

### A VOW OF JEPHTHAH

It Is Cited as a Warning Against Parental Heedlessness.

Dr. Talmage Lodges a Protest Against the Sacrifice of the Young on the Altar of Worldly Ambition.

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In his sermon to-day Dr. Talmage lodges a protest against the parental heedlessness and worldly ambition which are threatening the sacrifice of many American children; text, Judges 11:36: "My father, if thou has opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth."

Jephthah was a freebooter. Early turned out from a home where he ought to have been cared for, he consorted with rough men and went forth to earn his living as best he could. In those times it was considered right for a man to go out on independent military expeditions. Jephthah was a good man according to the light of his dark age, but through a wandering and a predatory life he became reckless and precipitate. The grace of God changes a man's heart, but never reverses his natural temperament. The Israelites wanted the Ammonites driven out of their country, so they sent a delegation to Jephthah, asking him to become commander-in-chief of all the forces. He might have said, "You drove me out when you had no use for me, and now you are in trouble you want me back," but he did not say that. He takes command of the army, sends messengers to the Ammonites to tell them to vacate the country, and, getting no favorable response, marshals his troops for battle.

Before going out to war Jephthah makes a very solemn vow that if the Lord will give him the victory then, on his return home, whatsoever first comes out of his doorway he will offer in sacrifice as a burnt offering. The battle opens. It was no skirmishing on the edges of dangers, no unlimbering of batteries two miles away, but the hurrying of men on the point of swords and spears until the ground could no more drink the blood and the horses reared to leap over the pile of bodies of the slain. In those old times opposing forces would fight until their swords were broken and then each one would throttle his man until they both fell, teeth to teeth, grip to grip, death stare to death stare, until the plain was one tumbled mass of corpses from which the last trace of manhood had been dashed out.

Jephthah wins the day. Twenty cities lay captured at his feet. Sound the victory all through the mountains of Gilead. Let the trumpeters call up the survivors. Homeward to your wives and children. Homeward with your glittering treasures. Homeward to have the applause of an admiring nation. Build triumphal arches. Swing out flags all over Mizpah. Open all your doors to receive the captured treasures. Through every hall spread the banquet. Pile up the viands. Fill high the tankards. The nation is redeemed, the invaders are routed and the national honor is vindicated.

Huzza for Jephthah, the conqueror! Jephthah, seated on a prancing steed, advances amid the acclaiming multitudes, but his eye is not on the excited populace. Remembering that he had made a solemn vow that, returning from victorious battle, whatsoever first came out of the doorway of his home that should be sacrificed as a burnt offering, he has his anxious look upon the door. I wonder what spotless lamb, what brace of doves, will be thrown upon the fires of the burnt offering! Oh, horrors! Paleness of death blanches his cheek. Despair seizes his heart. His daughter, his only child, rushes out the doorway to throw herself in her father's arms and shower upon him more kisses than there were wounds on his breast or dents on his shield. All the triumphal splendor vanishes. Holding back this child from his heaving breast and pushing the locks back from the fair brow and looking into the eyes of inextinguishable affection, with choked utterance he says: "Would to God I lay stark on the bloody plain! My daughter, my only child, joy of my home, life of my life, thou art the sacrifice!"

The whole matter was explained to her. This was no whining hollow-hearted girl into whose eyes the father looked. All the glory of sword and shield vanished in the presence of the valor of that girl. There may have been a tremor of the lip, as a rose leaf trembles in the sigh of the south wind; there may have been the starting of a tear like a raindrop shaken from the anther of a water lily. But with a self-sacrifice that man may not reach and only woman's heart can compass she surrenders herself to fire and to death. She cries out in the words of my text, "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do unto me whatsoever hath proceeded from thy mouth."

She bows to the knife, and the blood, which so often at the father's voice had rushed to the crimson cheek, smokes in the fires of the burnt offering. No one can tell us her name. There is no need that we know her name. The garlands that Mizpah twisted for Jephthah the warrior have gone into the dust, but all ages are twisting this girl's shaplet. It is well that her name came not to us, for no one can wear it. They may take the name of Deborah or Abigail or Miriam, but no one in all the ages shall have the title of this daughter of sacrifice.

Of course this offering was not pleasing to the Lord, especially as a provision was made in the law for such a contingency, and Jephthah might have redeemed his daughter by the payment of 30 shekles of silver. But before you hurl your denunciations at Jephthah's

cruelty remember that in olden times, when vows were made, men thought they must execute them, perform them, whether they were wicked or good. There were two wrong things about Jephthah's vow. First, he ought never to have made it. Next, having made it, it were better broken than kept. But do not take on pretentious airs and say: "I could not have done as Jephthah did." If in former days you had been standing on the banks of the Ganges and you had been born in India, you might have thrown your children to the crocodiles. It is not because we are naturally any better, but because we have more Gospel light.

