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Libbie Did Well.

A woman whose daughter had recently married was asked how she liked her new son-in-law.

"Oh, he's splendid!" was the hearty reply. "Libbie couldn't of done better. Why that man gets up of a morning gets his own breakfast, does up the dishes, sweeps and dusts, and makes Libbie a nice cup of coffee and takes it up to her room before he goes to his work ev'ry morning. I tell you Libbie did well to get a man like Frank. There ain't many like him nowadays."

REV. DR. TALMAGE.

The Eminent Brooklyn Divine's Sunday Sermon.

Subject: "The Plague of Crime."

TEXT: "*All the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.*"—Exodus vii. 20.

Among all the Egyptian plagues none could have been worse than this. The Nile is the wealth of Egypt. Its fish the food, its waters the irrigation of garden and fields. Its condition decides the prosperity or the doom of the empire. What happens to the Nile happens to all Egypt. And now in the text that great river is incarnadined. It is a red gash across an empire. In poetic license we speak of wars which turn the rivers into blood. But my text is not a poetic license. It was a fact, a great crimson, appalling condition described. The Nile rolling deep of blood. Can you imagine a more awful plague?

The modern plague which nearest corresponds with that is the plague of crime in all our cities. It hails not for bloodshed. It shrinks from no carnage. It bruises and cuts and strikes down and destroys. It revels in the blood of body and soul, this plague of crime rampant for ages, and never bolder or more rampant than now.

The annual police reports of these cities as I examine them are to me more suggestive than Dante's Inferno, and all Christian people as well as reformers need to awaken to a present and tremendous duty. If you want this Plague of Crime to stop there are several kinds of persons you need to consider. First, the public criminals. You ought not to be surprised that these people make up a large portion in many communities. The vast majority of the criminals who take ship from Europe come into our own port. In 1869 of the forty-nine thousand people who were incarcerated in the prisons of the country thirty-two thousand were of foreign birth. Four hundred had been there before. In a house of correction in the country where during a certain reach of time there had been five thousand people, more than nine hundred had been there before. So, in one case the prison, and in the other the house of correction, set them just as bad as they were before.

The secretary of one of the benevolent societies of New York says a lad fifteen years of age had spent three years of his life in prison, and he said to the lad, "What have they done for you to make you better?" "Well," replied the lad, "the first time I was brought up before the judge he said, 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself.' And then I committed a crime again, and I was brought up before the same judge, and he said, 'You rascal!' And after a while I committed some other crime, and I was brought before the same judge, and he said, 'You ought to be hanged.' That was all they had done for him in the way of reformation and salvation. Oh, you say, 'these people are incorrigible.' I suppose there are hundreds of persons this day living in the prison bunks who would leap up at the prospect of reformation if society would only allow them a way into decency and respectability.

"Oh," you say, "I have no patience with these rogues." I ask you in reply, how much better would you have been under the same circumstances? Suppose your mother had been a blasphemer and your father a sot, and you had started life with a body stuffed with evil predisposition, and you had spent much of your time in a cellar amid obscenities and cursing, and if at ten years of age you had been compelled to go out and steal, battered and banged at night if you came home without your pelting, and suppose your early manhood and womanhood had been covered with rags and filth and decent society had turned its back upon you, and left you to consort with vagabonds and wharf rats—how much better would you have been? I have no sympathy with that excessive clemency which would let crime run loose, or which would sit in the gallery of a court room weeping because some hard-hearted wretch is brought to justice, but I do say that the safety and life of the community demand more potential influences in behalf of public offenders.

In some of the city prisons the air is like that of the Black Hole of Calcutta. I have visited prisons where, as I went through the wicked, it almost knocked me down. No sunlight. Young men who had committed their first crime crowded in among old offenders. I saw in one prison a woman with a child almost blind, who had been arrested for the crime of poverty, who was waiting out the slow law could take her to the almshouse, where she rightfully belonged, but she was thrust in there with her child amid the most shameless wretches of the town. Many of the offenders in that prison salpt on the floor with nothing but a vermin-covered blanket over them. Those people crowded and wan and wasted and half suffocated and infuriated. I said to the man, "How do you stand it here?" "You know," said the man, "we have to stand it." "Oh, they will pay you when they get out." "Were they burned down one house they will burn three." "They will strike deeper the assassin knife." They are this minute pointing more burglaries.

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We want men like John Howard and Sir William Blackstone and women like Elizabeth Fry to look after the prisons of the United States, what those people did in other days for the prisons of England. I thank God for what Isaac T. Hopper and Dr. Wines and Mr. Harris and scores of others have done in the way of prison reform, but we want something more radical before will come the blessing of him who said, "I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Again, in your effort to arrest this plague of crime you need to consider untrust-worthy witnesses. "Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes drink in the morning." It is a great calamity to a city when bad men get into public authority. Why was it that in New York there was such unparalleled crime between 1866 and 1871? It was because the judges of police in that city at that time for the most part were as corrupt as the vagabonds that came before them for trial. Those were the days of high carnival for election frauds, assassination and forgery. We had all kinds of rings. There was one man during those years that got one hundred and twenty-eight thousand dollars in one year for serving the public.

