OTHER DAYS.

THE USES OF LOOKING BACK.

Dr. Talmage Stirs Up Pleasant Memories of the Past.

TEXT: "*Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee.*"—Deuteronomy viii., 2.

Before entering on my subject I wish to say that some newspaper correspondents, referring to a recent sermon in which I welcomed foreign nationalities to this country, have said that I advocated as a desirable thing the intermarriage of the white and black races. I never said so, I never thought so, and any one who so misrepresents that sermon is either a villain or a fool, perhaps both.

But to open this morning's subject I have to say God in the text advises the people to look back upon their past history. It will do us all good to rehearse the scenes between this May morning and our cradle, whether it was rocked in country or in town. A few days ago, with my sister and brother, I visited the place of my boyhood. It was one of the most emotional and absorbing days of my life. There stands the old house, and as I went through the rooms I said: "I could find my way here with my eyes shut, although I have not been here in forty years." There was the sitting room where a large family group every evening gathered, the most of them now in a better world. There was the old barn where we hunted for Easter eggs, and the place where the horses stood. There is where the orchard was, only three or four trees now left of all those that once bore apples, and some appear dead. There is the brook down which we rode to the watering of the horses bareback, and with a rope halter. We also visited the cemetery where many of our kindred are waiting for the resurrection, the old people side by side, after a journey together of sixty years, only about three years between the time of their going. There also sleep the dear old neighbors who used to tie their horses under the shed of the country meeting house and sit at the end of the pew, singing "Duke Street," and "Balerma," and "Antioch." Oh, they were a glorious race of men and women who did their work well, raised a splendid lot of boys and girls, and are now as to their bodies in silent neighborhood on earth, but as to their souls in jubilant neighborhood before the throne of God. I feel that my journey and visit last week did me good and it would do you all good, if not in person then in thought, to revisit the scenes of boyhood or girlhood. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee."

Youth is apt too much to spend all its time in looking forward. Old age is apt too much to spend all its time in looking backward. People in mid-life and on the apex look both ways. It would be well for us, I think, however, to spend more time in reminiscence. By the constitution of our nature we spend most of the time looking forward, and the vast majority of this audience live not so much in the present as in the future. I find that you mean to make a reputation, you mean to establish yourself, and the advantages that you expect to achieve absorb a great deal of your time. But I see no harm in this if it does not make you discontented with the present or disqualify you for existing duties.

It is a useful thing sometimes to look back, and to see the dangers we have escaped, and to see the sorrows we have suffered, and the trials and wanderings of our earthly pilgrimage, and to sum up our enjoyments. I mean this morning, so far as God may help me, to stir up your memory of the past, so that in the review you may be encouraged, and humbled, and urged to pray.

There is a chapel in Florence with a fresco by Guido. It was covered up with two inches of stucco until our American and European artists went there, and after long toil removed the covering and retraced the figures. And I am aware that the memory of the past, with many of you, is all covered up with ten thousand obliterations, and I propose this morning, so far as the Lord may help me, to take away the covering, that the old picture may shine out again.

I want to bind in one sheaf all your past advantages, and I want to bind in another sheaf all your past adversities. It is a precious harvest, and I must be cautious how I swing the scythe.

Among the greatest advantages of your past life was an early home and its surroundings. The bad men of the day, for the most part, dip their heated passions out of the boiling spring of an unhappy home. We are not surprised to find that Byron's heart was a concentration of sin, when we hear his mother was abandoned, and that she made sport of his infirmity, and often called him "the lame brat." He who has vicious parents has to fight every inch of his way if he would maintain his integrity, and at last reach the home of the good in heaven.

Perhaps your early home was in the city. It may have been in the days when Canal street, New York, was far up town and the site of this present church was an excursion into the country. That old house in the city may have been demolished or changed into stores, and it seemed like sacrilege to you, for there was more meaning in that plain house, in that small house, than there is in a granite mansion or a turreted cathedral. Looking back this morning you see it as though it were yesterday—the sitting room, where the loved ones sat by the plain lamplight, the mother at the evening meal, the brothers and sisters, perhaps long ago gathered into the skies, then plotting mischief on the floor or under the table, your father with a firm voice commanding a silence that lasted half a minute.

Oh, those were good days! If you had your foot hurt, your mother always had a soothing salve to heal it. If you were wronged in the street, your father was always ready to protect you. The year was one round of frolic and mirth. Your greatest trouble was like an April shower, more sunshine than shower. The heart had not been attacked by troubles, nor had sickness ridden it, and no lamb had a warmer sheepfold than the home in which your childhood nestled.