Now I make very practical use of this question when I tell you that the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter was a type of the physical, mental and spiritual sacrifice of 10,000 children in this day. There are parents all unwittingly bringing to bear upon their children a class of influences which will as certainly ruin them as knife and torch destroyed Jephthah's daughter. While I speak, the whole nation, without emotion and without shame, looks upon the stupendous sacrifice.

In the first place, I remark that much of the system of education in our day is a system of sacrifice. When children spend six or seven hours in school and then must spend two or three hours in preparation for school the next day, will you tell me how much time they will have for sunshine and fresh air and the obtaining of that exuberance which is necessary for the duties of coming life? No one can feel more thankful than I do for the advancement of common school education. The printing of books appropriate for schools, the multiplication of philosophical apparatus, the establishment of normal schools, which provide for our children teachers of largest caliber, are themes on which every philanthropist ought to be congratulated. But this herding of great multitudes of children in ill-ventilated schoolrooms and poorly equipped halls of instruction is making many of the places of knowledge in this country a huge holocaust. Politics in many of the cities gets into educational affairs and while the two political parties are scrabbling for the honors Jephthah's daughter perishes. It is so much so that there are many schools in the country to-day which are preparing tens of thousands of invalid men and women for the future; so that, in many places, by the time the child's education is finished the child is finished! In many places, in many cities of the country, there are large appropriations for everything else and cheerful appropriations, but as soon as the educational or moral interests of the city are struck through with an economy that is well-nigh the death of us.

In my parish in Philadelphia a little child was so pushed at school that she was thrown into a fever, and in her delirium, all night long, she was trying to recite the multiplication table. In my boyhood I remember that in our class at school there was one lad who knew more than all of us put together. If we were fast in our arithmetic, he excelled us. When we stood up for the spelling class, he was almost always the head of the class. Visitors came to his father's house, and he was always brought in as a prodigy. At 18 years of age he was an idiot. He lived ten years an idiot and died an idiot, not knowing his right hand from his left or day from night. The parents and the teachers made him an idiot.

You may flatter your pride by forcing your child to know more than any other children, but you are making a sacrifice of that child if by the additions to its intelligence you are making a subtraction from its future. The child will go away from such maltreatment with no exuberance to fight the battle of life. Such children may get along very well while you take care of them, but, when you are old or dead, alas for them if through the wrong system of education which you adopted they have no swartheness or force of character to take care of themselves! Be careful how you make the child's head ache or its heart flutter. I hear a great deal about black man's rights, and Chinaman's rights, and Indian's rights, and woman's rights. Would to God that somebody would rise to plead for children's rights! The Carthagians used to sacrifice their children by putting them into the arms of an idol which thrust forth its hand. The child was put into the arms of the idol, and no sooner touched the arms than it dropped into the fire. But it was the art of the mothers to keep the children smiling and laughing until the moment they died. There may be a fascination and a hilarity about the styles of education of which I am speaking, but it is only laughter at the moment of sacrifice. Would to God there were only one Jephthah's daughter!

Again, there are many parents who are sacrificing their children with wrong system of discipline—too great rigor or too great leniency. There are children in families who rule the household. The high chair in which the infant sits is the throne, and the rattle is the scepter, and the other children make up the parliament where father and mother have no vote! Such children come up to be miscreants. There is no chance in this world for a child that has never learned to mind. Such people become the boisterous of the church of God and the pest of the world. Children that do not learn to obey human authority are unwilling to learn to obey divine authority. Children will not respect parents whose authority they do not respect. Who are these young men that swagger through the streets with their thumbs in their vest talking about their father as "the old man," "the governor," "the squire," "the old chap," or their mother as "the old woman"? They are those who in youth, in childhood, never learned to respect authority. Eli, having heard that his sons had died in their wickedness, fell over backward and broke his

neck and died. Well he might! What is life to a father whose sons are debauched? The dust of the valley is pleasant to his taste, and the driving rains that drip through the roof of the sepulcher are sweeter than the wines of Helbon.

