

SPRINGTIME OF LIFE.

A Sermon on the Scenes of Youth by Dr. Talmage.

A Man's True Character Will Come Out Inside the Fireside—Home Should Be the Brightest Place on Earth.

(Washington, Feb. 26. Copyright, 1899.) Many tender recollections are stirred by Dr. Talmage's discourse, and scenes of boyhood and girlhood days will be lived over again: text, I Timothy, v. 4: "Let them learn first to show piety at home."

During the summer months the tendency is to the fields, to visitation, to foreign travel and the watering places, and the ocean steamers are thronged, but in the winter it is rather to gather in domestic circles, and during these months we spend many of the hours within doors, and the apostle comes to us and says that we ought to exercise Christian behavior amid all such circumstances. "Let them learn first to show piety at home."

There are a great many people longing for some grand sphere in which to serve God. They admire Luther at the diet of Worms and only wish they had some such great opportunity in which to display their Christian prowess. They admire Paul making Felix tremble, and they only wish that they had some such grand occasion in which to preach righteousness, temperance and judgment to come. All they want is an opportunity to exhibit their Christian heroism. Now, the apostle practically says: "I will show you a place where you can exhibit all that is grand and beautiful and glorious in Christian character, and that is the domestic circle. Let them learn first to show piety at home."

If one is not faithful in an insignificant sphere, he will not be faithful in a resounding sphere. If Peter will not help the cripple at the gate of the temple, he will never be able to preach 3,000 into the kingdom at the Pentecost. If Paul will not take pains to instruct in the way of salvation the jailer of the Philippian dungeon, he will never make Felix tremble. He who is not faithful in a skirmish would not be faithful in an Armageddon. The fact is, we are all placed in just the position in which we can most grandly serve God, and we ought not to be chiefly thoughtful about some sphere of usefulness which we may after awhile gain, but the all-absorbing question with you and with me ought to be: "Lord, what wilt thou have me now and here to do?"

There is one word in St. Paul's adjuration around which the most of our thoughts will revolve. That word is "home." Ask ten different men the meaning of that word, and they will give you ten different definitions. To one it means love at the hearth, plenty at the table, industry at the workstand, intelligence at the books, devotion at the altar. In that household discord never sounds its warwhoop and deception never tricks with its false face. To him it means a greeting at the door and a smile at the chair, peace hovering like wings, joy clapping its hands with laughter. Life is a tranquil lake. Pillowed on the ripples sleep the shadows. Ask another man what home is, and he will tell you it is want looking out of a cheerless fire grate, kneading hunger in an empty bread tray. The damp air shivering with curses. No Bible on the shelf. Children robbers and murderers in embryo. Obscene songs their lullaby. Every face a picture of ruin. Want in the background and sin staring from the front. No Sabbath wave rolling over that doornail. Vestibule of the pit. Shadow of infernal walls. Furnace for forging everlasting chains. Fagots for an unspending funeral pile. Awful word. It chokes with woe, it swears with ruin, it chokes with despair. The word "home" in the one case means everything bright. The word "home" in the other case means everything terrible.

I shall speak now of home as a test of character, home as a refuge, home as a political safeguard, home as a school and home as a type of Heaven. And in the first place home is a powerful test of character. The disposition in public may be in gay costume, while in private it is dishabille. As play wretches may appear in one way on the stage and may appear in another way behind the scenes, so private character may be different from public character. Private character is often public character turned wrong side out. A man may receive you into his parlor as though he were a distillation of smiles, and yet his heart may be a swamp of nettles. There are business men who all day long are mild and courteous and genial and good natured in commercial life, damming back their irritability and their petulance and their discontent, but at nightfall the dam breaks and scolding pours forth in floods and freshets.

Reputation is only the shadow of character, and a very small home sometimes will cast a very large shadow. The lips may seem to drop with myrrh and cassia and the disposition to be as bright and warm as a sheath of sunbeams, and yet they may only be a magnificent show window for a wretched stock of goods. There is many a man who is affable in public life and amid commercial spheres who in a cowardly way takes his anger and his petulance home and drops them in the domestic circle. The reason men do not display their bad temper in public is because they do not want to be knocked down. There are men who hide their petulance and their irritability just for the same reason that they do not let their notes go to protest—it does not pay—or for the same reason that they do not want a man in their stock company to sell his stock below par lest it deprecate the value.

