LIFE'S BRIGHT SIDE.

THREE PRESCRIPTIONS FOR THE CURE OF BUSINESS DEPRESSION.

Rev. Dr. Talmage Preaches a Sermon of Business Cheer — Christian Investment, Spiritual Awakening—A Warning—Life's Shipwrecks—Worth of the Soul.

WASHINGTON, July 25.—This discourse of Dr. Talmage shows how all may help in the restoration of good times, and is most appropriate. Text, Lamentations iii, 39, "Wherefore doth a living man complain?"

A cheerful interrogatory in the most melancholy book of the Bible! Jeremiah wrote so many sad things that we have a word named after him, and when anything is surcharged with grief and complaint we call it a jeremiad. But in my text Jeremiah, as by a sudden jolt, wakens us to a thankful spirit. Our blessings are so much more numerous than our deserts that he is surprised that anybody should ever find fault. Having life and with it a thousand blessings it ought to hush into perpetual silence everything like criticism of the dealings of God. "Wherefore doth a living man complain?"

While everything in our national finances is brightening, for the last few years the land has been set to the tune of "Naomi." There has been here and there a cheerful soloist, but the grand chorus has been one of lamentation, accompanied by dirges over prostrated commerce, silent manufactories, unemployed mechanism, and all those disorders described by the two short words, "hard times." The fact is that we have been paying for the bloody luxury of war more than 30 years ago. There were great national differences, and we had not enough Christian character to settle them by arbitration and treaty, and so we went into battle, expending life and treasure and well nigh swamping the national finances, and north and south, east and west, have ever since been paying for those four years' indulgence in barbarism.

But the time has come when this depression ought to end—yea, when it will end if the people are willing to do two or three things by way of financial medicament, for the people as well as congress must join in the work of recuperation. The best political economists tell us that there is no good reason for continued prostration. Plenty of money awaiting investment. The national health with never so strong an arm or so clear a brain. Yet we go on groaning, groaning, groaning, as though God had put this nation upon gruel and allowed us but one decent breakfast in six months. The fact is the habit of complaining has become chronic in this country, and after all these years of whimper and wailing and objurgation we are under such a momentum of snivel that we cannot stop.

A Plea For Cheerfulness.

There are three prescriptions by which I believe that our individual and national finances may be cured of their present depression. The first is cheerful conversation and behavior. I have noticed that the people who are most vociferous against the day in which we live are those who are in comfortable circumstances. I have made inquiry of those persons who are violent in their jeremiads against these times, and I have asked them, "Now, after all, are you not making a living?" After some hestitation and coughing and clearing their throat three or four times they say stammeringly, "Y-e-s." So that with a great multitude of people it is not a question of getting a livelihood, but they are dissatisfied because they cannot make as much money as they would like to make. They have only $2,000 in the bank, where they would like to have $4,000. They can clear in a year only $5,000, when they would like to clear $10,000, or things come out just even. Or in their trade they get $3 a day when they wish they could make $4 or $5. "Oh," says some one, "are you not aware of the fact that there is a great population out of employment, and there are hundreds of the good families of this country who are at their wits' end, not knowing which way to turn?" Yes, I know it better than any man in private life can know that sad fact, for it comes constantly to my eye and ear, but who is responsible for this state of things?

Much of that responsibility I put upon men in comfortable circumstances who by an everlasting growling keep public confidence depressed and new enterprises from starting out and new houses from being built. You know very well that one despondent man can talk 50 men into despondency, while one cheerful physician can wake up into exhilaration a whole asylum of hypochondriacs. It is no kindness to the poor or the unemployed for you to join in this deploration. If you have not the wit and the common sense to think of something cheerful to say, then keep silent. There is no man that can be independent of depressed conversation. The medical journals are ever illustrating it. I was reading of five men who resolved that they would make an experiment and see what they could do in the way of depressing a stout, healthy man, and they resolved to meet him at different points in his journey, and as he stepped out from his house in the morning in robust health one of the five men met him and said: "Why, you look very sick today. What is the matter?" He said: "I am in excellent health. There is nothing the matter." But, passing down the street, he began to examine his symptoms, and the second of the five men met him and said, "Why, how bad you do look!" "Well," he replied, "I don't feel very well." After awhile the third man met him, and the fourth man met him, and the fifth man came up and said: "Why, you look as if you had had the typhoid fever for six weeks. What is the matter with you?" And the man against whom the stratagem had been laid went home and died. And if you meet a man with perpetual talk about hard times and bankruptcy and dreadful winters that are to come you break down his courage. A few autumns ago, as the winter was coming on, people said: "We shall have a terrible winter. The poor will be frozen out this winter." There was something in the large store of acorns that the squirrels had gathered and something in the phases of the moon and something in other portents that made you certain we were going to have a hard winter. Winter came. It was the mildest one within my memory and within yours. All that winter long I do not think there was an icicle that hung through the day from the eaves of the house. So you prophesied falsely. Last winter was coming, and the people said: "We shall have unparalleled suffering among the poor. It will be a dreadful winter." Sure enough, it was a cold winter, but there were more large hearted charities than ever before poured out on the country, better provision made for the poor. So that there have been scores of winters when the poor had a harder time than they did last winter. Weather prophets say we will have frosts this summer which will kill the harvests. Now, let me tell you, you have lied twice about the weather, and I believe you are lying this time.

