

THE REV. DR. TALMAGE.

THE BROOKLYN DIVINE'S SUNDAY SERMON.

TEXT:—"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt."—Genesi xii, 41.

You cannot keep a good man down. God has decreed for him a certain elevation to which he must attain. He will bring him through though it cost him a thousand worlds. There are men constantly in trouble lest they shall not be appreciated. Every man comes in the end to be valued at just what he is worth. How often you see men turn out all their forces to crush one man or set of men. How do they succeed? No better than did the government that tried to crush Joseph, a Scripture character upon which we speak to-day. It would be an insult to suppose that you were not all familiar with the life of Joseph; how his jealous brothers threw him into the pit, but, seeing a caravan of Arabian merchants moving along on their camels with spices and gums, that loaded the air with aroma, sold their brother to these merchants, who carried him down into Egypt; how Joseph was sold to Potiphar, a man of influence and office; how by his integrity he raised himself to high position in the realm, until under the false charge of a vile wretch he was hurled into the penitentiary; how in prison he commanded respect and confidence; how by the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream he was freed and became the chief man in government, the Bismarck of the nation; how in time of famine Joseph had the control of a storehouse which he had filled during the seven years of plenty; how when his brothers who had thrown him into the pit and sold him into captivity applied for corn he sent them home with their beasts borne down under the heft of the corn sacks; how the sin against their brother which had so long been hidden came out at last, and was returned by that brother's forgiveness and kindness, an illustrious triumph of Christian principle.

Learn from this story in the first place, that the world is compelled to honor Christian character. Potiphar was only a man of the world, yet Joseph rose in his estimation until all the affairs of that great house were committed to his charge. From this servant no honors or confidences were withheld. When Joseph was in prison he soon won the heart of the keeper, and, though placed there for being a scoundrel, he soon convinced the jailer that he was an innocent man, a man released from close confinement, he became a general superintendent of prison affairs. Wherever Joseph was placed, whether a servant in the house of Potiphar or a prisoner in the penitentiary, he became the first man everywhere and is an illustration of the truth I lay down, that the world is compelled to honor Christian character.

There are those who affect to despise a religious life. They speak of it as a system of phlebotomy by which a man is bled of all his courage and nobility. They say he has demeaned himself. They pretend to have no more confidence in him since his conversion than before his conversion. But all that is hypocrisy. It is impossible for any man not to admire and confide in a Christian who shows that he has really become a child of God and is what he professes to be. You cannot despise a son or a daughter of the Lord God Almighty. Of course half and half religious character wins no approbation. Redwald, the King of the Saxons, after Christian baptism had two altars, one for the worship of God and the other for the sacrifice of devils. You may have a contempt for such men, for mere pretensions of religion, but when you behold the excellency of Jesus Christ come out in the life of one of his disciples, all that there is good and noble in your soul rises up into admiration. Though that Christian be as far beneath you in estate as the Egyptian slave of whom we are discussing, by an irrevocable law of our nature Potiphar and Pharaoh will always esteem Joseph. Chrysostom when threatened with death by Eudoxia, the Empress, sent word to her saying: "Go tell her that I fear nothing but sin." Such nobility of character will always be applauded. There was something in Agrippa and Felix which demanded their respect for Paul, the rebel against government. I doubt not they would willingly have yielded their office and dignity for the thousandth part of that true heroism which beamed in the eye and beat in the heart of the unconquerable apostle. The intidel and wording are compelled to honor in their hearts, though they may not eulogize with their lips, a Christian firm in persecution, cheerful in poverty, trustful in losses, triumphant in death. I find Christian men in all professions and occupations, and I find them respected, and honored, and successful. John Frederick Oberlin alleviating ignorance and distress, John Howard passing from dungeon to lazaretto with healing for the body and the soul. Elizabeth Frye coming to the profligate of Newgate prison to shake down their obduracy as the angel came to the prison at Philippi, driving open the doors and snapping locks and chains, as well as the lives of thousands of the followers of Jesus who have devoted themselves to the temporal and spiritual welfare of the race, are monuments of the Christian religion that shall not crumble while the world lasts. A man in the cars said: "I would like to become a Christian if I only knew what religion is." But if this lying and cheating and bad behavior among men who profess to be good is religion, I want none of it." But, my friends, if I am an artist in Rome and a man comes to me and asks what the art of painting is, I must not show him the tub of some mere pretender. I will take him to the Raphaels and the

Michael Angelos. It is most unfair and dishonest to take the ignominious failures in Christian profession instead of the glorious successes. The Bible and the church are great picture galleries filled with masterpieces.

