

# REV. DR. TALMAGE.

## THE BROOKLYN DIVINE'S SUNDAY

### SERMON.

TEXT.—*Be content with such things as ye have.*—Hebrews xiii, 5.

If I should ask some one: "Where is Brooklyn to-day?" he would say, "At Brighton Beach, or East Hampton, or Shelter Island." "Where is New York to-day?" "At Long Branch." "Where is Philadelphia?" "At Cape May." "Where is Boston?" "At Martha's Vineyard." "Where is Virginia?" "At the Sulphur Springs." "Where is the great multitude from all parts of the land?" "At Saratoga," the modern Pethesda, where the angel of health is ever stirring the waters. But, my friends, the largest multitude are at home, detained by business or circumstances. Among them all newspaper men, the hardest worked and the least compensated; city railroad employes, and ferry masters, and the police, and the tens of thousands of clerks and merchants waiting for their turn of absence, and households with an invalid who cannot be moved, and others hindered by stringent circumstances, and the great multitude of well to do people who stay at home because they like home better than any other place, refusing to go away simply because it is the fashion to go. When the express wagon, with its mountain of trunks directed to the Catskills or Niagara, goes through the streets, we stand at our window envious and impatient, and wonder why we cannot go as well as others. Fools that we are, as though one could not be as happy at home as anywhere else. Our grandfathers and grandmothers had as good a time as we have, long before the first spring was bored at Saratoga, or the first deer shot in the Adirondacks. They made their wedding tour to the next farmhouse, or living in New York, the celebrated they event by an extra walk on the Battery.

Now, the genuine American is not happy until he is going somewhere, and the passion is so great that there are Christian people with their families detained in the city who come not to the house of God, trying to give people the idea that they are out of town; leaving the door plate unscoured for the same reason, and for two months keeping the front shutters closed while they sit in the back part of the house, the thermometer at ninety! My friends, if it is better for us to go, let us go and be happy. If it be best for us to stay at home, let us stay at home and be happy. There is a great deal of good common sense in Paul's advice to the Hebrews: "Be content with such things as ye have." To be content is to be in good humor with our circumstances, not picking a quarrel with our obscurity, or our poverty, or our social position. There are four or five grand reasons why we should be content with such things as we have.

The first reason that I mention as leading to this spirit devised in the text, is the consideration that the poorest of us have all that is indispensable in life. We make a great ado about our hardships, but how little we talk of our blessings. Health and body, which is given in largest quantity to those who have never been petted, and fondled, and spoiled by fortune, we take as a matter of course. Rather have this luxury, and have it a one, than, without it, look out of a palace window upon parks of deer stalking between fountains and statuary. These people sleep sounder on a straw mattress than fashionable invalids on a couch of ivory and eagles' down. The dinner of herbs tastes better to the appetite sharpened on a woodman's ax or a reaper's scythe than wealthy indigestion experiences seated at a table covered with partridge, and venison, and pineapple. The grandest luxury God ever gave a man is health. He who trades that off for all the palaces of the earth is infinitely cheated. We look back at the glory of the last Napoleon, but who would have taken his Versailles and his Tuilleries if with them we had been obliged to take his gout? "Oh," says some one, "it isn't the grosser pleasures I covet, but it is the gratification of an artistic and intellectual taste." Why, my brother, you have the original from which these pictures are copied.

What is a sunset on a wall compared with a sunset hung in loops of fire on the heavens? What is a cascade silent on a canvas compared with a cascade that makes the mountain tremble, its spray ascending like the departed spirit of the water slain on the rocks? Oh, there is a great deal of hollow affectation about a fondness for pictures on the part of those who never appreciate the original from which the pictures are taken. As though a parent should have no regard for his child, but go into ecstasies over its photograph. Bless the Lord to-day, oh, man! oh, woman! that though you may be shut out from the works of a Church, a Bierstadt, a Rubens and a Raphael, you still have free access to a gallery grander than the Louvre or the Luxembourg or the Vatican—the royal gallery of the noonday heavens, the King's gallery of the midnight sky.