There must be harmony between the father's government and the mother's government. The father will be tempted to too great rigor. The mother will be tempted to too great leniency. Her tenderness will overcome her. Her voice is a little softer; her hand seems better fitted to pull out a thorn and soothe a pang. Children wanting anything from the mother cry for it. They hope to dissolve her with tears. But the mother must not interfere, must not coax off, must not beg for the child when the hour comes for the assertion of parental supremacy and the subjugation of a child's temper. There comes in the history of every child an hour when it is tested whether the parents shall rule or the child shall rule. That is the crucial hour. If the child triumphs in that hour, then he will some day make you crouch. It is a horrible scene—I have witnessed it—a mother come to old age, shivering with terror in the presence of a son who cursed her gray hairs and mocked her wrinkled face and begrudged her the crust she munched with her toothless gums!

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!

But, on the other hand, too great rigor must be avoided. It is a sad thing when domestic government becomes cold military despotism. Trappers on the prairie fight fire with fire, but you cannot successfully fight your child's bad temper with your own bad temper. We must not be too minute in our inspection. We cannot expect our children to be perfect. We must not see everything. Since we have two or three faults of our own, we ought not to be too rough when we discover that our children have as many. If tradition be true, when we were children we were not all little Samuels, and our parents were not fearful lest they could not raise us because of our premature goodness. You cannot scold or pound your children into nobility of character. The bloom of a child's heart can never be seen under a cold drizzle. Above all, fretting and scolding in the household. Better than ten years of fretting at your children is one good, round, old-fashioned application of the slipper! That minister of the gospel of whom we read in the newspapers that he whipped his child to death because he would not say his prayers will never come to canonization. The arithmetics cannot calculate how many thousands of children have been ruined forever either through too great rigor or too great leniency. The heavens and the earth are filled with the groan of the sacrificed. In this important matter, seek Divine direction, O father, O mother!

Further on, thousands and tens of thousands of the daughters of America are sacrificed to worldliness. They are taught to be in sympathy with all the artificialities of society. They are inducted into all the hollowness of what is called fashionable life. They are taught to believe that history is dry, but that 50 cent stories of adventurous love are delicious. With capacity that might have rivaled a Florence Nightingale in heavenly ministrations or made the father's house glad with filial and sisterly demeanor, their life is a waste, their beauty a curse, their eternity a demolition.

In the siege of Charleston, during our civil war, a lieutenant of the army stood on the floor beside the daughter of the ex-governor of the state of South Carolina. They were taking the vows of marriage. A bombshell struck the roof, dropped into the group, and nine were wounded and slain, among the wounded to death the bride. While the bridegroom knelt on the carpet trying to stanch the wounds the bride demanded that the ceremony be completed, that she might take the vows before her departure, and when the minister said: "Wilt thou be faithful unto death?" with her dying lips she said, "I will," and in two hours she had departed. That was the slaughter and the sacrifice of the body, but at thousands of marriage altars there are daughters slain for time and slain for eternity. It is not a marriage. It is a massacre. Affianced to someone who is only waiting until his father dies so he can get the property; then a little while they swing around in the circles, brilliant circles; then the property is gone, and, having no power to earn a livelihood, the twin sink into some corner of society, the husband an idler and a sot, the wife a drudge, a slave and a sacrifice. Ah, spare your denunciations from Jephthah's head and expend them all on this wholesale modern martyrdom!

I lift up my voice against the sacrifice of children. I look out of my window on a Sabbath, and I see a group of children unwashed, uncombed, un-Christianized. Who cares for them? Who prays for them? Who utters to them one kind word? When the city missionary, passing along the park in New York, saw a ragged lad and heard him swearing, he said to him: "My son, stop swearing! You ought to go to the house of God to-day. You ought to be good. You ought to be a Christian." The lad looked in his face and said: "Ah! It is easy for you to talk, well clothed as you are and well fed. But who chaps hain't got no chance." Who lifts them to the altar for baptism? Who goes forth to snatch them up from crime and death and woe? Who to-day will go forth and bring them into schools and churches? No; heap them up, great piles of rags and wretchedness and filth. Put underneath them the fires of sacrifice, stir up the blaze, put on more fagots, and, while we sit in the churches with folded arms and indifference, crime and disease and death will go on with the agonizing sacrifice.

Love of trees and plants is safe; you do not run risks in your affections.—Alex Smith.

### A SOCIETY GIRL

Miss Thornby was a veritable butterfly (as every one said), with a fortune at the command of her own capricious fancy. Judson had never seen her, but he had heard of her, for the humble cottage that treasured all he had in the world belonged to her. The usual kindly light had long since died out of Judson's eyes, and the only sparkle that ever came from them glared from a silent tear. The winter was not yet over, but the poor commissioners' funds were exhausted. There was no work to be had; no one to look to for help; and three tiny babes and an invalid wife to care for.