Some people are so overborne with the dolorousness of the times that they say we shall have communistic outrages in this country such as they had in France. I do not believe it. The parallel does not run. They have no Sabbath, no Bible, no God in France. We have all these defenses for our American people, and public opinion is such that if the people in this country attempt a cutthroat expedition they will land in Sing Sing or from the gallows go up on tight rope. I do not believe the people of this country will ever commit outrages and riot and murder for the sake of getting bread. But all this lugubrosity of tone and face keeps people down. Now I will make a contract. If the people of the United States for one week will talk cheerfully, I will open all the manufactories, I will give employment to all the unoccupied men and women, I will make a lively market for your real estate that is eating you up with taxes, I will stop the long processions on the way to the poorhouse and the penitentiary and I will spread a plentiful table from Maine to California and from Oregon to Sandy Hook, and the whole land shall carol and thunder with national jubilee. But says some one, "I will take that contract, but we can't affect the whole nation." My hearers and readers, representing as you do all professions, all trades and all occupations, if you should resolve never again to utter a dolorous word about the money markets, but by manner and by voice and by wit and caricature and, above all, by faith in God to try to scatter this national gloom, do you not believe the influence would be instantaneous and widespread? The effect would be felt around the world. For God's sake and for the sake of the poor and for the sake of the employed quit growling. Depend upon it, if you men in comfortable circumstances do not stop complaining, God will blast your harvests and see how you will get along without a corn crop, and he will sweep you with floods, and he will devour you with grasshoppers, and he will burn your city. If you men in comfortable circumstances keep on complaining, God will give you something to complain about. Mark that!

The Best Investment.

The second prescription for the alleviation of financial distresses is proper Christian investment. God demands of every individual state and nation a certain proportion of their income. We are parsimonious. We keep back from God that which belongs to him, and when we keep back anything from God he takes what we keep back, and he takes more. He takes it by storm, by sickness, by bankruptcy, by any one of the 10,000 ways which he can employ. The reason many of you are cramped in business is because you have never learned the lesson of Christian generosity. You employ an agent. You give him a reasonable salary, and, lo, you find out that he is appropriating your funds, besides the salary. What do you do? Discharge him. Well, we are God's agents. He puts in our hands certain moneys. Part is to be ours, part is to be his. Suppose we take all, what then? He will discharge us. He will turn us over to financial disasters and take the trust away from us. The reason that great multitudes are not prospered in business is simply because they have been withholding from God that which belongs to him. The rule is, give and you will receive, administer liberally and you shall have more to administer. I am in full sympathy with the man who was to be baptized by immersion, and some one said, "You had better leave your pocketbook out; it will get wet." "No," said he; "I want to go down under the wave with everything. I want to consecrate my property and all to God." And so he was baptized. What we want in this country is more baptized pocketbooks.

I had a relative whose business seemed to be failing. Here a loss, and there a loss, and everything was bothering, perplexing and annoying him. He sat down one day and said: "God must have a controversy with me about something. I believe I haven't given enough to the cause of Christ." And there and then he took out his checkbook and wrote a large check for a missionary society. He told me: "That was the turning point in my business. Ever since then I have been prosperous. From that very day—aye, from that very hour—I saw the change." And, sure enough, he went on, and he gathered a fortune.