Perhaps you were brought up in the country. You stand now to-day in memory under the old tree. You climbed it for fruit that was not quite ripe because you couldn't wait any longer. You hear the brook rumbling along over the pebbles. You step again into the furrow where your father in his shirt sleeves shouted to the lazy oxen. You frighten the swallows from the rafters of the barn, and take just one egg, and silence your conscience by saying they won't miss it. You take a drink again out of the very bucket that the old well fetched up. You go for the cows at night, and find them wagging their heads through the bars. Oftimes in the dusty and busy streets you wish you were home again on that cool grass, or in the rag carpeted hall of the farmhouse, through which there was the breath of new mown hay or the bloom of buckwheat.

You may have in your windows now beautiful plants and flowers brought from across the sea, but not one of them stirs in your soul so much charm and memory as the old ivy and the yellow sunflower that stood sentinel along the garden wall, and the forget-me-nots playing hide-and-seek mid the long grass. The father, who used to come in sunburned from the fields and sit down on the doorsill and wipe the sweat from his brow, may have gone to his everlasting rest. Mother, who used to sit at the fire a little bent over, cap and spectacles on her face mellowing with the vicissitudes of many years, may have put down her gray head on the pillow in the valley, but forget-me-not you never will. Have you thanked God for it? Have you rehearsed all these reminiscences? Oh, thank God for a Christian father; thank God for a Christian mother; thank God for an early Christian home; thank God for an early Christian home.

Coming to mind another passage in the history of your life. The day came when you set up your own household. The days passed along in quiet blessedness. You twain sat at the table morning and night and talked over your plans for the future. The most insignificant affair in your life became the subject of mutual consultation and advisement. You were so happy you felt you never could be any happier. One day a dark cloud hovered over your dwelling and it got darker and darker, but out of that cloud the shining messenger of God descended to incarnate an immortal spirit. Two little feet started on an eternal journey, and you were to lead them—a gem to flash in heaven's coronet, and you to polish it; eternal ages of light and darkness watching the starting out of a newly created creature.

You rejoiced and you trembled at the responsibility that in your possession an immortal treasure was placed. You prayed and rejoiced, and wept and wondered, and prayed and rejoiced and wept and wondered; you were earnest in supplication that you might lead it through pre into the kingdom of God. There was a tremor in your earnestness. There was a double interest about that home. There was an additional interest why you should stay there and be faithful, and when in a few months your house was filled with the music of the child's laughter, you were struck through with the fact that you had a stupendous mission.

Have you kept that vow? Have you neglected any of these duties? Is your home as much to you as it used to be? Have those anticipations been gratified? God help you to-day in your solemn reminiscence, and let His mercy fall upon your soul if your kindness has been ill requited. God have mercy on the parent on the wrinkles of whose face is written the story of a child's sin. God have mercy on the mother who, in addition to her other pangs, has the pangs of a child's iniquity. Oh, there are many, many sad sounds in this sad world, but the saddest sound that is ever heard is the breaking of a mother's heart. Are there any here who remember that in that home they were unfaithful? Are there those who wandered off from that early home, and left the mother to die with a broken heart? Oh, I stir that reminiscence to-day.

I find another point in your life history. You found one day you were in the wrong road; you couldn't sleep at night; there was just one word that seemed to sob through your banking-house, or through your office, or through your shop, or your bedroom, and that word was "Eternity." You said: "I am not ready for it. O God, have mercy." The Lord heard. Peace came to your heart. In the breath of the hill and the waterfall's clash you heard the voice of God's love; the clouds and the trees hailed you with gladness; you came into the house of God.

You remember how your hand trembled as you took up the cup of the Communion. You remember the old minister who consecrated it, and you remember the church officials who carried it through the aisle; you remember the old people who at the close of the service took your hand in theirs in congratulating sympathy, as much as to say: "Welcome home, you lost prodigal;" and though those hands are all withered away, that Communion Sabbath is resurrected this morning; it is resurrected with all its prayers, and songs and tears, and sermons, and transfiguration. Have you kept those vows? Have you been a backslider? God help you. This day kneel at the foot of mercy and start again for heaven. Start to-day as you started then. I rouse your soul by that reminiscence.

But I must not spend any more of my time in going over the advantages of your life. I just put them all in one great sheaf, and I wrap them up in your memory with one loud harvest song, such as the reapers sing. Praise the Lord, ye blood bought immortals of earth! Praise the Lord, ye crowned spirits of heaven!

