THE CONTRARY WIND

DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO STRUGGLING SOULS.

The Disciples on the Lake of Galilee—A Draft of Discouragement—The Disadvantage of an Unfortunate Name—Early Mistakes That Cloud the Life.

WASHINGTON, May 30.—Dr. Talmage's sermon this week is one of good cheer. It will give encouragement to many struggling souls. The subject is "Contrary Winds," and the text Mathew xiv, 24. "The wind was contrary."

As I well know by experience on Lake Galilee, one hour all may be calm and the next hour the winds and waves will be so boisterous that you are in doubt as to whether you will land on the shore or on the bottom of the deep. The disciples in the text were caught in such a stress of weather and the sails bent and the ship plunged, for "the wind was contrary." There is in one of the European straits a place where, whichever way you sail, the winds are opposing. There are people who all their life seem sailing in the teeth of the wind. All things seem against them. It may be said of their condition as of that of the disciples in my text, "the wind was contrary."

A great multitude of people are under seeming disadvantage, and I will today, in the swarthiest Anglo-Saxon that I can manage, treat their cases not as a nurse counts out eight or ten drops of a prescription and stirs them in a half glass of water, but as when a man has by a mistake taken a large amount of strychnine or paris green or belladonna, and the patient is walked rapidly round the room and shaken up until he gets wide awake. Many of you have taken a large draught of the poison of discouragement, and I come out by the order of the Divine Physician to rouse you out of that lethargy.

Handicapped by a Name.

First, many people are under the disadvantage of an unfortunate name given them by parents who thought they were doing a good thing. Sometimes at the baptism of children while I have held up one hand in prayer I have held up the other hand in amazement that parents should have weighted the babe with such a dissonant and repulsive nomenclature. I have not so much wondered that some children should cry out at the christening font as that others with such smiling face should take a title that will be the burden of their lifetime. It is outrageous to afflict children with an undesirable name because it happened to be possessed by a parent or a rich uncle from whom favors are expected or some prominent man of the day who may end his life in disgrace. It is no excuse, because they are Scripture names, to call a child Jehoiakim or Tiglath-Pileser. I baptized one by the name Bathsheba. Why, under all the circumambient heaven, any parent should want to give to a child the name of that loose creature of Scripture times I cannot imagine. I have often felt at the baptismal altar, when names were announced to me, like saying, as did the Rev. Dr. Richards of Morristown, N. J., when a child was handed him for baptism and the name given, "Hadn't you better call it something else?"

Impose not upon that babe a name suggestive of flippancy or meanness. There is no excuse for such assault and battery on the cradle when our language is opulent with names musical and suggestive in meaning, such as John, meaning "the gracious gift of God," or Henry, meaning "the chief of a household," or Alfred, meaning "good counselor," or Joshua, meaning "God, our salvation," or Ambrose, meaning "immortal," or Andrew, meaning "manly," or Esther, meaning "star," or Abigail, meaning "my father's joy," or Anna, meaning "grace," or Victoria, meaning "victory," or Rosalie, meaning "beautiful as a rose," or Margaret, meaning "a pearl," or Ida, meaning "godlike," or Clara, meaning "illustrious," or Amelia, meaning "busy," or Bertha, meaning "beautiful," and hundreds of other names just as good that are a help rather than a hindrance.

Names as Lifelong Obstacles.

But sometimes the great hindrance in life is not in the given name, but in the family name. While legislatures are willing to lift such incubus, there are families that keep a name which mortgages all the generations with a great disadvantage. You say, "I wonder if he is any relation to So-and-so," mentioning some family celebrated for crime or deception. It is a wonder to me that in all such families some spirited young man does not rise, saying to his brothers and sisters, "If you want to keep this nuisance or scandalization of a name, I will keep it no longer than until by quickest course of law I can slough off this gangrene." The city directory has hundreds of names the mere pronunciation of which has been a lifelong obstacle. If you have started life under a name which either through ridiculous orthography or vicious suggestion has been an incumbrance, resolve that the next generation shall not be so weighted. It is not demeaning to change a name. Saul of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle. Hadassah, "the myrtle," became Esther, "the star." We have in America, and I suppose it is so in all countries, names which ought to be abolished and can be and will be abolished for the reason that they are a libel and a slander. But if for any reason you are submerged either by a given name or by a family name that you must bear, God will help you to overcome the outrage by a life consecrated to the good and useful. You may erase the curse from the name. If it once stood for meanness, you can make it stand for generosity. If once it stood for pride, you can make it stand for humility. If it once stood for fraud, you can make it stand for honesty. If once it stood for wickedness, you can make it stand for purity. There have been multitudes of instances where men and women have magnificently conquered the disasters of the name inflicted upon them.