Another consideration leading us to a spirit of contentment is the fact that our happiness is not dependent upon outward circumstances. You see people happy and miserable amid all circumstances. In a family where the last loaf is on the table, and the last stick of wood on the fire, you sometimes find a cheerful confidence in God, while in a very fine place you will see and hear discord sounding her war whoop, and hospitably, freezing to death in the cheerless parlor. I stopped one day on Broadway at the head of Wall street, at the foot of Trinity church, to see who seemed the happiest people passing. I judged from their looks the happiest people were not those who went down into Wall street, for they had on their brow the anxiety of the dollar they expected to make; nor the people who came out of Wall street, for

they had on their brow the anxiety of the dollar they had lost; nor the people who swept by in splendid equipage, for they were a carriage that was finer than theirs. The happiest person in all that crowd, judging from the countenance, was the woman who sat at the apple stand knitting. I believe real happiness often looks out of the window of an humble home than through the opera glass of the gilded box of a theatre.

I find Nero growling on the throne. I find Paul singing in a dungeon. I find King Ahab going to bed at noon through insensibility, while near by is Naboth contented in the possession of a vineyard. Haman, Prime Minister of Persia, frets himself almost to death because a poor Jew will not tip his hat and Abithophel, one of the greatest lawyers of Bible times, through fear of dying, hangs himself. The wealthiest man, forty years ago, in New York, when congratulated over his large estate, replied: "Ah! you don't know how much trouble I have in taking care of it." Byron declared in his last hours that he had never seen more than twelve happy days in all his life. I do not believe he had seen twelve minutes of thorough satisfaction. Napoleon I. said: "I turn with disgust from the cowardice and selfishness of men; I hold life a horror; death is repose. What I have suffered the last twenty days is beyond human comprehension." While, on the other hand, to show how one may be happy amid the most disadvantageous circumstances, just after the Ocean Monarch had been wrecked in the English channel, a steamer was cruising along in the darkness, when the captain heard a song, a sweet song, coming over the water, and he bore down toward that voice, and found it was a Christian woman on a plank of the wrecked steamer, singing to the tune of "St. Martin's."

Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the billows near me roil,  
While the tempest still is high.

The heart right toward God and man, we are happy. The heart wrong toward God and man, we are unhappy.

Another reason why we should come to this spirit inculcated in the text is the fact that all the differences of earthly condition are transitory. The houses you build, the land you culture, the places in which you barter, are soon to go into other hands. However hard you may have it now, if you are a Christian the scene will soon end. Pain, trial, persecution never knock at the door of the grave. A coffin made out of pine boards is just as good a resting place as one made out of silver mounted mahogany or rosewood. Go down among the resting places of the dead, and you will find that though people there had a greater difference of worldly circumstances, now they are all alike unconscious. The hand that greeted the Senator, and the President, and the King is still as the hand that hardened on the mechanic's hammer or the manufacturer's wheel. It does not make any difference now whether there is a plain stone above them from which the traveler pulls aside the weeds to read the name, or a tall shaft springing into the heavens as though to tell their virtues to the skies.

In that silent land there are no titles for great men, and there are no rumblings of chariot wheels, and there is never heard the foot of the dance. The Egyptian guano which is thrown on the fields in the east for the enrichment of the soil is the dust raked out from the sepulchers of kings and lords and mighty men. Oh the chagrin of those men if they had never known that in the after ages of the world they would have been called Egyptian guano.

Of how much worth now is the crown of Caesar? Who bids for it? Who cares now anything about the Amphictyonic council or the laws of Lycurgus? Who trembles now because Xerxes crossed the Hellespont on a bridge of boats? Who fears because Nebuchadnezzar thunders at the gates of Jerusalem? Who cares now whether or not Cleopatra marries Antony? Who crouches before Ferdinand, or Boniface, or Alaric? Can Cromwell dissolve the English parliament now? Is William, Prince of Orange, King of the Netherlands? No, no! However much Elizabeth may love the Russian crown, she

must pass it to Peter, and Peter to Catherine, and Catherine to Paul, and Paul to Alexander, and Alexander to Nicholas. Leopold puts the German scepter into the hand of Joseph, and Philip comes down off the Spanish throne to let Ferdinand go on. House of Stuart, house of Hapsburg, house of Stuart, house of Bourbon, quarreling about everything else, but agreeing in this: "The fashion of this world passeth away." But have all these dignities gone? Can they not be called back? I have been in assemblages where I have heard the roll called, and many distinguished men have answered. If I should call the roll to-day of some of those mighty ones who have gone I wonder if they would not answer. I will call the roll. I will call the roll of the King's first: Alfred the Great! William the Conqueror! Frederick II! Louis XVI! No answer.—I'll call the roll of the poets: Rowland Southey! Thomas Campbell! John Keats! George Crabbe! Robert Burns! No answer. I'll call the roll of artists: Michael Angelo! Paul Veronese! William Turner! Christopher Wren! No answer. Eyes closed. Ears deaf. Lips silent. Hands palsied. Scepter, pencil, pen, sword, put down forever. Why should we struggle for such baubles?