As at sunset sometimes the wind rises, so after a sunshiny day there may be a tempestuous night. There are people who in public act the philanthropist who at home act the Nero with respect to their slippers and their gowns. Audubon, the great ornithologist, with gun and pencil went through the forests of America to bring down and to sketch the beautiful birds, and after years of toil and exposure completed his manuscript and put it in a trunk in Philadelphia and went off for a few days' recreation and rest, and came back and found that the rats had utterly destroyed the manuscript, but without any discomposure and without any fret or bad temper he again picked up his gun and his pencil and visited all the great forests of America and reproduced his immortal work. And yet there are people with the ten-thousandth part of that loss who are utterly irritable, who at the loss of a pencil or an article of raiment will blow as long and loud and sharp as a northeast storm. Now, that man who is affable in public and who is irritable in private is making a fraudulent and overissue of stock, and he is as bad as a bank that might have \$400,000 or \$500,000 of bills in circulation with no specie in the vault. Let us learn to show piety at home. If we have it not there, we have it not anywhere. If we have not genuine grace in the family circle, all our outward and public plausibility merely springs from the fear of the world or from the slimy, putrid pool of our own selfishness. I tell you the home is a mighty test of character. What you are at home you are everywhere, whether you demonstrate it or not.

Again, home is a refuge. Life in the United States army on the national road to Mexico—a long march, with ever and anon a skirmish and a battle. At evening we pitch our tent and stack the arms; we hang up the war-cap, and our head on the knapsack, we sleep until the morning bugle calls us to march to the action. How pleasant it is to rehearse the victories and the surprises and the attacks of the day, seated by the still campfire of the home circle! Yea, life is a stormy sea. With shivered masts and torn sails and bulk aleak, we put in at the harbor of home. Blessed harbor! There we go for repairs in drydock. The candle in the window is to the toiling man the light-house guiding him into port. Children go forth to meet their fathers as pilots at the Narrows take the hand of ships. The doornail of the home is the wharf where heavy life is unladen. There is the place where we may talk of what we have done without being charged with self-adulation. There is the place where we may lounge without being thought ungraceful. There is the place where we may express affection without being thought silly. There is the place where we may forget our annoyances and exasperations and troubles. Forlorn earth pilgrim, no home? Then die. That is better. The grave is brighter and grander and more glorious than this world with no tent from marching, with no harbor from the storm, with no place of rest from this scene of greed and gouge and loss and gain. God pity the man or the woman who has no home!

Further, home is a political safeguard. The safety of the state must be built on the safety of the home. Why cannot France come to a placid republic? MacMahon appoints his ministry, and all France is a quake lest the republic be smothered. Gambetta dies, and there are hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen who are fearing the return of a monarchy. The Dreyfus case is at this moment a slumbering earthquake under Paris. France, as a nation, has not the right kind of a Christian home. The Christian hearthstone is the only hearthstone for a republic. The virtues cultured in the family circle are an absolute necessity for the state. If there be not enough moral principle to make the family adhere, there will not be enough political principle to make the state adhere. No home means the Goths and Vandals, means the Nomads of Asia, means the Numidians of Africa, changing from place to place according as the pasture happens to change. Confounded be all those babels of iniquity which would overpower and destroy the home! The same storm that upsets the ship in which the family sail will sink the frigate of the constitution. Jails and penitentiaries and armies and navies are not our best defenses. The door of the home is the best fortress. Household utensils are our best artillery, and the chimneys of our dwelling houses are the grandest monuments to safety and triumph. No home, no republic!

Further, home is a school. Old ground must be turned up with subsoil plow, and it must be harrowed and re-harrowed, and then the crop will not be as large as that of the new ground with less culture. Now, youth and childhood are new ground, and all the influences thrown over their heart and life will come up in after life luxuriantly. Every time you have given a smile of approbation all the good cheer of your life will come up again in the geniality of your children. And every ebullition of anger and every uncontrollable display of indignation will be fuel to their disposition 20 or 30 or 40 years from now—fuel for a bad fire a quarter of a century from this. You praise the intelligence of your child too much sometimes when you think he is not aware of it, and you will see the result of it before ten years of age in his annoying affectations. You praise his beauty, supposing he is not large enough to understand what you say, and you will find him standing on a high chair before a flattering mirror. Words and deeds and examples are the seed of character, and children are very apt to be the second edition of their parents. Abraham begat Isaac, so virtue is apt to go down in the ancestral line, but Herod begat Agrippah, so iniquity is transmitted. Oh, make your home the brightest place on earth if you would chain your