The Crippled Struggler.

Again, many people labor under the misfortune of incomplete physical equipment. We are by our Creator so economically built that we cannot afford the obliteration of any physical faculty. We want our two eyes, our two ears, our two hands, our two feet, our eight fingers and two thumbs. Yet what multitudes of people have but one eye or but one foot! The ordinary casualties of life have been quadrupled, quintupled, sextupled, aye, centupled, in our time by the civil war, and at the north and south a great multitude are fighting the battle of life with half or less than half the needed physical armaments. I do not wonder at the pathos of a soldier during the war, who, when told that he must have his hand amputated, said, "Doctor, can't you save it?" and when told that it was impossible said, with tears rolling down his cheeks: "Well, then, goodby, old hand. I hate to part with you. You have done me a good service for many years, but it seems you must go. Goodby."

A celebrated surgeon told me of a scene in the clinical department of one of the New York hospitals, when a poor man with a wounded leg was brought in before the students to be operated on. The surgeon was pointing out this and that to the students and handling the wounded leg, and was about to proceed to amputation when the poor man leaped from the table and hobbled to the door and said, "Gentlemen, I am sorry to disappoint you, but by the help of God I will die with my leg on." What a terrific loss is the loss of our physical faculties!"

The way the battle of Crecy was decided against France was by the Welshmen killing the French horses, and that brought their riders to the ground. And when you cripple this body, which is merely the animal on which the soul rides, you may sometimes defeat the soul.

God's Help.

Yet how many suffer from this physical taking off! Good cheer, my brother! God will make it up to you somehow. The grace, the sympathy of God, will be more to you than anything you have lost. If God allows part of your resources to be cut off in one place, he will add it on somewhere else. As Augustus, the emperor, took off a day from February, making it the shortest month in the year, and added it to August, the month named after himself, so advantages taken from one part of your nature will be added on to another. But it is amazing how much of the world's work has been done by men of subtracted physical organization. S. S. Preston, the great orator of the southwest, went limping all his life, but there was no foot put down upon any platform of his day that resounded so far as his clubfoot. Beethoven was so deaf that he could not hear the crash of the orchestra rendering his oratorios. Thomas Carlyle, the dyspeptic martyr, was given the commission to drive cant out of the world's literature. The Rev. Thomas Stockton of Philadelphia, with one lung raised his audience nearer heaven than most ministers can raise them with two lungs. In the banks, the insurance companies, the commercial establishments, the reformatory associations, the churches, there are tens of thousands of men and women today doubled up with rheumatism or subject to the neuralgias or with only fragments of limbs, the rest of which they left at Chattanooga or South Mountain or the Wilderness, and they are worth more to the world, and more to the church, and more to God than those of us who have never so much as had a finger joint stiffened by a felon.

Put to full use all the faculties that remain and charge on all opposing circumstances with the determination of John of Bohemia, who was totally blind, and yet at a battle cried out, "I pray and beseech you to lead me so far into the fight that I may strike one good blow with this sword of mine!" Do not think so much of what faculties you have lost as of what faculties remain. You have enough left to make yourself felt in three worlds, while you help the earth and balk hell and win heaven. Arise from your discouragements, O men and women of depleted or crippled physical faculties, and see what, by the special help of God, you can accomplish!

Alexander and Bucephalus.

The skilled horsemen stood around Bucephalus, unable to mount or manage him, so wild was the steed. But Alexander noticed that the sight of his own shadow seemed to disturb the horse. So Alexander clutched him by the bridle and turned his head away from the shadow and toward the sun, and the horse's agitation was gone, and Alexander mounted him and rode off, to the astonishment of all who stood by. And what you people need is to have your sight turned away from the shadows of your earthly lot, over which you have so long pondered, and your head turned toward the sun—the glorious sun of gospel consolation and Christian hope and spiritual triumph.