But some of you have not always had a smooth life. Some of you are now in the shadow. Others had their troubles years ago, you are a mere wreck of what you once were. I must gather up the sorrows of your past life; but how shall I do it? You say that is impossible, as you have had so many troubles and adversities. Then I will just take two, the first trouble and the last trouble. As when you are walking along the street, and there has been music in the distance, you unconsciously find yourself keeping step to the music, so when you started life your very life was a musical timebeat. The air was full of joy and hilarity; with the bright clear ear you made the best skip; you went on and life grew brighter until after a while suddenly a voice from heaven said: "Halt!" and quick as the sunshine you halted; you grew pale, you confronted your first sorrow. You had no idea that the flush on your child's cheek was an unhealthy flush. You said it can't be anything serious. Death in slippered feet walked round about the cradle. You did not hear the tread; but after a while the truth flashed on you. You walked the floor. Oh, if you could, with your strong, stout hand, have wrenched that child from the destroyer. You went to your room and you said: "God, save my child! God, save my child." The world seemed going out in darkness. You said: "I can't bear it; I can't bear it." You felt as if you could not put the long lashes over the bright eyes, never to see them again sparkle. Oh, if you could have taken that little one in your arms and with it leaped the grave, how gladly you would have done it! Oh, if you could let your property go, your houses go, your land and your storehouse go, how gladly you would have allowed them to depart if you could only have kept that one treasure!

But one day there arose from the heavens a chill blast that swept over the bedroom, and instantly all the light went out, and there was darkness—thick, murky, impenetrable, shuddering darkness. But God didn't leave you there. Mercy spoke. As you took up the cup and was about to put it to your lips, God said: "Let it pass," and forthwith, as by the hand of angels, another cup was put into your hands; it was the cup of God's consolation. And as you have sometimes lifted the head of a wounded soldier, and poured wine into his lips, so God put His left arm under your head, and with His right hand He poured into your lips the wine of His comfort and His consolation, and you looked at the empty cradle and looked at your broken heart, and you looked at the Lord's chastisement, and you said: "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight."

Ah, it was your first trouble. How did you get over it? God comforted you. You have been a better man ever since. You have been a better woman ever since. In the jar of the closing gate of the sepulcher you heard the clanging of the opening gate of heaven, and you felt an irresistible drawing heavenward. You have been purer of mind ever since that night when the little one for the last time put its arms around your neck and said: Good-night, papa; good-night, mamma. Meet me in heaven."

But I must come on down to your latest sorrow. What was it? Perhaps it was your own sickness. The child's tread on the stair, or the tick of the watch on the stand disturbed you. Through the long weary days you counted the figures in the carpet or the flowers in the wall paper. Oh, the weariness, the exhaustion! Oh, the burning pangs! Would God it were morning, would God it were night, were your frequent cry. But you are better, or perhaps even well. Have you thanked that God to-day you can come out in the fresh air, that you are in this place to hear God's name, and to sing God's praise, and implore God's help, and to ask God's forgiveness? Bless the Lord who healeth all our diseases, and redeemeth our lives from destruction.

Perhaps your last sorrow was a financial embarrassment. I congratulate some of you on your lucrative profession or occupation, on ornate apparel, on a commodious residence—everything you put your hands to seems to turn to gold. But there are others of you who are like the ship on which Paul sailed, where two seas met, and you are broken by the violence of the waves. By an unadvised indorsement, or by a conjunction of unforeseen events, or by fire, or storm or a senseless panic, you have been flung headlong, and where you once dispensed great charities, now you have hard work to make the two ends meet.

Have you forgotten to thank God for your days of prosperity, and that through your trials some of you have made investments which will continue after the last bank of this world has exploded, and the silver and gold are molten in the fires of a burning world? Have you, amid all your losses and discouragements, forgot that there was bread on your table this morning, and that there shall be a shelter for your head from the storm, and there is air for your lungs, and blood for your heart, and light for your eye, and a glad and glorious and triumphant religion for your soul?

Perhaps your last trouble was a bereavement. That heart which in childhood was your refuge, the parental heart, and which has been a source of the quickest sympathy ever since, has suddenly become silent forever, and now sometimes, whenever in sudden annoyance and without deliberation you say "I will go and tell mother," the thought flashes on you: "I have no mother;" or the father, with voice less tender, but as stanch and earnest and loving as ever, watchful of all your ways, exultant over your success without saying much, although the old people do talk it over by themselves, his trembling hand on that staff which you now keep as a family relic, his memory embalmed in grateful hearts, is taken away forever.

Or, there was your companion in life, sharer of your joys and sorrows, taken, leaving the heart an old ruin, where the chill winds blow over a wide wilderness of desolation, the sands of the desert driving across the place which once bloomed like the garden of God. And Abraham mourns for Sarah at the cave of Machpelah. Going along your path in life, suddenly, right before you was an open grave. People looked down and they saw it was only a few feet deep and a few feet wide, but to you it was a cavern down which went all your hopes and all your expectations.

But cheer up in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Comforter. He is not going to forsake you. Did the Lord take that child out of your arms? Why, He is going to shelter it better than you could. He is going to array it in a white robe, and with palm branch it will be all ready to greet you at your coming home. Blessed the broken heart that Jesus heals. Blessed the importunate cry that Jesus compassionates. Blessed the weeping eye from which the soft hand of Jesus wipes away the tear.

