THE HOMESICK SOUL.

DR. TALMAGE DRAWS MANY LESSONS FROM THE PRODIGAL SON.

The Pleasures of Sin Are but for a Season, and Vile, Unworthy Pleasures at That. Only in Righteousness Can the Human Heart Find Any Real Satisfaction.

LONDON, Aug. 21.—Dr. Talmage has been preaching during the past week every day. Besides the engagements made in his original programme for the week he preached in several towns which he had promised to visit earlier, but had been unable to do so, owing to so much more time than he expected being taken up by his visit to Russia, whither he went to attend the distribution of The Christian Herald relief cargo. The canceling of these engagements caused acute disappointment to the citizens, and as far as possible Dr. Talmage has yielded to their entreaties to fix a later date. The audiences last week at Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and Derby were enormous, and at each place the popular ovation in the streets was most enthusiastic. The sermon selected for publication this week is from the text, Luke xv, 18, "I will arise and go to my father."

There is nothing like hunger to take the energy out of a man. A hungry man can toil neither with pen nor hand nor foot. There has been many an army defeated not so much for lack of ammunition as for lack of bread. It was that fact that took the fire out of this young man of the text. Storm and exposure will wear out any man's life in time, but hunger makes quick work. The most awful cry ever heard on earth is the cry for bread.

A traveler tells us that in Asia Minor there are trees which bear fruit looking very much like the long bean of our time. It is called the carab. Once in awhile the people reduced to destitution would eat these carabs, but generally the carabs, the beans spoken of here in the text, were thrown only to the swine and they crunched them with great avidity. But this young man of my text could not get even them without stealing them. So one day amid the swine troughs he begins to soliloquize. He says, "These are no clothes for a rich man's son to wear; this is no kind of business for a Jew to be engaged in—feeding swine; I'll go home; I'll go home; I will arise and go to my father."

FOOLS MAKE A MOCK AT SIN.

I know there are a great many people who try to throw a fascination, a romance, a halo about sin, but notwithstanding all that Lord Byron and George Sand have said in regard to it, it is a mean, low, contemptible business, and putting food and fodder into the troughs of a herd of iniquities that root and wallow in the soul of man is very poor business for men and women intended to be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. And when this young man resolved to go home it was a very wise thing for him to do, and the only question is whether we will follow him.

Satan promises large wages if we will serve him; but he clothes his victims with rags, and he pinches them with hunger, and when they start out to do better he sets after them all the bloodhounds of hell. Satan comes to us today and he promises all luxuries, all emoluments if we will only serve him. Liar, down with thee to the pit! "The wages of sin is death." Oh, the young man of the text was wise when he uttered the resolution, "I will arise and go to my father."

In the time of Queen Mary of England a persecutor came to a Christian woman who had hidden in her house for the Lord's sake one of Christ's servants, and the persecutor said, "Where is that heretic?" The Christian woman said, "You open that trunk and you will see the heretic." The persecutor opened the trunk, and on the top of the linen of the trunk he saw a glass. He said, "There is no heretic here." "Ah," she said, "look in the glass and you will see the heretic." As I take up the mirror of God's Word today I would that instead of seeing the prodigal of the text we might see ourselves—our want, our wandering, our sin, our lost condition—so that we might be as wise as this young man was and say, "I will arise and go to my father."

The resolution of this text was formed in disgust at his present circumstances. If this young man had been by his employer set to culturing flowers, or training vines over an arbor, or keeping account of the pork market, or overseeing other laborers, he would not have thought of going home. If he had had his pockets full of money, if he had been able to say: "I have a thousand dollars now of my own. What's the use of my going back to my father's house? Do you think I am going back to apologize to the old man? Why he would put me on the limits. He would not have going on around the old place such conduct as I have been engaged in. I won't go home; there is no reason why I should go home. I have plenty of money, plenty of pleasant surroundings, why should I go home?" Ah! it was his pauperism, it was his beggary. He had to go home.

IS MAN IN A LOST CONDITION?

Some man comes and says to me: "Why do you talk about the ruined state of the human soul? Why don't you speak about the progress of the Nineteenth century and talk of something more exhilarating?" It is for this reason: A man never wants the Gospel until he realizes he is in a famine struck state. Suppose I should come to you in your home, and you are in good, robust health, and I should begin to talk about medicines, and about how much better this medicine is than that, and some other medicine than some other medicine, and talk about this physician and that physician. After awhile you would get tired, and you would say: "I don't want to hear about medicines. Why do you talk to me of physicians? I never have a doctor."