And then remember that all physical disadvantages will after awhile vanish. Let those who have been rheumatismed out of a foot, or cataracted out of an eye, or by the perpetual roar of our cities thundered out of an ear, look forward to the day when this old tenement house of flesh will come down and a better one shall be builded. The resurrection morning will provide you with a better outfit. Either the unstrung, worn out, blunted and crippled organs will be so reconstructed that you will not know them, or an entire new set of eyes and ears and feet will be given you. Just what it means by corruption putting on incorruption we do not know, save that it will be glory ineffable, no limping in heaven, no straining of the eyesight to see things a little way off, no putting of the hand behind the ear to double the capacity of the tympanum, but faculties perfect, all the keys of the instrument attuned for the sweep of the fingers of ecstasy. But until that day of resumption comes let us bear each other's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Another form of disadvantage under which many labor is lack of early education. There will be no excuse for ignorance in the next generation. Free schools and illimitable opportunity of education will make ignorance a crime. I believe in compulsory education, and those parents who neglect to put their children under educational advantages have but one right left, and that is the penitentiary. But there are multitudes of men and women in midlife who have had no opportunity. Free schools had not yet been established, and vast multitudes had little or no school at all. They feel it when as Christian men they come to speak or pray in religious assemblies or public occasions, patriotic or political or educational. They are silent because they do not feel competent. They owe nothing to English grammar, or geography, or belles lettres. They would not know a participle from a pronoun if they met it many times a day. Many of the most successful merchants of America and men in high political places cannot write an accurate letter on any theme. They are completely dependent upon clerks, and deputies, and stenographers, to make things right. I knew a literary man who in other years in this city made his fortune by writing speeches for congressmen or fixing them up for The Congressional Record after they were delivered. The millionaire illiteracy of this country is beyond measurement.

Ungrammatical, but Effective.

Now, suppose a man finds himself in midlife without education, what is he to do? Do the best he can. The most effective layman in a former pastoral charge that I ever heard speak on religious themes could within five minutes of exhortation break all the laws of English grammar, and if he left any law unfractured he would complete the work of lingual devastation in the prayer with which he followed it. But I would rather have him pray for me if I were sick or in trouble than any Christian man I know of, and in that church all the people preferred him in exhortation and prayer to all others. Why? Because he was so thoroughly pious and had such power with God he was irresistible, and as he went on in his prayer sinners repented and saints shouted for joy, and the bereaved seemed to get back their dead in celestial companionship. And when he had stopped praying and as soon as I could wipe out of my eyes enough tears to see the closing hymn I ended the meeting, fearful that some long winded prayer meeting bore would pull us down from the seventh heaven.

Not a word have I to say against accuracy of speech or fine elecution or high mental culture. Get all these you can. But I do say to those who were brought up in the day of poor schoolhouses and ignorant schoolmasters and no opportunity: You may have so much of good in your soul and so much of heaven in your everyday life that you will be mightier for good than any who went through the curriculum of Harvard or Yale or Oxford, yet never graduated in the school of Christ. When you get up to the gate of heaven, no one will ask you whether you can parse the first chapter of Genesis, but whether you have learned the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, nor whether you know how to square the circle, but whether you have lived a square life in a round world. Mount Zion is higher than Mount Parnassus.

But what other multitudes there are under other disadvantages! Here is a Christian woman whose husband thinks religion a sham, and while the wife prays the children one way the husband swears them another. Or here is a Christian man who is trying to do his best for God and the church, and his wife holds him back and says on the way home from prayer meeting, where he gave testimony for Christ: "What a fool you made of yourself! I hope hereafter you will keep still." And when he would be benevolent and give $50 she criticises him for not giving 50 cents. I must do justice and publicly thank God that I never proposed at home to give anything for any cause of humanity or religion but the other partner in the domestic firm approved it, and when it seemed beyond my ability and faith in God was necessary she had three-fourths the faith. But I know men who, when they contribute to charitable objects, are afraid that the wife shall find it out. What a withering curse such a woman must be to a good man!

Then there are others under the great disadvantage of poverty. Who ought to get things cheapest? You say those who have little means. But they pay more. You buy coal by the ton; they buy it by the bucket. You buy flour by the barrel; they buy it by the pound. You get apparel cheap because you pay cash; they pay dear because they have to get trusted. And the Bible was right when it said, "The destruction of the poor is their poverty."

Mistakes In Early Life.

Then, there are those who made a mistake in early life, and that overshadows all their days. "Do you not know that that man was once in prison?" is whispered. Or, "Do you know that that man once attempted suicide?" Or, "Do you know that that man once absconded?" Or, "Do you know that that man was once discharged for dishonesty?" Perhaps there was only one wrong deed in the man's life, and that one act haunts the subsequent half century of his existence.

Others have unfortunate predominance of some mental faculty, and their rashness throws them into wild enterprises, or their trepidation makes them decline great opportunity, or there is a vein of melancholy in their disposition that defeats them, or they have an endowment of overmirth that causes the impression of insincerity.