I was sailing down the St. John River, Canada, which is the blume and the Hudson commingled in one scene of beauty and grandeur, and while I was on the deck of the steamer a gentleman pointed out to me the places of interest, and he said: "All this is interval land, and it is the richest land in all the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia."

"What," said I, "do you mean by interval land?" "Well," he said, "this land is submerged for a part of the year; spring freshets come down and all these plains are overflowed with the water, and the water leaves a rich deposit, and when the waters are gone the harvest springs up, and there is the grandest harvest that was ever reaped." And I instantly thought, "It is not the heights of the church and it is not the heights of this world that is the scene of the greatest prosperity, but the soul over which the floods of sorrow have gone, the soul over which the freshets of tribulation have torn their way, that yields the greatest fruits of righteousness, and the largest harvest for time, and the richest harvest for eternity." Bless God that your soul is interval land.

But these reminiscences reach only to this morning. There will yet be one more point of tremendous reminiscence, and that is the last hour of life, when we have to look over all our past existence. What a moment that will be! I place Napoleon's dying reminiscence on St. Helena beside Mrs. Judson's dying reminiscence in the harbor of St. Helena, the same island, twenty years after. Napoleon's dying reminiscence, amid the delirium "Head of the army." Mrs. Judson's dying reminiscence, as she came home from her missionary toil and her life of self-sacrifice for God, dying in the cabin of the ship in the harbor of St. Helena, was: "I always did love the Lord Jesus Christ." And then, the historian says, she fell into a sound sleep for an hour, and woke amid the songs of angels.

I place the dying reminiscence of Augustus Cæsar against the dying reminiscence of the Apostle Paul. The dying reminiscence of Augustus Cæsar was addressing his attendants: "Have I played my part well on the stage of life?" and they answered him in the affirmative, and he said: "Why, then, don't you applaud me?" The dying reminiscence of Paul the Apostle was: "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love His appearing." Augustus Cæsar died amid pomp and great surroundings. Paul uttered his dying reminiscence leaping up through the wall of a dungeon. God grant that our last hour may be the closing of a useful life, and the opening of a glorious eternity.

FIVE SKELETONS FOUND.

Remains of the Ancient Mound Builders Unearthed in Iowa.

Important discoveries have been made near Floyd, Iowa, of remains of the ancient mound builders. A circular mound, 30 feet in diameter and 2 feet high, has been opened, and five skeletons found. They were exceedingly well preserved, the earth having been closely packed around them. Three of them were males, one a female, and the fifth a baby.

The skull of the female is in a good state of preservation, and those who have made careful measurements of it say that it shows that the person belonged to the very lowest type of humanity. Archæologists claim that the measurements show inferiority even to the celebrated "Neanderthal" skull. These bones are claimed to be the most perfect of any remains of the mound builders yet discovered.

There are several other mounds near this one, and they will be examined in a few days.

An expedition has started from Evansville, Indiana, to explore Central America. The party is equipped with photographers' and naturalists' supplies and takes along several newspaper men to write up the country.

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Origin of "Uncle Sam."

Speculation has recently arisen regarding the origin of the term "Uncle Sam" as applied to the United States Government.

In the war of 1812, between this country and Great Britain, Elbert Anderson, of New York, purchased in Troy, N. Y., a large amount of pork for the American Army.

It was inspected by Samuel Wilson, who was popularly known as "Uncle Sam." The barrels of pork were marked "E. A., U. S.," the lettering being done a facetious employe of Mr. Wilson.

When asked by fellow-workmen the meaning of the mark (for the letters U. S., for United States, were then almost entirely new to them), said "he did not know, unless it meant Elbert Anderson and Uncle Sam," alluding to Uncle Sam Wilson.

The joke took among the workmen, and passed currently, and "Uncle Sam" himself being present, was occasionally rallied on the increasing extent of his possessions. Soon the incident appeared in print, and the joke gained favor rapidly, till it penetrated and was recognized in every part of the country, and, says John Frost, the Boston historian, will no doubt continue so while the United States remains a nation.

It is now firmly imbedded in the Mosaic of our language, like "Tippecanoe," "Log Cabin," and other short but expressive phrases, which refer to important events in the history of the Republic. Both "Tippecanoe" and "Log Cabin" have taken on renewed force and vitality since their adoption by Hon. H. H. Warner, of Safe Cure fame, in the naming of two of his great standard remedies, the principal one known as Warner's Log Cabin Sarsaparilla. They are based upon formulæ so successfully used by our ancestors in the cure of the common ailments to which their arduous labors rendered them liable in the good old Log Cabin days.

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