Furthermore, we learn from this story of Joseph that the result of persecution is elevation. Had it not been for his being sold into Egyptian bondage by his malicious brothers and his false imprisonment, Joseph would never have become Prime Minister. Everybody accepts the promise: "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," but they do not realize the fact that this principle applies to worldly as well as spiritual success. Had it not been for Aeschines who brought impeachment against Demosthenes, the immortal oration De Corona, would never have been delivered. Men rise to high political position through misrepresentation and the assault of the public. Public abuse is all that some of our public men have had to rely upon for their elevation. It has brought to them what talent and executive force could never have achieved. Many of those who are making great effort for place and power will never succeed just because they are not of enough importance to be abused. It is the nature of man to gather about those who are persecuted and defend them, and they are apt to forget the faults of those who are the subjects of attack while attempting to drive back the slanders. Helen Stark, a Scotch martyr condemned with her husband to death for Christ's sake, said to her husband: "Rejoice; we have lived together many joyful days, but this day wherein we must die together ought to be most joyful to us both." Therefore I will not bid you good night, for soon we shall meet in the heavenly kingdom." By the flash of the furnace, best Christian character is demonstrated.

I go into another department, and I find that those great denominations of Christians which have been most abused have spread the most rapidly. No good man was ever more vilely maltreated than John Wesley. His followers were hooted at and maligned and called by every detestable name that infernal ingenuity could invent, but the hotter the persecution the more rapid the spread of that denomination, until you know what a great host they have become and what a tremendous force for God and truth they are wielding all the world over. It was persecution that gave Scotland to Presbyterianism. It was persecution which gave our own land first to civil liberty and afterward to religious freedom. Yea, I may go further back and say it was persecution that gave the world the salvation of the Gospel. The ribald mockery, the hungering and thirsting, the unjust trial and ignominious death where all the forces of hell's fury was hurled against the cross was the introduction of that religion which is yet to be the earth's deliverance from guilt and suffering and her everlasting enthronement among the principalities of heaven. The State has sometimes said to the Church: "Come, let me take your hand and I will help you." What has been the result? The Church has gone back and has lost its estate of holiness and has become ineffective. At other times the State has said to the Church: "I will crush you." What has been the result? After the storms have spent their fury, the church, so far from having lost any of its force, has increased, and is worth infinitely more after the assault than before it. The church is far more indebted to the opposition of civil government than to its approval. The fires of the stake have only been the torches which Christ held in His hand, by the light of which the church has marched to her present position. In the sound of racks and implements of torture I hear the rumbling of the wheels of the Gospel chariot. Scaffolds of martyrdom have been the stairs by which the church has ascended. Aqua fortis is the best test of pure gold.

Furthermore, our subject impresses us that sins will come to exposure. Long, long ago had these brothers sold Joseph into Egypt. They had suppressed the crime, and it was a profound secret well kept by the brothers. But suddenly the secret is out. The old father hears that his son is in Egypt, having been sold there by the malice of his own brothers. How their cheeks must have burned and their hearts sunk at the flaming out of this suppressed crime. The smallest iniquity has a thousand tongues, and they will blab out an exposure. Saul was sent to destroy the Canaanites, their sheep and the oxen. But when he got down there among the pastures he saw some fine sheep and oxen too fat to kill, and so he thought he would steal them. He drove them toward home, but stopped to report to the prophet how well he had executed his commission, when in the distance the sheep began to bleat and the oxen to bellow. The secret was out and Samuel said to the blushing and confounded Saul: "What means the bleating of the sheep that I hear and the lowing of the cattle?" Aye, my hearers, you cannot keep an iniquity quiet. At just the wrong time the sheep will bleat and the oxen will bellow. Achan cannot steal the Babylonish garment without getting stoned to death, nor Benedict Arnold betray his country without being execrated for all time. Look over the police arrests, these thieves, these burglars, these adulterers, these counterfeiters, these highwaymen, these assassins. They all thought they could bury their iniquity so deep down that it would never come to resurrection. But there was some shoe that answered to the print in the sand, some false keys found in possession, some bloody knife that whispered of the deed, and the public indignation, and the anathema of outraged law hurled him into the Tombs or hoisted him on the gallows. At the close of the battle between the Dauphin of France and the Helvetians, Burchard Monk was so eaten with the victory that he lifted his helmet to look off upon the field, when a wounded soldier hurled a stone that struck his uncovered forehead and he fell. Sin will always have some spot exposed, and there is no safety in iniquity. Francis the First, King of France, was discussing how it