children to the high path of virtue and rectitude and religion! Do not always turn the blinds the wrong way. Let the light, which puts gold on the gentian and spots the pansy, pour into your dwellings. Do not expel the little feet to keep step to a dead march. Do not cover up your walls with such pictures as West's "Death on a Pale Horse" or Tintoretto's "Massacre of the Innocents." Rather cover them if you have pictures with "The Hawking Party," and "The Mill by the Mountain Stream," and "The Fox Hunt," and the "Children Amid Flowers," and the "Harvest Scene," and "The Saturday Night Marketing." Get you no hint of cheerfulness from grasshopper's leap and lamb's frisk and quail's whistle and garrulous streamlet, which from the rock at the mountain top clear down to the meadow ferns under the shadow of the steep comes looking to see where it can find the steepest place to leap off at and talking just to hear itself talk? If all the skies hurried with tempest and everlasting storm, wandered over the sea, and every mountain stream were raving mad, frothing at the mouth with mud foam, and there was nothing but simoom blowing among the hills and there were neither lark's carol nor humming bird's trill, nor waterfall's dash, but only bear's bark and panther's scream and wolf's howl, then you might well gather into your homes only the shadows. But when God has strewn the earth and the heavens with beauty and with gladness, let us take into our home circles all innocent hilarity, all brightness and all good cheer. A dark home makes bad boys and bad girls in preparation for bad men and bad women.

Above all, my friends, take into your homes Christian principle. Can it be that in any of the comfortable homes whose inmates I confront the voice of prayer is never lifted? What! No supplication at night for protection? What! No thanks giving in the morning for care? How, my brother, my sister, will you answer God in the day of judgment with reference to your children? It is a plain question, and therefore I ask it. In the tenth chapter of Jeremiah God says He will pour out His fury upon the families that call not upon His name. Oh, parents, when you are dead and gone, and the moss is covering the inscription of the tombstone, will your children look back and think of father and mother at family prayer? Will they take the old family Bible and open it and see the mark of tears of contrition and tears of consolation promise wept by eyes long before gone out into darkness? Oh, if you do not inculcate Christian principle in the hearts of your children, and you do not warn them against evil, and you do not invite them to holiness and to God, and they wander off into dissipation and into infidelity and at last make shipwreck of their immortal soul, on their deathbed and in the day of judgment they will curse you!

Seated by the register or the stove, what if, on the wall, should come out the history of your children? What a history—the mortal and immortal life of your loved ones! Every parent is writing the history of his child. He is writing it, composing it into song, or pointing it with a groan.

My mind runs back to one of the best of early homes. Prayer like a roof over it. Peace like an atmosphere in it. Parents personifications of faith in trial and comfort in darkness. The two pillars of that earthly home long crumbled to dust. But shall I ever forget that early home? Yes, when the flower forgets the sun that warmed it. Yes, when the mariner forgets the star that guided him. Yes, when love has gone out on the heart's altar, and memory has emptied its urn into forgetfulness. Then, the home of my childhood, I will forget thee! The family altar of a father's importunity and a mother's tenderness, the voices of affection, the funeral of our dead, the father and mother with interlocked arms like intertwining branches of trees making a perpetual arbor of love and peace and kindness—then I will forget thee—then, and only then! You know, my brother, that a hundred times you have been kept out of sin by the memory of such a scene as I have been describing. You have often had raging temptations, but you know what has held you with supernatural grasp. I tell you a man who has had such a good home as that never gets over it, and a man who has had a bad early home never gets over it.

Again, home is a type of Heaven. At our best estate we are only pilgrims and strangers here. "Heaven is our home." Death will never knock at the door of that mansion, and in all that country there is not a single grave. How glad parents are in the holidays to gather their children home again! But I have noticed there is almost always a son or a daughter absent—absent from home, perhaps absent from the country, perhaps absent from the world. Oh, how glad our Heavenly Father will be when He gets all His children home with Him in Heaven! And how delightful it will be for brothers and sisters to meet after long separation! Once they parted at the door of the tomb. Now they meet at the door of immortality. Once they saw only "through a glass darkly." Now it is face to face, corruption, in corruption, mortality, immortality. Where are now their sins and sorrows and troubles? Overwhelmed in the Red sea of death, while they pass through dry shod. Gates of pearl, capstones of amethyst, thrones of dominion do not stir my soul so much as the thought of home. Once there, let earthly sorrows howl like storms and roll like seas. Home! Let thrones rot and empires wither. Home! Let the world die in earthquake struggle and be buried amid procession of planets and dirge of spheres. Home! Let everlasting ages roll in irresistible sweep. Home! No sorrow. No crying. No tears. No death. But home, sweet home, beautiful home, everlasting home, home with each other, home with angels, home with God!

AT NUMBER SIX.

It was not the quantity he had taken—it never is—but that ridiculous mixing. So Smith—he was a commercial traveler, returning to Pentonville after a fortnight's absence—argued with himself.

That sherry at Thetford would quarrel with the brady and water at Grantham, and the bitter beer and Irish whiskey at Peterboro and the glass or two of stout with a nip of gin on reaching town. Perhaps the contents of his own flask and a bad cigar on the road might have helped, but certainly when he reached his own house he had to steady himself against the lampost before drifting in.