Others have a mighty obstacle in their personal appearance, for which they are not responsible. They forget that God fashioned their features, and their complexion and their stature, the size of their nose and mouth and hands and feet, and gave them their gait and their general appearance, and they forget that much of the world's best work and the church's best work has been done by homely people, and that Paul the Apostle is said to have been humpbacked and his eyesight weakened by ophthalmia, while many of the finest in appearance have passed their time before flattering looking glasses or in studying killing attitudes and in displaying the richness of wardrobes—not one ribbon or vest or sack or glove or button or shoestring of which they have had brains to earn for themselves.

Others had wrong proclivities from the start. They were born wrong, and that sticks to one even after he is born again. They have a natural crankiness that is 275 years old. It came over with their great grandfathers from Scotland, or Wales, or France. It was born on the banks of the Thames, or the Clyde, or the Tiber, or the Rhine, and has survived all the plagues and epidemics of many generations, and is living today on the banks of the Potomac, or the Hudson, or the Androscoggin, or the Savannah, or the La Plata. And when a man tries to stop this evil ancestral proclivity he is like a man on a rock in the rapids of Niagara, holding on with a grip from which the swift currents are trying to sweep him into the abyss beyond.

Oh, this world is an overburdened world, an overworked world. It is an awfully tired world. It is a dreadfully unfortunate world. Scientists are trying to find out the cause of these earthquakes in all lands, cisatlantic and transatlantic. Some say this and some say that. I have taken the diagnosis of what is the matter with the earth. It has so many burdens on it and so many fires within it, it has a fit. It cannot stand such a circumference and such a diameter. Some new Cotopaxi or Stromboli or Vesuvius will open, and then all will be at peace for the natural world. But what about the moral woes of the world that have racked all nations, and for 6,000 years science proposes nothing but knowledge, and many people who know the most are the most uncomforted?

A Way Out For All.

In the way of practical relief for all disadvantages and all woes the only voice that is worth listening to on this subject is the voice of Christianity, which is the voice of Almighty God. Whether I have mentioned the particular disadvantage under which you labor or not, I distinctly declare, in the name of my God, that here is a way out and a way up for all of you. You cannot be any worse off than that Christian young woman who was in the Pemberton mills when they fell some years ago, and from under the fallen timbers she was heard singing, "I am going home to die no more."

Take good courage from that Bible, all of whose promises are for those in bad predicament. There are better days for you, either on earth or in heaven. I put my hand under your chin and lift your face into the light of the coming dawn. Have God on your side, and then you have for reserve troops all the armies of heaven, the smallest company of which is 20,000 chariots and the smallest brigade 144,000, the lightnings of heaven their drawn sword.

An ancient warrior saw an overpowering host come down upon his small company of armed men, and mounting his horse he threw a handful of sand in the air, crying. "Let their faces be covered with confusion." And both armies heard his voice, and history says it seemed as though the dust thrown in the air had become so many angels of supernatural deliverance, and the weak overcame the mighty, and the immense host fell back, and the small number marched on. Have faith in God, and, though all the allied forces of discouragement seem to come against you in battle array and their laugh of defiance and contempt resounds through all the valleys and mountains, you might by faith in God and importunate prayer pick up a handful of the very dust of your humiliation and throw it into the air, and it shall become angels of victory over all the armies of earth and hell. The voices of your adversaries, human and satanic, shall be covered with confusion, while you shall be not only conqueror, but more than conqueror, through that grace which has so often made the fallen helmet of an overthrown antagonist the footstool of a Christian victory.

Municipal Intolerance to Spanish Mules.

A bishop's coachman must not swear, especially when he is on the box and the bishop inside. There is a certain place in Spain called Corrales. It is in the province and diocese of Zamora, and the bishop of Zamora recently went in his coach and four (but they were mules) to hold a confirmation at Corrales. When the children of the diocese were duly confirmed, the mules, being confirmed already in stubbornness and original sin, refused to start and backed the carriage with the bishop inside it against the churchyard gate, thereby making a breach in the sanctuary of the churchyard wall. At this point the coachman is reported to have uttered one of those thunderous Spanish curses in which the language of Spain is so infinitely superior to the language of France and which even a bishop must feel has the dignity of power. Unfortunately for himself, the mayor of Corrales, Senor Tome, had just taken leave of the bishop and was standing by the carriage when the word reached him. He sprang forward and fined the coachman 4 pesetas on the spot for blasphemy and profanation, for in Spain the mayor carries the court with him wherever he goes. The bishop also got out and dismissed the blasphemer on the spot. Then the mayor got on the box and himself drove monsignore back to his episcopal residence. The confirmation has ever since been known by a title which may be freely translated the Blue Blazes Confirmation of Corrales.—Pall Mall Gazette.