Another reason why we should culture this spirit of cheerfulness is the fact that God knows what is best for His creatures. You know what is best for your child. He thinks you are not as liberal with him as you ought to be. He criticises your discipline, but you look over the whole field, and you, loving that child, do what in your deliberate judgment is best for him. Now, God is the best of fathers. Sometimes his children think that he is hard on them, and that he is not as liberal with them as he might be. But children do not know as much as a father. I can tell you why you are not largely a flatterer, and why you have not been grandly success-

ful. It is because you cannot stand the temptation. If your path had been smooth, you would have depended upon your own surefootedness; but God roughened that path, so you have to take hold of his hand. If the weather had been mild, you would have loitered along the water courses; but at the first howl of the storm you quickened your pace heavenward and wrapped around you the warm robe of a Saviour's righteousness. "What have I done?" says the wheat sheaf to the farmer; "what have I done that you beat me so hard with your flail?" The farmer makes no answer, but the rake takes off the straw, and the mill blows the chaff to the wind, and the golden grain falls down at the foot of the winnill. After a while, the straw looking down from the mow upon the golden grain banked up on either side the floor understands why the farmer beat the wheat sheaf with the flail.

Who are those before the throne? The answer came: "These are they who, out of great tribulation, had their robes washed and made white in the blood of the lamb." Would God that we could understand that our trials are the very best thing for us. If we had an appreciation of that truth, then we should know why it was that John Noyra, the martyr, in the very midst of the flame, reached down and picked up one of the fagots that was consuming him, and kissed it, and said: "Blessed be God for the time when I was born for this preferment." They who suffer with Him on earth shall be glorified with Him in heaven. Be content, then, with such things as you have.

Another consideration leading us to the spirit of the text is the assurance that the Lord will provide somehow. Will he who holds the water in the hollow of his hand a low his children to die of thirst? Will he who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and all the earth's luxuriance of grain and fruit, allow his children to starve? Go out tomorrow morning at 5 o'clock in the woods and hear the birds chant. They have had no breakfast, they know not where they will dine, they have no idea where they will sup; but hear the birds chant at 5 o'clock in the morning. "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not much better than they?" Seven thousand people, in Christ's time, went into the desert. They were the most improvident people I ever heard of. They deserved to starve. They might have taken food enough to last them until they got back. Nothing did they take. A lad, who had more wit than all of them put together, asked his mother that morning for some loaves of bread and some fishes. They were put into his satchel. He went out into the desert. From this provision the seven thousand were fed, and the more they ate the larger the loaves grew until the provision that the boy brought in one satchel was multiplied so he could not have carried the fragments home in six satchels. "O," you say, "times have changed, and the day of miracle has gone." I reply that, what God did then by miracle, He does now in some other way, and by natural laws. "I have been young," said David, "but now I am old; yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread." It is high time that you people who are fretting about worldly circumstances, and who are fearing you are

coming to want, understood that the oath of the eternal God is involved in the fact that you are to have enough to eat and to wear.

Again, I remark that the religion of Jesus Christ is the grandest influence to make a man contented. Indemnity against all financial and spiritual harm! It calms the spirit, dwindles the earth into insignificance, and swallows up the soul with the thought of heaven. O ye who have been going about from place to place expecting to find in change of circumstances something to give solace to the spirit. I commend you, this morning, to the warm-hearted, earnest, practical, common sense religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked," and as long as you continue in your sin you will be miserable. Come to Christ. Make Him your portion, and start for heaven, and you will be a happy man—you will be a happy woman.

Yet, my friends, notwithstanding all these inducements to a spirit of contentment, I have to tell you this morning the human race is divided into two classes—those who scold and those who get scolded. The carpenter wants to be anything but a carpenter, and the mason anything but a mason, and the banker anything but a banker, and the lawyer anything but a lawyer, and the minister anything but a minister, and everybody would be happy if he were only somebody else. The anemone wants to be a sunflower, and the apple orchards throw down their blossoms because they are not tall cedars, and the scow wants to be a schooner, and the sloop would like to be a seventy-four pounder, and parents have the worst children that ever were, and everybody has the greatest misfortune, and everything is upside down, or going to be. Ah! my friends, you never

make any advance through such a spirit as that. You cannot fret yourself up; you may fret yourself down. Amid all this grating of tones I strike this string of the Gospel harp: "Godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing into the world, and it is very certain we can carry nothing out; having food and raiment, let us therewith be content."