One of the children had just opened the stove door and had put something in. Judson looked away from it to his wife. Their eyes met in silent converse. It was the last stick of wood, and they were both thinking of it.

"Never mind, John," said his wife, in a faint, broken voice. "Perhaps something will come to us before the day is over."

A few gruff, inarticulate words were all he could offer. Judson was strong and able-bodied, but misfortune had so bound him down that he was as helpless as the little toddler that tugged in vain at his boot strap.

Suddenly he got up from his chair and left the house—leaving no word as to where he was going. He was frenzied with grief, and, laboring under excessive energy of strained emotion, walked briskly and fast, finally reached his destination—the Thornby home—a magnificent stone structure at the sides of which the splendid lawn stretched away for hundreds of feet.

Judson's frenzy hardened into anger as he realized the unjust fate that had made her an heiress, and him, the guardian of so many tender, innocent dependents, a pauper!

"It is useless," he said to himself, despairingly, "to ask for help here, but it is my last chance." He even thought the echo of his footsteps mocked him as he mounted to the door, and as he pressed the bell he wished that it might be the knell that would summon her and all like her to another world.

It was 9 o'clock. Miss Thornby had just finished dressing for the ball when the maid rapped at her door and said: "There's a workman down in the hall that insists on seeing you, and says that he won't go away until he does."

"What in the world can he want of me?" said she, and then added: "Well, if he won't go away take him into the library and I'll be there in a moment."

Soon she came fluttering in in a cloud of tulle and ablaze with diamonds. Judson had never seen such a vision and he hated her more than ever. He wanted to strangle her and wrench off her jewels to sell for bread to feed his starving family. He stood near the door with his cap in his hand and was looking half doggedly out from his half-bowed head when Miss Thornby crossed to where he stood and said with the airiest good nature: "Did you wish to see me?"

Her tone confused him. Somehow he had expected to be ill-treated, if not ordered out. Collecting himself, he said, tremblingly: "Yes, miss, I came to ask if you would let me stay a little longer in your house. I am out of work and can not pay a cent, and your agent is going to turn us into the street to-morrow."

"My agent is going to put you out of your house?" said she, excitedly.

"Out of your house," he corrected.

"Why, how perfectly horrible," she exclaimed, in amazement.

Judson caught at a ray of hope in her sympathetic manner, and urged on by it he went on rapidly:

"If you'd only let me stay in it a little longer maybe I can get work soon, and then, miss, I'll pay you as fast as I can. It's hard enough to starve—"

"To starve!" she echoed, dropping her hands and staring at the man, as though straining her mind to conceive the idea.

"Yes, miss," said Judson, in a low, resolute voice. "My wife and children and me—we are starving."

Miss Thornby looked at him with unaccustomed but sincere distress. Suddenly she crossed the room to the writing desk.

"Here," said she, handing him a leaf from a check book, "I hope this will help you out. I am sorry that it happened. I didn't know that I had an agent who would be so cruel. I am very sorry for you."

Judson was overwhelmed with grateful surprise. He did not know how the check read, but he knew by Miss Thornby's generous manner that it was enough to help him out of his trouble.

Miss Thornby was scarcely conscious of having conferred a favor, the effort had been so slight, until she saw the man's trembling hand as he took the paper from her, and listened to his grateful voice as he thanked her again and again.

Judson went hurriedly down the street in the effort to reach the first electric light. Then he stopped to read the number on the check. He read it once, and then looked closely and carefully at it again. His heart gave a sudden bound. There was no mistake—it read "one hundred dollars."

Judson's angry thoughts of a few moments before flashed over him and struck him to the heart. His eyes filled with tears. "God bless her," said he prayerfully; "she has saved me from something worse than death—" and so she had, for Judson had traded up his mind not to let his little ones live to suffer starvation.

**A German Industry.**  
The manufacture of straw is one of the most important industries of Germany, giving thousands means of support.

### HUMORS OF DIVORCE.

Some Reasons for Untying the Marriage Knot Are Laid Bare.

Although it is happily not possible in every country to dissolve the marriage tie because a husband has an aversion to soap or because a wife has a tongue more active than her fingers, there is a ludicrous facility in many lands for getting rid of an undesirable wife or husband.

In Greece a wife, to maintain her position, must be the very "pink of propriety," and if she goes to theatre or race meeting or even dines with a friend without her husband's sanction he may send her back to her mother and bid her stay there.