The only safe investment that a man can make in this world is in the cause of Christ. If a man give from a superabundance, God may or he may not respond with a blessing, but if a man give until he feels it, if a man give until it fetches the blood, if a man give until his selfishness cringes and twists and cowers under it, he will get not only spiritual profit, but he will get paid back in hard cash or in convertible securities. We often see men who are tight fisted who seem to get along with their investments very profitably, notwithstanding all their parsimony. But wait. Suddenly in that man's history everything goes wrong. His health fails, or his reason is dethroned, or a domestic curse smites him, or a midnight shadow of some kind drops upon his soul and upon his business. What is the matter? God is punishing him for his small heartedness. He tried to cheat God, and God worsted him. So that one of the recipes for the cure of individual and national finances is more generosity. Where you bestowed $1 on the cause of Christ give $2. God loves to be trusted, and he is very apt to trust back again. He says: "That man knows how to handle money. He shall have more money to handle." And very soon the property that was on the market for a great while gets a purchaser, and the bond that was not worth more than 50 cents on a dollar goes to par, and the opening of a new street doubles the value of his house, or in any way of a million God blesses him.

Christian Generosity.

Once the man finds out that secret and he goes on to fortune. There are men whom I have known who for ten years have been trying to pay God $1,000. They have never been able to get it paid, for just as they were taking out from one fold of their pocketbook a bill mysteriously somehow in some other fold of their pocketbook there came a larger bill. You tell me that Christian generosity pays in the world to come. I tell you it pays now, pays in hard cash, pays in government securities. You do not believe it? Ah, that is what keeps you back. I knew you did not believe it. The whole world and Christendom is to be reconstructed on this subject, and as you are a part of Christendom let the work begin in your own soul. "But," says some one, "I don't believe that theory, because I have been generous and I have been losing money for ten years." Then God prepaid you, that is all.

What became of the money that you made in other days? You say to your son, "Now I will give you $500 every year as long as you live." After awhile you say, "Well, my son, you prove yourself so worthy of my confidence I will just give you $20,000 in a single lump." And you give it to him, and he starts off. In two or three years he does not complain against you: "Father is not taking care of me. I ought to have $500 a year." You prepaid your son, and he does not complain. There are thousands of us now who can this year get just enough to supply our wants. But did not God supply for us in the past and has he not again and again and again paid us in advance? In other words, trusted you all along—trusted you more than you had a right to ask? Strike, then, a balance for God. Economize in anything rather than in your Christian charities. There is not more than one out of 800 of you who ever give enough to do you any good, and when some cause of Christianity, some missionary society or Bible society or church organization, comes along and gets anything from you what do you say? You say, "I have been bled." And there never was a more significant figure of speech than that used in common parlance. Yes, you have been bled, and you are spiritually emaciated, when if you had been courageous enough to go through your property and say, "That belongs to God, and this belongs to God, and the other thing belongs to God," and no more dared to appropriate it to your own use than something that belonged to your neighbor, instead of being bled to death by charities you would have been reinvigorated and recuperated and built up for time and for eternity. God will keep many of you cramped in money matters until the day of your death unless you swing out into larger generosities.

A Great Promise.

People quote as a joke what is a divine promise, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and it will return to thee after many days." What did God mean by that? There is an allusion there. In Egypt when they sow the corn it is at a time when the Nile is overflowing its banks, and they sow the seed corn on the waters, and as the Nile begins to recede this seed corn strikes in the earth and comes up a harvest, and that is the allusion. It seems as if they are throwing the corn away on the waters, but after awhile they gather it up in a harvest. Now says God in his word, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and it shall come back to thee after many days." It may seem to you that you are throwing it away on charities, but it will yield a harvest of green and gold—a harvest on earth and a harvest in heaven. If men could appreciate that and act on that, we would have no more trouble about individual or national finances.

Prescription the third, for the cure of all our individual and national financial distresses, a great spiritual awakening. It is no mere theory. The merchants of this country were positively demented with the monetary excitement in 1857. There never before nor since has been such a state of financial depression as there was at that time. A revival came, and 500,000 people were born into the kingdom of God. What came after the revival? The grandest financial prosperity we have ever had in this country. The finest fortunes, the largest fortunes in the United States, have been made since 1857. "Well," you say, "what has spiritual improvement and revival to do with monetary improvement and revival?" Much to do. The religion of Jesus Christ has a direct tendency to make men honest and sober and truth telling, and are not honesty and sobriety and truth telling auxiliaries of material prosperity?