Let us all remember, if we are Christians, that we are going after a while, whatever be our circumstances now, to have a glorious vacation. As in summer we put off our garments and go down into the cool sea to bathe, so we will put off these garments of flesh, and step into the cool Jordan. We will look around for some place to lay down our weariness; and the trees will say: "Come and rest under our shadow;" and the earth will say: "Come and sleep in my bosom;" and the winds will say: "Hush! while I sing thee a cradle hymn," and while six strong men carry us out to our last resting place, and ashes come to ashes and dust to dust, we will see two scarred feet standing amid the

broken soil, and a lacerated brow bending over the open grave, while a voice, tender with all affection and mighty with all omnipotence, will declare: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Comfort one another with these words."

### Life in the Bahamas.

Sponging has all the attractions of a gambling adventure. Should the game be successful, the profits are large enough money may be made in a short time to insure the enjoyment of months of idleness. And idleness is a real luxury when a man can recline under the shade of his own guava or orange tree, and have the latest news from the passing neighbors as they saunter along; their fanners round flat baskets of palm leaves piled with glowing tomatoes, large green avocado pears, or red and yellow peppers, for sale in town—of course chew sugar cane or smoke a pipe, as the spirit moves him, taking no thought for the morrow, which is pretty sure to be sunny and balmy as to-day. Dwellers in the dark and sombre north can hardly realize the charm and joyousness that seem to radiate from earth and air in the lotus-eating southern climes. The mere sense of existence becomes in itself a happiness; one can understand what animals probably feel in pleasant pastures on brilliant days. Then, as the sun sinks slowly downward, the golden heaven glows over a rejoicing earth, flushing every moment into richer beauty beneath the departing rays, while rosy beams of light streaming upward like so many auroras is a singular and very beautiful effect often to be seen in a Bahama sunset. When the sun has set new beauties appear, every bush and tussock becoming alive with thousands of fireflies; and when a silvery green moon rises in the calm deep sapphire sky, it is difficult to decide whether night or day be the more full of loveliness. Besides the fire flies, a fire beetle—one of the Elytra—is a singular insect with a brilliant green phosphorescent light proceeding from two round spots on the thorax, added to which, when excited, the insect has the power to emit a regular blaze of light from the segments of the abdomen, of such brilliancy that one can read by its light. In Cuba ladies fasten these elytra as ornaments in their hair, or let them flash beneath the folds of the tulle dresses.—*Nineteenth Century.*

### The Leaping Salmon of Canada.

The salmon rivers of Canada are all streams of swift currents, whirling rapids and high falls. The salmon seems to make its way up these streams with as much ease as he moves down. One of the sights in the vicinity of Quebec is the salmon leaping at the Falls of Lorette, and during July many persons assemble there to see it. The falls are a succession of steep tumblers and the water rushes over the rocks with great velocity. The salmon gather at the foot of the lower tumble, and, with marvellous leaps up the very face of the rushing waters, make their way to the summit without apparent difficulty, gliding up the swift chutes like a flash and mounting each successive tumble until the grand summit is reached. The native Canadian will tell you, with a straight and solemn face, that when there was no legal interference with spearing, the Indians were in the habit of gathering at the foot of the falls in their birch canoes and casting their spears at the salmon as they leaped up the torrents, making their cast with such marvellous skill that the salmon aimed at was invariably stopped in his vaulting career and fell back impaled by the Indian's cruel barb. That may be true, but I know for a fact that they tell the stranger many queer things in Canada.—*Philadelphia News.*

### Turmoil for Trees.

Propos of the vibrant property of wood, have you never heard the grinding in the dead, dry trunk of the pine—the gnawing of the minute teeth of the borers? It is like a busy carpenter shop in full blast. I remember, in a recent walk in Conway woods, that such a tree audibly announced its presence fully twenty feet in advance of me. Sawdust poured out from hundreds of apertures, and on laying my ear against the trunk and closing my eyes I seemed to be in the midst of a metropolitan bedlam—a whole city block behind in its construction and rushed for its finish, with hammers and planes and chisels in wild, eddying confusion. I could hear the saws and augers, gouges, derrick and pulleys, and most the hurried footfall—indeed, everything but the profanity of the workmen. And yet a single one of these disclosed in his hiding place was scarcely larger than a brad.—*Harper's.*