Time was, and not long ago, in Crete, when a man might divorce his wife if she appeared likely to add too many quivers to his bow; and in Russia, if husband and wife wished to part for any reason whatever, all they need do was to adjourn to some public place, and in the presence of on-lookers tear a strip of muslin in two.

In Morocco it is not fashionable to be attached too long to any particular wife, and a man's social position may be gauged by the number of wives he has divorced. It is quite common for a man to have married and parted from a score of wives before he has reached the age at which the average Englishman thinks it prudent to marry.

In France, during the "time of terror," the daring experiment was tried of allowing divorces at will and without any assigned cause. The result was disastrous or happy, according to the point of view; for within a year 4,000 couples agreed to part in Paris alone, and within a short time there were actually more divorces than marriages every year.

In Japan if an oblique-eyed beauty gives too much rein to her tongue, "off she goes," to learn that a discreet reticence is a virtue in a wife.

In Germany if the wife uses her husband's purse too freely he can keep the purse to himself and bid her go, while he looks out for a fraulein of simpler tastes.

In Australia a man can divorce a wife who is too fond of her cups, or rather glasses; and no Chinaman is called upon to tolerate a shrew.

From the oldest times divorce has been in some countries almost as simple a matter as untying a shoe lace. In ancient Rome a man who wearied of his wife could free himself by the simple process of telling her to go.

In biblical history, too, we learn that Abraham divorced Hagar by providing her bread and a bottle of water and sending her away.

**How Toads Pass the Winter.**

"Studying the physiology of the toad," "Professor Simon Henry Gage combats the opinion that this creature hibernates under leaves or tree-trunks. It is often found in such refuge, but only when it has come out of its hole at the opening of the spring and has been caught by a return of cold weather. Ordinarily it hibernates in the earth, preferably in dry soil not apt to freeze. It buries itself backward, its hind feet and the end of its body serving to scoop out its hole, while it pushes itself in with its fore-legs. Once buried, it leaves no trace whatever of its hiding place. When it is in a temperature near the freezing-point its own temperature is three-fourths to one and one fourth degrees higher than that of the surrounding medium. When toads are found under frozen leaves, they are still able to move about. Mr. Gage has seen these creatures with feet and skin absolutely frozen solid, but with internal organs in good condition, and able to come to life perfectly."

**Why Fishes Are Slippery.**

Fish of almost every sort are, when fresh caught, slippery and hard to hold. This slipperiness is due to a sort of mucus exuded through the scales and is of the greatest importance to all finny creatures.

One of the important functions of the fish's slimy coating is to protect it from the attacks of fungus, a form of plant life found in all waters, salt and fresh, foul and pure. If the fish is so injured that some spot becomes uncovered by the slime, a barely visible fungus will be likely to lodge there, and when it is once lodged the process of its reproduction is very rapid. It soon extends over the gills and kills the fish.

The primary purpose of the slime of the fish is to reduce its friction when in motion through the water and increase its speed. It also serves as a cushion to the scales, which it thus protects from many injuries.

**Red-Haired People.**

An eminent man of science has recently declared that red-haired people are far less apt to go bald than those who are possessed of other colored hair. The average crop on the head of a red-haired person is only 25,000 hairs. Ordinary dark hair is far finer, and over three dark hairs take up the space of one red one; 105,000 is about the average. But fair-haired people are still better off; 140,000 to 160,000 is a quite common number of hairs on the scalp of a fair-haired man or woman.

This authority does not comment on the peculiarities of red-haired people, but it is well known that they are of a more passionate nature than others, and often of a fine and sensitive disposition, akin to what is known as the artistic temperament.

**Disappearing Islands.**

The islands in Chesapeake Bay frequented by fishermen and drovers are so rapidly disappearing beneath the assault of the tides that in a few years there will be none left. A striking instance is Tangier Island, where the British fortifications of 1812 are under water.

**Distance to China.**

In China there is no regular standard of distance. Chinese mile may be from a quarter of an English mile to a mile and three quarters, according to the province.

**Indian Income Tax.**

The income tax in India is levied on all incomes of \$101 and upward, and then only one man in 700 comes within its scope.

**Spiders.**  
The silk spider has been found to spin its web in one ounce.

## Half Sick Half Well

Many persons have their good day and their bad day. Others are about half sick all the time. They have headache, backache, and are restless and nervous. Food does not taste good, and the digestion is poor; the skin is dry and sallow and disfigured with pimples or eruptions; sleep brings no rest and work is a burden. What is the cause of all this? Impure blood. And the remedy?



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