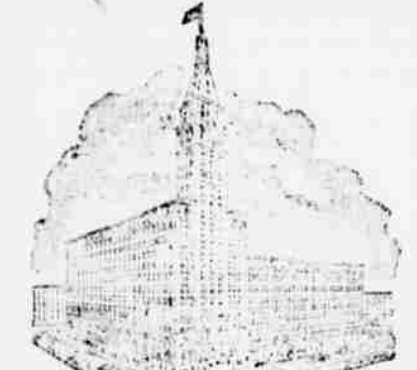




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BUSINESS TRIALS.

Dr. Talmage Shows How They Reinforce the Spirit.

Religion in Trade—The Merchant's Office a School of Industry, Patience, Integrity and Upright Living.

[Copyright, 1892, by Louis Klopsch.] Washington, Aug. 27.

In this discourse Dr. Talmage argues that religion may be taken into all the affairs of life, and instead of being a hindrance, as many think, is a reinforcement. The text is Romans 12: 11: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

Industry, devoutness and Christian service—all commended in that short text. What, is it possible that they shall be conjoined? Oh, yes. There is no war between religion and business, between ledgers and Bibles, between churches and counting houses. On the contrary, religion accelerates business, sharpens men's wits, sweetens acerbity of disposition, fills the blood of phlegmatics and throws more velocity into the wheels of hard work. It gives better balancing to the judgment, more strength to the will, more muscles to industry and throws into enthusiasm a more consecrated fire. You cannot in all the circle of the world show me a man whose honest business has been despoiled by religion.

The industrial classes are divided into three groups—producers, manufacturers, traders. Producers, such as farmers and miners. Manufacturers, such as those who turn corn into food and wool and flax into apparel. Traders, such as make profit out of the transfer and exchange of all that which is produced and manufactured. A business man may belong to any one or all of these classes, and not one is independent of any other.

When the prince imperial of France fell on the Zulu battlefield because the strapfastening the stirrup to the saddle broke as he clung to it, his comrades all escaping, but he falling under the lances of the savages, a great many people blamed the empress for allowing her son to go forth into that battlefield, and others blamed the English government for accepting the sacrifice, and others blamed the Zulus for their barbarism. The one most to blame was the harness maker who fashioned that strap of the stirrup out of shoddy and imperfect material, as it was found to have been afterward. If the strap had held, the prince imperial would probably have been alive to-day. But the strap broke. No prince independent of a harness maker! High, low, wise, ignorant, you in one occupation, in another, all bound together.

So that there must be one continuous line of sympathy with each other's work. But whatever your vocation, if you have a multiplicity of engagements, into your life there comes losses and annoyances and perturbations as well as percentages and dividends, if you are pursued from Monday morning until Saturday night, and from January to January by inexorable obligation and duty, then you are a business man, or you are a business woman, and my subject is appropriate to your case.

We are under the impression that the toil and tug of business life are a prison into which a man is thrust, or that it is an unequal strife, where unarmed a man goes forth to contend. I shall show you this morning that business life was intended of God for grand and glorious education and discipline, and if I shall be helped to say what I want to say I shall rub some of the wrinkles of care out of your brow and unstrap some of the burdens from your back. I am not talking of an abstraction. Though never having been in business life, I know all about business men. In my first parish at Belleville, N. J., ten miles from New York, a large portion of my audience was made up of New York merchants. Then I went to Syracuse, a place of immense commercial activity, and then I went to Philadelphia and lived long among the merchants of that city, than whom there are no better men on earth, and for 25 years I stood at my Brooklyn pulpit, Sabbath by Sabbath, preaching to audiences the majority of whom were business men and business women. It is not an abstraction of which I speak, but a reality with which I am well acquainted.

In the first place, I remark that business life was intended as a school of energy. God gives us a certain amount of raw material out of which we are to hew our character. Our faculties are to be reset, rounded and sharpened up. Our young folks having graduated from school or college need a higher education, that is the rasping collision of every-day life alone can effect. Energy is wrought out only in the fire. After a man has been in business activity 10, 20, 30 years, his energy is not to be measured by weights or plummets or ladders. There is no height it cannot scale, and there is no depth it cannot fathom, and there is no obstacle it cannot thrash.

Now, my brother, why did God put you in that school of energy? Was it merely that you might be a yardstick to measure cloth, or a steelyard to weigh flour? Was it merely that you might be better qualified to chaffer and haggle? No. God placed you in that school of energy that you might be developed for Christian work. If the undeveloped talents in the Christian churches of to-day were brought out and thoroughly harnessed, I believe the whole earth would be converted to God in a twelvemonth. There are so many deep streams that are turning no mill and that are harnessed to no factory bands.

Now, God demands the best lamb out of every flock. He demands the rich-

est sheep of every harvest. He demands the best men of every generation. A cause in which Newton and Locke and Mansfield toiled you and I can afford to toil in. Oh, for fewer idlers in the cause of Christ and for more Christian workers, men who shall take the same energy that from Monday morning to Saturday night they put forth for the achievement of a livelihood or the gathering of a fortune, and on Sabbath days put it forth to the advantage of Christ's kingdom and the bringing of men to the Lord.