If we could have an awakening in this country as in the days of Jonathan Edwards of Northampton, as in the days of Dr. Finley of Basking Ridge, as in the days of Dr. Griffin of Boston, the whole land would rouse to a higher moral tone, and with that moral tone the honest business enterprise of the country would come up. You say a great awakening has an influence upon the future world. I tell you it has a direct influence upon the financial welfare of this world. The religion of Christ is no foe to successful business. It is its best friend. And if there should come a great awakening in this country, and all the banks and insurance companies and stores and offices and shops should close up for two weeks and do nothing but attend to the public worship of almighty God, after such a spiritual vacation the land would wake up to such financial prosperity as we have never dreamed of. Godliness is profitable for the life that now is as well as for that which is to come. But, my friends, do not put so much emphasis on worldly success as to let your eternal affairs go at loose ends. I have nothing to say against money. The more money you get the better, if it comes honestly and goes usefully. For the lack of it sickness dies without medicine, and hunger finds its coffin in an empty bread tray, and nakedness shivers for clothes and fire. All this canting tirade against money as though it had no practical use, when I hear a man indulge in it, it makes me think the best heaven for him would be an everlasting poorhouse. No; there is a practical use in money, but while we admit that we must also admit that it cannot satisfy the soul, that it cannot pay for our ferriage across the Jordan of death, that it cannot unlock the gate of heaven for our immortal soul.

Shipwreck.

Yet there are men who act as though packs of bonds and mortgages could be traded off for a mansion in heaven, and as though gold were a legal tender in that land where it is so common that they make pavements out of it. Salvation by Christ is the only salvation. Treasures in heaven are the only incorruptible treasures. Have you ever cyphered out that sum in loss and gain, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" You may wear fine apparel now, but the winds of death will flutter it like rags. Homespun and a threadbare coat have sometimes been the shadow of robes white in the blood of the Lamb. All the mines of Australia and Brazil, strung in one carcanet, are not worth to you as much as the pearl of great price. You remember, I suppose, some years ago, the shipwreck of the Central America? A storm came on that vessel. The surges tramped the deck and swept down through the hatches, and there went up a hundred voiced death shriek. The foam on the jaw of the wave. The pitching of the steamer, as though it would leap a mountain. The glare of the signal rockets. The long cough of the steam pipes. The hiss of extinguished furnaces. The walking of God on the wave. Oh, it was a stupendous spectacle. But that ship did not go down without a struggle. The passengers stood in long lines trying to bail it out, and men unused to toil tugged until their hands were blistered and their muscles were strained. After awhile a sail came in sight. A few passengers got off, but the most went down. The ship gave one lurch and was lost.

So there are men who go on in life—a fine voyage they are making out of it. All is well till some euroclydon of business disaster comes upon them, and they go down. The bottom of this commercial sea is strewn with the shattered hulks. But because your property goes shall your soul go? Oh, no. There is coming a more stupendous shipwreck after awhile. This world—God launched it 6,000 years ago, and it is sailing on, but one day it will stagger at the cry of "Fire!" and the timbers of the rocks will burn, and the mountains flame like masts, and the clouds like sails in the judgment hurricane. God will take a good many off the deck, and others out of the berths, where they are now sleeping in Jesus. How many shall go down? No one will know until it is announced in heaven one day: "Shipwreck of a world! So many millions saved! So many millions drowned!" Because your fortunes go, because your house goes, because all your earthly possessions go, do not let your soul go. May the Lord Almighty, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, save your souls!

A Seaside Romance.

They were sitting on the sands side by side, looking out over the ocean.

"How peaceful it looks!" said he.

"Yes," said she, "but how very wet!"

"True," he observed, "and yet how calm and restful it appears! With you by my side I could sail on forever."

"Yes?" she queried.

"Yes," he affirmed, "forever. Will you, dearest?"

"On one condition," she replied. "I am a cautious girl, and I do not wish to be overhasty. But I will let you make the test, and when the test is made and you say it is successful I will go with you."

"And that test, love?" he cried.

"You take a boat and sail on forever, and after you have sailed on forever tell me how it works," she answered.

And she left him meditating.—Harper's Bazar.

Dry In Kansas.

Here is a drought story told by a traveling man: I was driving across the country to a little town in western Kansas the other day, when I met a farmer hauling a wagon load of water.

"Where do you get water?" said I.

"Up the road about seven miles," he replied.

"And you haul water seven miles for your family and stock?"

"Yep."

"Why, in the name of sense, don't you dig a well?"

"Because it's jest as far one way as the other, stranger."—Kansas City Journal.

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