Suppose I come into your house and I find you severely sick, and I know the medicines that will cure you, and I know the physician who is skillful enough to meet your case. You say: "Bring on all that medicine, bring on that physician. I am terribly sick and I want help." If I came to you and you feel you are all right in body, and all right in mind, and all right in soul, you have need of nothing; but suppose I have persuaded you that the leprosy of sin is upon you, the worst of all sickness. Oh, then you say, "Bring me that balm of the Gospel, bring me that divine medicament, bring me Jesus Christ."

But says some one in the audience, "How do you prove that we are in a ruined condition by sin?" Well, I can prove it in two ways, and you may have your choice. I can prove it either by the statements of men or by the statement of God. Which shall it be? You all say, "Let us have the statement of God." Well, he says in one place, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." He says in another place, "What is man that he should be clean, and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" He says in another place, "There is none that doeth good; no, not one." He says in another place, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

THE ALL POWERFUL NAME.

"Well," you say, "I am willing to acknowledge that, but why should I take the particular rescue that you propose?" This is the reason, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is the reason, "There is one name given under heaven among men whereby they may be saved." Then there are a thousand voices here ready to say, "Well, I am ready to accept this help of the Gospel; I would like to have this divine cure; how shall I go to work?" Let me say that a mere whim, an undefined longing amounts to nothing. You must have a stout, tremendous resolution like this young man of the text, when he said, "I will arise and go to my father."

"Oh," says some man, "how do I know my father wants me? How do I know, if I go back, I would be received?" "Oh," says some man, "you don't know where I have been; you don't know how far I have wandered; you wouldn't talk that way to me if you knew all the iniquities I have committed." What is that flutter among the angels of God? It is news; it is news! Christ has found the lost.

Nor angels can their joy contain,
But kindled with new fire;
The sinner lost is found, they sing,
And strike the sounding lyre.

When Napoleon talked of going into Italy they said, "You can't get there; if you knew what the Alps were you wouldn't talk about it or think of it; you can't get you ammunition wagons over the Alps." Then Napoleon rose in his stirrups, and waving his hand toward the mountains he said, "There shall be no Alps." That wonderful pass was laid out which has been the wonderment of all the years since—the wonderment of all engineers. And you tell me there are such mountains of sin between your soul and God there is no mercy. Then I see Christ waving his hand toward the mountains, and I hear him say, "I will come over the mountains of thy sin and the hills of thine iniquity." There shall be no Pyrenees; there shall be no Alps.

Again, I notice that this resolution of the young man of the text was founded in sorrow at his misbehavior. It was not mere physical plight. It was grief that he had so maltreated his father. It is a sad thing after a father has done everything for a child to have that child be ungrateful.

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child.

That is Shakespeare. "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." That is the Bible. Well, my friends, have not some of us been cruel prodigals? Have we not maltreated our Father? And such a Father! So loving, so kind. If he had been a stranger, if he had forsaken us, if he had flagellated us, if he had pounded us and turned us out of doors on the commons, it would not have been so wonderful—our treatment of him; but he is a Father so loving, so kind, and yet how many of us for our wanderings have never apologized! We apologize for wrongs done to our fellows, but some of us perhaps have committed ten thousand times ten thousand wrongs against God and never apologized.

THE DISGUSTED PRODIGAL.

I remark still further that this resolution of the text was founded in a feeling of homesickness. I do not know how long this young man, how many months, how many years, he had been away from his father's house, but there is something about the reading of my text that makes me think he was homesick. Some of you know what that feeling is. Far away from home sometimes, surrounded by everything bright and pleasant, plenty of friends, you have said, "I would give the world to be home tonight." Well, this young man was homesick for his father's house. I have no doubt when he thought of his father's house he said, "Now perhaps father may not be living."

We read nothing in this story—this parable founded on everyday life—we read nothing about the mother. It says nothing about going home to her. I think she was dead. I think she had died of a broken heart at his wanderings, or perhaps he had gone into dissipation from the fact he could not remember a loving and sympathetic mother. A man never gets over having lost his mother. Nothing said about her here. But he is homesick for his father's house. He thought he would just like to go and walk around the old place. He thought he would just like to go and see if things were as they used to be.