It is no compliment to public authority when we have in all the cities of the country, walking about, men and women notorious for criminality unwhipped of justice. They are pointed out to you in the street by law. There you find what are called the "famous," the men who steal, lie and cheat, the thief and the forger, the man who is the chief and last a great prize winning for the goods to the owner to whom they belonged.

There you will find the sewer-rats of the sewers, the men who crawl out into the street with great slouch of hand, clothes and shoes. There you find the funeral thieves, the people who go about the city and rifle from coffins and pocketed the dead. And there you find the politicians, many here and there, who have to be watched lest they steal the public money they have to bury it, when they were put in office by family, or they will be sitting in a hard and get a large property for you, and you to pay the way and support them. There are the swindlers, the sneaks, the cowards, the sneaks.

Those are the classes of people who are the low, Hottentot, Bushman, Digger Indian, their faces in the lineaments of their faces in the lineaments of their faces not defined, nearly and deeply cut. When they are brought into the court to be punished it is putting a high compliment and saying to this vagabond class of this country, "What a sale thing you are! Be a great criminal, and we will keep upon them. But in this country, which would be a great criminal, and we will not work." Yes, I have preached the gospel to the chief of the criminals of this country, and I know what I say when I say that the detectives are after them, the police will be after them, the jail will be their door of the prison is being opened, and the judge is ready to call in the case. The great enemy to criminals is the great security to society.

Again in your effort to arrest this plague of crime, you need to consider the idle population. Of course I do not refer to those who are getting their living by honest work, who cannot get rich, and who are willing for those athletic men and women who will not work. A man in Philadelphia was asked why he kept men upon his place, large as it is, instead of keeping machinery, and he said, "I may not hang myself, but I do not care who hangs himself." The great idle. It is from the idle classes that the criminal classes are made up. Stagnation, like water, gets putrid if it stands and rots and stinks. We can wonder that in the cities where there is so much to do, and all the hosts of earth and heaven and hell are plunging into the conflict and angels are flying and God is at work and the universe is a quake with the marching and countermarching, that God lets His indignation fall upon a man who chooses idleness.

I have watched these dooplings who spend their time stroking their beard and retouching their toilet and criticising industrious people, and pass their days and nights in barrooms and gin houses, lounging and smoking and chewing and cardplaying. They are not only useless, but they are dangerous. How hard it is for them to while away the hours! Alas for them! If they do not know how to while away an hour, what will they do when they have all eternity on their hands? These men for a while smoke the best cigars and wear the best clothes and move in the highest spheres, but I have noticed that very soon they come down to the prison, the almshouse, or stop at the gallows.

The police stations of this cluster of cities furnish annually between two and three hundred thousand lodgings. For the most part these two and three hundred thousand lodgings are furnished to able-bodied men and women—people as able to work as you and I are. When they are received no longer at one police station because they are full of cotton up to some man who swamps a bank. More than that, it touches your heart in the moral depression of the community. You might as well think to stand in a closely confined room where there are fifty people and yet not breathe the vitiated air, as to stand in a community where there is such a great multitude of the depraved without somewhat being contaminated. What is the fire that burns your store down compared with the conflagration which consumes your morals? What is the theft of the gold and silver from your money safe compared with the theft of your children's virtue?

We are all ready to arraign criminals. We shout at the top of our voice, "Stop thief!" and when the police get on the track we come out, latches and in our slippers, and stand in the street. We come around the bawling ruffian and hustle him off to justice, and when he gets in prison what do we do for him? With great gusto we put on the handcuffs and the hopples, but what preparation are we making for the day when the handcuffs and the hopples come off? Society seems to say to these criminals, "Villain, go in there and rot," when it ought to say, "You are an offender against the law, but we mean to give you an opportunity to repent, we mean to help you. Here are Bibles and tracts and Christian influences. Christ died for you. Look and live."

Vast improvements have been made by introducing industries into the prison, but we want something more than hammers and shoe lasts to reclaim these people. Aye, we want more than sermons on the Sabbath day. Society must impress these men with the fact that it does not enjoy their suffering and that it is attempting to reform and elevate them. The majority of criminals suppose that society has a grudge against them and they in turn have a grudge against society.

They are harder in heart and more infuriate when they come out of jail than when they went in. Many of the people who go to prison go again and again and again. Some years ago, of fifteen hundred prisoners who during the year had been in Sing Sing, four hundred had been there before in a house of correction in the country where during a certain reach of time there had been five thousand people, more than nine hundred had been there before. So, in one case the prison, and in the other the house of correction, set them just as bad as they were before.

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Again, in your effort to arrest this plague of crime you need to consider untrust-worthy witnesses. "Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes drink in the morning." It is a great calamity to a city when bad men get into public authority. Why was it that in New York there was such unparalleled crime between 1866 and 1871? It was because the judges of police in that city at that time for the most part were as corrupt as the vagabonds that came before them for trial. Those were the days of high carnival for election frauds, assassination and forgery. We had all kinds of rings. There was one man during those years that got one hundred and twenty-eight thousand dollars in one year for serving the public.