BEGGING CRAZE IN ENGLAND.

Gone Daft Over the Raising of Various Subscriptions.

The approach of the end of the century in England finds the people gone daft over the raising of subscriptions. If there be one thing above all others that characterizes the Britons of today, it is their persistent fondness for creating "funds," and they seize every pretext for arousing the interest of the nation in this project and that. The fad, for such it must be, is illustrated by the present outcropping of schemes for innumerable purposes, all seeking to draw money from the purses of the charitable and inspired by the approaching celebration of the completion of the sixtieth year of Queen Victoria's reign. This fashion of appealing to the public for money because of some national ceremony has not taken root in this country, and the citizens of America may be devoutly thankful, if the present experience of the English nation is to be taken as an index of the logical development of the craze. Subscription papers, it is said, flutter in every corner of the United Kingdom.

All classes are appealed to for pounds, shillings and pence. Shillings lists are popular. It is related that a certain great project was put forth on the basis of a national shilling subscription. It was planned to acknowledge each contribution in the columns of three London dailies. It soon appeared that it was costing 1⅓ shillings to acknowledge each shilling, and then the plans were changed. Here are some of the projects for which these various "funds" are being raised, all in the name of the queen's jubilee: To raise the debts of the London hospitals; to create public libraries by the score; for the benefit of the hospital nurses; for the sustentation of the clergy; for the spread of temperance; for the creation of new parks; for the purchase of lifeboats; for the benefit of a home for incurables; for the erection of "Victoria cottage homes," presumably for the benefit of certain elegant paupers; for the relief of the spinsters of the nation, for the relief of distressed Irish ladies; for the prevention of cruelty to children; for the benefit, in some unstated manner, of lady mayoresses; for the erection of a home for the dying, and the climax is capped by a fund for the creation of a lethal chamber for dogs.—Washington Star.

London and Food.

American cities, above those of any other nation, possess the advantage of being able to provide food promptly and at short notice for a great number of people in excess of their normal population without enhanced cost to local consumers. British and continental cities confronted with such a contingency find it difficult to meet. The anticipated influx of a great body of strangers means weeks of preparation; prices of edibles are at once raised far above the average, and not only visitors but residents also are put to considerable inconvenience to procure a sufficiency. Already in London much apprehension is felt in regard to feeding the estimated 1,500,000 strangers who are expected to be present at the celebration of the queen's jubilee.

As is well known, England is mainly dependent for its edibles upon foreign sources. London is provisioned only from day to day, and any interruption of transportation facilities from the continent for a few hours would practically exhaust its supply of many perishable commodities. The Daily Telegraph is already indulging in gloomy forebodings on the subject. It asserts that perishable food, such as milk, fruit, vegetables and fish, will be scarce and extortionately dear. On the actual day of the procession it fears an actual fight for edibles. Caterers are already contracting to supply luncheons and dinners for the sightseers on June 22.

From the terms demanded it is conceded that only millionaires will be able to feed satisfactorily. Alarm is inspired by the possibility that for several days previous to the celebration the demand upon the passenger service of the railways will be so great as to disorganize the transportation of food from rural England and the continent. New York can absorb an influx of strangers far more numerous, in proportion to its size, than London, and no one will have evidence that all comestibles are not as plentiful and cheap as usual.—New York Sun.

How Fast Wild Geese Fly.

During the three days ending March 22 numerous flocks of geese were seen migrating northward, or, rather, northeastward, since they were following the general trend of the coast line, which, in New England, is nearly northeastward north of Cape Cod. On the morning of March 22, while A. E. Sweetland and I were measuring clouds at the ends of a base line 1,178.4 meters in length, extending from the Blue Hill Meteorological observatory to the base of Blue hill, we succeeded in measuring, with our cloud theodolites, the height and the velocity of flight of one of these flocks of geese. So rapid is the velocity of flight that the flock was visible to the observers only about two minutes, but during that time two sets of measurements were taken with the theodolites on the leader of the flock.

The first measurements, at 8:49 a. m., were accurately taken at the observatory station, but were only approximate at the other station. The second measurements, at 8:50 a. m., were accurate and simultaneous at both stations. Using the second set of observations at both stations for the height and the two sets of observations at the observatory station for the velocity, the calculations gave the height as 905 feet above the Neponset river valley, of 960 feet above sea level and the velocity of flight as 44.3 miles an hour. The direction of flight was from southwest to northeast.

On a previous occasion we found a flock of ducks flying from the northeast at a height of 958 feet with a velocity of 47.8 miles an hour.—H. Helm Clayton in Science.

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