was best to get his army into Italy. Amari, the court fool, sprang out from the corner and said to the king and his staff officers: "You had better be thinking how you will get your army back out of Italy after once you have entered." In other words, it is easier for us to get into sin than to get out of it. Whitefield was riding on horseback in a lonely way with some missionary money in a sack fastened to the saddle bags. A highwayman sprang out from the thicket and put his hand out toward the gold, when Whitefield turned upon him and said: "That belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, touch it if you dare," and the villain fell back empty handed into the thicket. Oh, the power of conscience! If offended, it becomes God's avenging minister. Do not think that you can hide any great and protracted sin in your hearts. In an unguarded moment it will slip off the lip, or some slight occasion may for a moment set ajar this door of hell that you wanted to keep closed. But suppose that in this life you hide it, and you get along with that transgression burning in your heart, as a ship on fire within for days may hinder the flame from breaking out by keeping down the hatchways, yet at last, in the Judgment, that iniquity will blaze out before the throne of God and the universe.

Furthermore, learn from this subject the inseparable connection between all events however remote. Lord Hastings was beheaded one year after he had caused the death of the Queen's children, in the very month, the very day, the very hour, and the very moment. There is wonderful precision in the Divine judgments. The universe is only one thought of God. Those things which seem fragmentary, and isolated are only different parts of that one great thought. How far apart seemed these two events—Joseph sold to the Arabian merchants and the rulership of Egypt. Yet you see in what a mysterious way God connected the two in one plan. So all events are linked together. You who are aged can look back and group together a thousand things in your life that once seemed isolated. One undivided chain of events reached from the Garden of Eden to the cross of Calvary, and thus up to heaven. There is a relation between the smallest insect that hums in the summer air and the archangel on his throne. God can trace a direct ancestral line from the blue jay that last spring built its nest in a tree behind the house to some one of that flock of birds, which, when Noah hoisted the ark's window, with a whirl and dash of bright wings went out to sing over Mount Ararat. The tulips that bloomed this summer in the flower-bed were nursed of last winter's snow-flakes. The furthest star on one side the universe could not look to the furthest star on the other side and say: "You are no relation to me." For from that bright orb a voice of light would ring across the heavens responding: "Yes, yes; we are sisters." Sir Sidney Smith in prison was playing lawn tennis in the yard and the ball flew over the wall. Another ball containing letters was thrown back, and so communication was opened with the outside world, and Sir Sidney escaped in time to defeat Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition. What a small incident connected with what vast result! Sir Robert Peel from a pattern he drew on the back of a pewter dinner plate got the suggestions of that

which led to the important invention by which calico is printed. Nothing in God's universe swings at loose ends. Accidents are only God's way of turning a leaf in the book of his eternal decrees. From our cradle to our grave there is a path all marked out. Each event in our life is connected with every other event in our life. Our loss may be the most direct road to our gain. Our defeats and victories are twin brothers. The whole direction of our life was changed by something which at the time seemed to you a trifle, while some occurrence which seemed tremendous affected you but little. The Rev. Dr. Kennedy, of Basking Ridge, New Jersey, went into his pulpit one Sabbath and by a strange freak of memory forgot his subject and forgot his text, and in great embarrassment rose before his audience and announced the circumstance and declared himself entirely unable to preach; then launched forth in a few words of entreaty and warning which resulted in the outbreaking of the mightiest revival of religion ever known in that State, a revival of religion that resulted in churches still standing and in the conversion of a large number of men who

entered the Gospel ministry who have brought their thousands into the kingdom of God. God's plans are magnificent beyond all comprehension. He molts us, turns and directs us, and we know it not. Thousands of years are to Him but as the flight of a shuttle. The most terrific occurrence does not make God tremble, and the most triumphant achievement does not lift Him into rapture. That one great thought of God goes on through the centuries, and nations

rise and fall, and eras pass, and the world itself changes, but God still keeps the undivided mastery, linking event to event and century to century. To God they are all one event, one history, one plan, one development, one system. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.