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There you will find the sewer-rats of the sewers, the men who crawl out into the street with great slouch of hand, clothes and shoes. There you find the funeral thieves, the people who go about the city and rifle from coffins and pocketed the dead. And there you find the politicians, many here and there, who have to be watched lest they steal the public money they have to bury it, when they were put in office by family, or they will be sitting in a hard and get a large property for you, and you to pay the way and support them. There are the swindlers, the sneaks, the cowards, the sneaks.

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Again in your effort to arrest this plague of crime, you need to consider the idle population. Of course I do not refer to those who are getting their living by honest work, who cannot get rich, and who are willing for those athletic men and women who will not work. A man in Philadelphia was asked why he kept men upon his place, large as it is, instead of keeping machinery, and he said, "I may not hang myself, but I do not care who hangs himself." The great idle. It is from the idle classes that the criminal classes are made up. Stagnation, like water, gets putrid if it stands and rots and stinks. We can wonder that in the cities where there is so much to do, and all the hosts of earth and heaven and hell are plunging into the conflict and angels are flying and God is at work and the universe is a quake with the marching and countermarching, that God lets His indignation fall upon a man who chooses idleness.

I have watched these dooplings who spend their time stroking their beard and retouching their toilet and criticising industrious people, and pass their days and nights in barrooms and gin houses, lounging and smoking and chewing and card-playing. They are not only useless, but they are dangerous. How hard it is for them to while away the hours! Alas for them! If they do not know how to while away an hour, what will they do when they have all eternity on their hands? These men for a while smoke the best cigars and wear the best clothes and move in the highest spheres, but I have noticed that very soon they come down to the prison, the almshouse, or stop at the gallows.

The police stations of this cluster of cities furnish annually between two and three hundred thousand lodgings. For the most part these two and three hundred thousand lodgings are furnished to able-bodied men and women—people able to work as you and I are. When they are received no longer at one police station because they are full of cotton up to some man who swamps a bank. More than that, it touches your heart in the moral depression of the community. You might as well think to stand in a closely confined room where there are fifty people and yet not breathe the vitiated air, as to stand in a community where there is such a great multitude of the depraved without somewhat being contaminated. What is the fire that burns your store down compared with the conflagration which consumes your morals? What is the theft of the gold and silver from your money safe compared with the theft of your children's virtue?

We are all ready to arraign criminals. We shout at the top of our voice, "Stop thief!" and when the police get on the track we come out, latches and in our slippers, and stand in the street. We come around the bawling ruffian and hustle him off to justice, and when he gets in prison what do we do for him? With great gusto we put on the handcuffs and the hopples, but what preparation are we making for the day when the handcuffs and the hopples come off? Society seems to say to these criminals, "Villain, go in there and rot," when it ought to say, "You are an offender against the law, but we mean to give you an opportunity to repent, we mean to help you. Here are Bibles and tracts and Christian influences. Christ died for you. Look and live."

Vast improvements have been made by introducing industries into the prison, but we want something more than hammers and shoe lasts to reclaim these people. Aye, we want more than sermons on the Sabbath day. Society must impress these men with the fact that it does not enjoy their suffering and that it is attempting to reform and elevate them. The majority of criminals suppose that society has a grudge against them and they in turn have a grudge against society.

They are harder in heart and more infuriate when they come out of jail than when they went in. Many of the people who go to prison go again and again and again. Some years ago, of fifteen hundred prisoners who during the year had been in Sing Sing, four hundred had been there before in a house of correction in the country where during a certain reach of time there had been five thousand people, more than nine hundred had been there before. So, in one case the prison, and in the other the house of correction, set them just as bad as they were before.

The secretary of one of the benevolent societies of New York says a lad fifteen years of age had spent three years of his life in prison, and he said to the lad, "What have they done for you to make you better?" "Well," replied the lad, "the first time I was brought up before the judge he said, 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself.' And then I committed a crime again, and I was brought up before the same judge, and he said, 'You rascal!' And after a while I committed some other crime, and I was brought before the same judge, and he said, 'You ought to be hanged.' That was all they had done for him in the way of reformation and salvation. Oh, you say, 'these people are incorrigible.' I suppose there are hundreds of persons this day living in the prison bunks who would leap up at the prospect of reformation if society would only allow them a way into decency and respectability.

"Oh," you say, "I have no patience with these rogues." I ask you in reply, how much better would you have been under the same circumstances? Suppose your mother had been a blasphemer and your father a sot, and you had started life with a body stuffed with evil predisposition, and you had spent much of your time in a cellar amid obscenities and cursing, and if at ten years of age you had been compelled to go out and steal, battered and banged at night if you came home without your pelting, and suppose your early manhood and womanhood had been covered with rags and filth and decent society had turned its back upon you, and left you to consort with vagabonds and wharf rats—how much better would you have been? I have no sympathy with that excessive clemency which would let crime run loose, or which would sit in the gallery of a court room weeping because some hard-hearted wretch is brought to justice, but I do say that the safety and life of the community demand more potential influences in behalf of public offenders.

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