Many a man after having been off a long while has gone home and knocked at the door, and a stranger has come. It is the old homestead, but a stranger comes to the door. He finds out father is gone, mother is gone and brothers and sisters all gone. I think this young man of the text said to himself, "Perhaps father may be dead." Still he starts to find out. He is homesick. Are there any here today homesick for God, homesick for heaven?

A sailor, after having been long on the sea, returned to his father's house and his mother tried to persuade him not to go away again. She said: "Now you had better stay at home; don't go away; we don't want you to go. You will have it a great deal better here." But it made him angry. The night before he went away again to sea he heard his mother praying in the next room, and that made him more angry. He went far out on the sea, and a storm came up, and he was ordered to very perilous duty, and he ran up the ratlines, and amid the shrouds of the ship he heard the voice that he had heard in the next room.

He tried to whistle it off; he tried to rally his courage; but he could not silence that voice he had heard in the next room, and there in the storm and the darkness he said: "O Lord, what a wretch I have been, what a wretch I am! Help me just now, Lord God." And I thought in this assemblage today there may be some who may have the memory of a father's petition or a mother's prayer pressing mightily upon the soul, and that this hour they may make the same resolution I find in my text, saying, "I will arise and go to my father."

A lad at Liverpool went out to bathe, went out into the sea, went out too far, got beyond his depth and he floated far away. A ship bound for Dublin came along and took him on board. Sailors are generally very generous fellows, and one gave him a cap and another gave him a jacket and another gave him shoes. A gentleman passing along on the beach at Liverpool found the lad's clothes and took them home, and the father was heartbroken, the mother was heartbroken at the loss of their child. They had heard nothing from him day after day, and they ordered the usual mourning for the sad event.

But the lad took ship from Dublin and arrived in Liverpool the very day the garments arrived. He knocked at the door and the father was overjoyed and the mother was overjoyed at the return of their lost son. Oh, my friends, have you waded out too deep? Have you waded down into sin? Have you waded from the shore? Will you come back? When you come back will you come in the rags of your sin or will you come robed in the Saviour's righteousness? I believe the latter. Go home to your God today. He is waiting for you. Go home!

But I remark the characteristic of this resolution was, it was immediately put into execution.

DO NOT DELAY.

The context says "he arose and came to his father." The trouble in nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand is that our resolutions amount to nothing because we make them for some distant time. If I resolve to become a Christian next year, that amounts to nothing at all. If I resolve to become a Christian tomorrow, that amounts to nothing at all. If I resolve at the service today to become a Christian, that amounts to nothing at all. If I resolve after I go home today to yield my heart to God, that amounts to nothing at all. The only kind of resolution that amounts to anything is the resolution that is immediately put into execution.

There is a man who had the typhoid fever. He said, "Oh, if I could get over this terrible distress; if this fever should depart, if I could be restored to health, I would all the rest of my life serve God." The fever departed. He got well enough to walk around the block. He got well enough to attend to business. He is well today—as well as he ever was. Where is the broken vow? There is a man who said long ago, "If I could live to the year 1892, by that time I will have my business matters all arranged, and I will have time to attend to religion, and I will be a good, thorough, consecrated Christian." The year 1892 has come. January, February, March, April, May, June, July—fully half of the year gone. Where is your broken vow?

"Oh," says some man, "I'll attend to that when I can get my character fixed up; when I can get over my evil habits; I am now given to strong drink," or, says the man, "I am given to uncleanness," or, says the man, "I am given to dishonesty. When I get over my present habits, then I'll be a thorough Christian." My brother, you will get worse and worse until Christ takes you in hand. "Not the righteous, sinners Jesus came to call."

Oh, but you say, "I agree with you on all that, but I must put it off a little longer." Do you know there were many who came just as near as you are to the kingdom of God and never entered it? I was at East Hampton, Long Island, and I went into the cemetery to look around, and in that cemetery there are twelve graves side by side—the graves of sailors. This crew, some years ago, in a ship went into the breakers at Amagansett, about three miles away. My brother, then preaching at East Hampton, had been at the burial. These men of the crew came very near being saved. The people from Amagansett saw the vessel, and they shot rockets, and they sent ropes from the shore, and these poor fellows got into the boat, and they pulled mightily for the shore, but just before they got to the shore the rope snapped and the boat capsized and they were lost, and their bodies afterward washed upon the beach.