"She isn't there," he muttered, looking up at the lighted window of the little drawing room, which at the moment showed several figures in silhouette. "Well, I'm hanged if she isn't enjoying herself in the midst of a maddening crowd in her husband's absence."

With a sputtering veauvian Mr. Smith made certain of the brass number. No. 6 it was.

A mixture of liquor always makes a key turn rather hard, but at length Smith got the door open. Cautiously, like an inebriated burglar, he entered and flopped into a chair in the lobby. He would get his boots off and steal quietly to bed.

He wrestled with them and conquered, and sneezing along in his stockings was supporting himself by the balusters on the second step of the stairs, when the creak of an opening door sent him up at a headlong stumble.

He could hear a voice—his wife's, he thought—complaining of the heat, and deep bass tones in reply. "Hot!" echoed Smith, on the landing above. "Pretty cool I should call it, that sort of thing, when a man's away. Who's that bassoon she's talking to, I should like to know?" He was getting angry.

A chill gust of night air came up the stairs. "Halloo, they've opened the door at the back!" Smith was rapidly sobering.

"They're going out into the garden. What shall I do?" He paused a moment, bemusedly considering. Then: "Hang me, if I'll have my wife perambulating by moonlight with a bass viol! Perfect stranger to me. I'll swear!"

Smith had gone upstairs a lamb—he went down a lion. He flung aside his boots and his fear of detection together, and descended. There, as he had guessed, was the open door, and on the moonlit sward beyond he could see—

It was a caution to gardeners to see Septimus Smith get over that somewhat limited lawn in his stockings. Like an overgrown Puck, he tripped across flower-bed and dewy grass. His unshod feet made no sound, and his wife and her companion talked on uninterruptedly, their backs turned toward him.

"What ought the back of an enemy to suggest to a brave man?" the jealous Smith asked himself. "To me it suggests a desire for boots. However, here goes!"

With this he poised himself, and delivered the most emphatic kick he could under the circumstances. A man can but do his best. The well-meaning Smith did that—and he got his reward. The bass-voiced stranger turned on the instant; and as he did so our "commercial" saw more stars than were ever beheld of astronomer. About the same time he sat down with commendable promptitude on the wet grass.

The lady gave a little scream, and Smith, as he took his astronomical observations, heard her cry: "Good gracious, Tom, it's surely little Mr. Smith of No. 6!"

"And pray, what does little Mr. Smith of No. 6 mean by forcing his way into No. 9 and kicking me?" asked the stalwart Tom.

Smith rose painfully. He felt that he had made some horrible blunder. "If this isn't No. 6," he said meekly, "I must be a wretched, drivelling lunatic, and I authorize you to lock me up in the nearest asylum, Miss Oakey."

"O, that miserable nakey!" she said. "I told papa yesterday that something unpleasant would come of it if it wasn't looked to." She fluttered on before them to the house, the scarlet ribbons that had deceived poor Smith all a-wave. "Come, both of you," she said. "In three minutes I'll make you apologize to one another for your rudeness."

As Smith again looked at that unlucky brass numeral—this time with sober eyes—a light dawned upon him. "By Jove!" he ejaculated. "It's as clear as glass to me now. The top screw of the 9 has come out, and the horrid figure has reversed itself into a 6!"

"Of course," smiled Miss Oakey; "and now perhaps you'll shake hands with my brother Tom, who's only just come home from America—and—tell us why you kicked him."

Poor Smith blushed like a bashful beetroot and looked very uncomfortable as he told the story of his little mistake.

Ten minutes afterward, as he stood on the step of the veritable No. 6, he raised his hand to the calm night sky and registered a couple of vows—first, to quit a terrace where the houses were all alike and the locks were seemingly the same; and, secondly, thenceforth to avoid mixing his liquors.

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RAILROAD SCHEDULES

Table with columns for Westward and Eastward, listing stations and times for various railroads including Pennsylvania Railroad and Lehigh Valley Railroad.

Table for BALD EAGLE VALLEY, showing Westward and Eastward schedules with stations like Tyrone, Bald Eagle, and Lock Haven.

Table for BELLEFONTE & SNOW SHOES BRANCH, showing Westward and Eastward schedules with stations like Bellefonte and Snow Shoe.

Table for BELLEFONTE CENTRAL RAILROAD, showing Westward and Eastward schedules with stations like Bellefonte and Lock Haven.

Table for THE CENTRAL RAILROAD OF PENNA., showing Read Down and Read Up schedules with stations like Harrisburg and Philadelphia.