This was a legitimate ambition. Had he waited the due course of time and nature, he would have succeeded to the throne in the honorable line of succession. If instead of for immediate kingship, his ambition had been for wise administration when he did ascend the throne, and had it, instead of prompting to usurpation, lead him to a conscientious preparation for the high and sacred functions to which he aspired, the results would not have been so disastrous. Ambition, when yoked to principle, is the lever by which we raise ourselves from the dead level of our fellowmen. And the danger, young man, is not that your ambition will be too strong, but, like Absalom's, it may be divorced from principle.

These short cuts to success are the Devil's pet schemes for destroying souls. He made this appeal to the only perfect young man that ever walked this earth. He took him up into an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, and said, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Now that was an exceeding short-cut to success. It would dispense with all those long years of toil and suffering; it would do away with Calvary and Gethsemane and the sepulchre. But the young man resisted the appeal and plodded all along through the years of suffering, went through Gethsemane's dark solitude, went over Calvary's agonies and ignominies, went through the tomb and came out the other side with the kingdoms of the world at his feet, and standing on another mount in Galilee, he said, "All power is given to me in heaven and earth," and then ascended to the throne of universal dominion. The

success was longer coming, but it was surer and more glorious. Something akin to this was what the Devil put before Absalom. The prospects were favorable to his being king at the decease of his father. But the time was too long, the process was too slow, the issues too uncertain for his restless ambition. And so he must take a short cut to his father's kingdom. He felt aggrieved at his father's treatment of him in reference to the assassination of his brother Amnon. He persuaded himself that he had been badly treated. The people were discontented with David's administration and were ripe for revolt, and he flattered himself that all he had to do was to take this tide at its flood and float to fortune and glory. So the short-cut method he pursued, but instead of success, he meets defeat; instead of honor he reaps disgrace; and instead of at last being buried under the pretentious monument, he had erected for himself in the king's dale, he is cast into a great pit in the wood and a very great heap of stones was laid upon him. And Jewish writers tell us that for centuries afterwards, every passer-by was accustomed to throw a stone on the heap which covered Absalom's remains, and, as he threw it, to say, "Cursed be the memory of rebellious Absalom, and cursed be forever all wicked children that rise up in rebellion against their parents."

Young men, the temptation to kingship does not confront you, because in this land monarchy is impracticable; but the one great temptation before young men to day is to plutocracy, which means money power. The Bible emphatically warns against being in haste to get rich. And yet money counts for so much in this land where rank and titles count for so little, that one temptation before our young men is haste to get rich. Haste to be rich is at the bottom of all the defalcations and embezzlements which startle our country and consign to disgrace families which hitherto were noted for integrity and honor. Haste to be rich is at the bottom of all the corners, combines and trusts which oppress our country and wring from the poor to increase the coffers of the already rich, or the would be rich. Short cuts to success abound in almost every department of life. There are short cuts to business success, by which a man is raised almost in an hour from comparative poverty and obscurity to a position of commanding affluence and influence. And the fact that the methods of success are so soon forgotten in the flush and glory of success itself only intensifies the temptation to these short-cut methods. Riches attained by rum and red-iron in a few years become as respectable as riches attained by the most respectable pursuits. When a few years have passed away and the original proprietors have died or gone into more respectable avocations, the gewgaws of rum bought and fraud-bought wealth are feted and toasted and worshipped as much as the most honorable minions of fortune.

Not only are there short cuts to business success, but there are short cuts to professional success. Plodding is no longer respectable success. The scintillating meteor that flashes and vanishes is appreciated before the settled orb which slowly but surely climbs the heavens. There are institutions calling themselves literary institutions which thrive by retailing bogus diplomas and palm off on the world as proficients in science those who are ignorant of the first principles of science. And the sad thing is that their patronage is sufficient to make them permanent institutions—standing cankers upon our body politic. And the wonderful success of some of these adepts in the short-cut methods is calculated to tempt our young men to follow their course.

The short-cut method may succeed for a time, but it is doomed to defeat at last. And, dear young men, let me warn you to listen to no siren's song, be it sung never so sweetly, that would tempt you to anything which is not honest, honorable and Christly. Remember the fate of Absalom. He attempted the short cut method to the throne, but he found his throne to be a prickly oak, and his mausoleum a dishonored grave.

III. Finally now. The last factor in Absalom's temporal and eternal destruction was the fact that he entirely left God out of his aims and plans. There is not a character in the whole Bible in which God is so completely ignored as in Absalom. God was not in all his thoughts. In all his aims and plans, there was a complete ignoring of the being and claims of Jehovah. But if he ignored God, one thing is certain God did not ignore him, but allowed him to go on in his infatuation until ultimate success seemed within his very grasp, and then put a prickly oak in his way that checked him. As a historian has said of the downfall of Cardinal Wolsey, so may be said of Absalom, "There was long delay, but the hour of reckoning at length arrived. Slowly the hand had crawled along the dial plate—slowly as if the event would never come, and wrong was heaped upon wrong, and oppression cried, and it seemed as if no ear heard its voice, till the measure of wickedness was at length fulfilled. The finger touched the hour, and as the strokes of the ponderous hammer pealed above the din of the nation, in an instant the whole fabric of iniquity was shattered to ruins." So with Absalom, he had often been reproved, but had hardened his heart, and now he was suddenly destroyed and that without remedy. And in that day of decisive battle when David in suspense and despair asked the messenger, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Without wait-

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