Oh, what a solemn day it was—I have been told of it by my brother—when these twelve men lay at the foot of the pulpit and he read over them the funeral service. They came very near shore—within shouting distance of the shore, yet did not arrive on solid land. There are some men who come almost to the shore of God's mercy, but not quite, not quite. To be only almost saved is to be lost.

LOST BEYOND REDEMPTION.

I will tell you of two prodigals—the one that got back and the other that did not get back. In Richmond there is a very prosperous and beautiful home in many respects. A young man wandered off from that home. He wandered very far into sin. They heard of him often, but he was always on the wrong track. He would not go home. At the door of that beautiful home one night there was a great outcry. The young man of the house ran down and opened the door to see what was the matter. It was midnight. The rest of the family were asleep. There were the wife and children of this prodigal young man. The fact was he had come home and driven them out.

He said: "Out of this house. Away with these children; I will dash their brains out. Out into the storm!" The mother gathered them up and fled. The next morning the brother, a young man who had staid at home, went out to find this prodigal brother and son, and he came where he was and saw the young man wandering up and down in front of the place where he had been staying, and the young man who had kept his integrity said to the older brother: "Here, what does this mean? What is the matter with you? Why do you act in this way?" The prodigal looked at him and said: "Who am I? Whom do you take me to be?" He said, "You are my brother." "No, I am not. I am a brute. Have you seen anything of my wife and children? Are they dead? I drove them out last night in the storm. I am a brute. John, do you think there is any help for me? Do you think I will ever get over this life of dissipation?" He said, "John, there is just one thing that will stop this." The prodigal ran his finger across his throat and said: "That will stop it, and I'll stop it before night. Oh, my brain; I can stand it no longer." That prodigal never got home. But I will tell you of a prodigal that did get home.

In this country two young men started from their father's house and went down to Portsmouth. The father could not pursue his children; for some reason he could not leave home, and so he wrote a letter down to Mr. Griffin, saying: "Mr. Griffin, I wish you would go and see my two sons. They have arrived in Portsmouth and they are going to take ship and are going away from home. I wish you would persuade them back." Mr. Griffin went and he tried to persuade them back. He persuaded one to go. He went with very easy persuasion because he was very homesick already. The other young man said: "I will not go. I have had enough of home. I'll never go home." "Well," said Mr. Griffin, "then if you won't go home I'll get you a respectable position on a respectable ship." "No, you won't," said the prodigal; "no, you won't. I am going as a common sailor; that will plague my father most, and what will do most to tantalize and worry him will please me best."

Years passed on and Mr. Griffin was seated in his study one day when a message came to him saying there was a young man in irons on a ship at the dock—a young man condemned to death—who wished to see this clergyman. Mr. Griffin went down to the dock and went on shipboard. The young man said to him, "You don't know me, do you?" "No," he said, "I don't know you." "Why, don't you remember that young man you tried to persuade to go home, and he wouldn't go?" "Oh, yes," said Mr. Griffin; "are you that man?" "Yes. I am that man," said the other. **"I would like to have you pray for me. I have committed murder and I must die; but I don't want to go out of this world until some one prays for me. You are my father's friend, and I would like to have you pray for me."**

Mr. Griffin went from judicial authority to judicial authority to get that young man's pardon. He slept not night nor day. He went from influential person to influential person until in some way he got that young man's pardon. He came down on the dock and as he arrived on the dock with the pardon the father came. He had heard that his son under a disguised name had been committing crime and was going to be put to death. So Mr. Griffin and the father went on ship's deck, and at the very moment Mr. Griffin offered the pardon to the young man the old father threw his arms around the son's neck and the son said: "Father, I have done very wrong and I am very sorry. I wish I had never broken your heart. I am very sorry." "Oh," said the father, "don't mention it. It doesn't make any difference now. It is all over. I forgive you, my son," and he kissed him and kissed him and kissed him.

Today I offer you the pardon of the Gospel—full pardon, free pardon. I do not care what your crime has been. Though you say you have committed a crime against God, against your own soul, against your fellow man, against your family, against the day of judgment, against the cross of Christ—whatever your crime has been, here is pardon, full pardon, and the very moment you take that pardon your heavenly Father throws his arms about you and says: "My son, I forgive you. It is all right. You are as much in my favor now as if you had never sinned." Oh, there is joy on earth and joy in heaven! Who will take the Father's embrace?

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