Furthermore, we learn from this story the propriety of laying up for the future. During seven years of plenty Joseph prepared for the famine, and when it came he had a crowded storehouse. The life of most men in a worldly respect is divided into years of plenty and famine. It is seldom that any man passes through life without at least seven years of plenty. During these seven prosperous years your business bears a rich harvest. You hardly know where all the money comes from, it comes so fast. Every bargain you make seems to turn into gold. You contract few bad debts. You are astounded with large dividends. You invest more and more capital. You wonder how men can be content with a smart business, gathering in only a hundred dollars where you reap your thousands. These are the

seven years of plenty. Now, Joseph, is the time to prepare for famine; for to almost every man there do come seven years of famine. You will be sick; you will be unfortunate; you will be defrauded; you will be disappointed; you will be old, and if you have no storehouse upon which to fall back you may be famine-struck. We have no admiration for this denying one's self of all present comfort and luxury for the mere pleasure of hoarding up, this grasping for the mere pleasure of seeing how large a pile you can get, this always being poor and cramped because as soon as a dollar comes in it is sent out to see if it can't find another dollar to carry home on its

back; but there is an intelligent and noble-minded forecast which we love to see in men who have families and kindred dependent upon them for the blessings of education and home. God sends us to the insects for a lesson which, while they do not stink themselves in the present, do not forget their duty to forestall the future: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise, which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest." Now there are two ways of laying up money: the one by investing it in stock and depositing it in banks and loaning it on bond and mortgage. The other way of laying up money is giving it away. He is the safest who makes both of these investments. But the man who devotes none of his gain to the cause of Christ and thinks only of his own comfort and luxury

is not safe. I don't care how his money is invested. He acted as the rose if it should say: "I will hold my breath and no one shall have a snatch of fragrance from me until next week, and then I will set all the garden afloat with the aroma. The time comes, but having been without fragrance for so long, it has nothing then to give. But above all lay up treasures in heaven. They never depreciate in value. They never are at a discount. They are always available. You may feel safe now with your present yearly income, but what will such an income be worth after you are dead? Others will get it. Perhaps some of them will quarrel about it before you are buried. They will be right glad that you are dead. They are only waiting for you to die. What then will all your accumulation

be worth if you could gather it all into your bosom and walk up with it to heaven's gate? It would not purchase your admission; or, if allowed to enter, it could not buy you a crown or a robe, and the poorest saint in heaven would look down and say: "Where did that pauper come from?"

Finally, learn from this subject that in every famine there is a storehouse. Up the long row of building, piled to the very roof with corn, come the hungry multitudes, and Joseph commanded that their sacks and their wagons be filled. The world has been blasted. Every green thing was withered under the touch of sin. From all continents, and islands, and zones, comes up the groan of dying millions. Over tropical spice-grove, and Siberian ice-land, and Hindu jungle the blight has fallen. The famine is universal. But, glory be to God! there is a great storehouse. Jesus Christ, our elder brother, this day bids us come in from our hunger and beggary, and obtain infinite supplies of grace enough to make us rich forever. Many of you have for all a long while been smitten of the famine. The world has not stilled the throbbing of your spirit. Your conscience sometimes rouses you up with such suddenness and strength that it requires the most gigantic determination to quell the disturbance. Your courage quakes at the thought of the future. Oh, why will you tarry amid the blastings of the famine when such a glorious storehouse is open in God's mercy!

"Ye wretched, hungry, starving poor, Behold a royal feast— Where mercy spreads her bounteous store For every humble guest."

"See, Jesus stands with open arms, He calls, He bids you come; Gull holds you back and fear alarms, But see, there yet is room."

Was It a Mistake.

The *Jewellers' Weekly* relates the following: "Let me tell you an incident which occurred to me once. I was a young man then and a clerk in Tiffany's. One morning a richly attired lady got out of her handsome carriage and entered the store. She walked to the diamond department and asked to be shown some loose gems. She selected two valuable solitaires and paid for them. Thinking my attention was called in another direction, she slyly but rapidly took a stone and placed it in her mouth. I saw the theft but hardly knew what to do. Calling for a messenger, I sent for our business manager, and told him what had happened. Without an instant's delay he said:

"Madam, you have made a mistake. You have one of our diamonds in your mouth. Will you return it without an exposure?"

"The next moment she gave a gulp, and I knew the gem had gone. She had swallowed it. Of course, we were in a dilemma. The lady became indignant and threatened suit and violence at the hands of her husband."

"What did you do?" "Sent the bill with a written explanation to the husband. The next day he paid us a visit. He said that he believed there was a mistake, but that he could not afford an exposure."