Dr. Duff visited a man who had inherited a great fortune. The man said to him: "I had to be very busy for many years of my life getting my livelihood. After awhile this fortune came to me, and there has been no necessity that I toil since. There came a time when I said to myself 'Shall I now retire from business or shall I go on and serve the Lord in my worldly occupation?' He said: "I resolved on the latter, and I have been more industrious in commercial circles than I ever was before, and since that hour I have never kept a farthing for myself. I have thought it to be a great shame if I couldn't toil as hard for the Lord as I had toiled for myself, and all the products of my factories and all my commercial establishments, to the last farthing, have gone for the building of Christian institutions and supporting the church of God." Would that the same energy put forth for the world could be put forth for God. Would that a thousand men in these great cities who have achieved a fortune could see it their duty now to do all business for Christ and the alleviation of the world's suffering!

Again, I remark that business life is a school of patience. In your everyday life how many things to annoy and to disquiet! Bargains will rub. Commercial men will sometimes fail to meet their engagements. Cashbooks and money drawer will sometimes quarrel. Goods ordered for a special emergency will come too late or be damaged in the transportation. People intending no harm will go shopping without any intention of purchase, overturning great stocks of goods and insisting that you break the dozen. More bad debts on the ledger. More counterfeit bills in the drawer. More debts to pay for other people. More meanness on the part of partners in business. Annoyance after annoyance, vexation after vexation, and loss after loss.

All that process will either break you down or brighten you up. It is a school of patience. You have known men under the process to become petulant, and choleric, and angry, and pugnacious, and cross, and sour, and queer, and they lost their customers, and their name became a detestation. Other men have been brightened up under the process. They were like rocks, all the more valuable for being blasted. At first they had to choke down their wrath, at first they had to bite their lip, at first they thought of some stinging retort they would like to make, but they conquered their impatience. They have kind words now for sarcastic flings. They have gentle behavior now for unmanly eruptions. They are patient now with unfortunate debtors. They have Christian reflections now for sudden reverses. Where did they get that patience? By hearing a minister preach concerning it on Sabbath? Oh, no. They got it just where you will get it—if you ever get it at all—selling hats, discounting notes, turning banisters, plowing corn, tinning roofs, pleading causes. Oh, that amid the turmoil and anxiety and exasperation of everyday life you might hear the voice of God saying: "In patience possess your soul. Let patience have her perfect work."

I remark again that business life is a school of useful knowledge. Merchants do not read many books and do not study lexicons. They do not dive into profounds of learning, and yet nearly all through their occupations come to understand questions of finance, and politics, and geography, and jurisprudence, and ethics. Business is a severe schoolmistress. If pupils will not learn, she strikes them over the head and the heart with severe losses. You put \$5,000 into an enterprise. It is all gone. You say: "That is a dead loss." Oh, no. You are paying the schooling. That was only tuition, very large tuition—I told you it was a severe schoolmistress—but it was worth it. You learned things under that process you would not have learned in any other way.

Traders in grain come to know something about foreign harvests; traders in fruit come to know something about the prospects of tropical production; manufacturers of American goods come to understand the tariff on imported articles; publishers of books must come to understand the new law of copyright; owners of ships must come to know winds and shoals and navigation, and every bale of cotton and every rascal cask and every tea box and every cluster of bananas is so much literature for a business man. Now, my brother, what are you going to do with the intelligence? Do you suppose God put you in this school of information merely that you might be sharper in a trade, that you might be more successful as a worldling? Oh, no. It was that you might take that useful information and use it for Jesus Christ.

Can it be that you have been dealing with foreign lands and never had the missionary spirit, wishing the salvation of foreign people? Can it be that you have become acquainted with all the outrages inflicted in business life and that you have never tried to bring to bear that Gospel which is to extirpate all evil and correct all wrongs and illuminate and save men for this world and the world darkness and lift up all wretchedness to come? Can it be that understanding all the intricacies of business you know nothing about those things which will last after all bills of exchange and consignments and invoices and rent rolls shall have been

pled up and been consumed in the fires of the last great day? Can it be that a man will be wise for time and a fool for eternity?

I remark also that business life is a school for integrity. No man knows what he will do until he is tempted. There are thousands of men who have kept their integrity merely because they never have been tested. A man was elected treasurer of the state of Maine some years ago. He was distinguished for his honesty, usefulness and uprightiness, but before one year had passed he had taken of the public funds for his own private use and was hurried out of office in disgrace. Distinguished for crime after. You can call over the names of men just like that, in whose honesty you had complete confidence, but placed in certain crises of temptation they went overboard.

Never so many temptations to scoundrelism as now. Not a law on the statute book but has some back door through which a miscreant can escape. Ah, how many deceptions in the fabric of the goods! So much plundering in commercial life that if a man talk about living a life of complete commercial integrity there are those who ascribe it to greenness and lack of tact.

How many men do you suppose there are in commercial life who could say truthfully: "In all the sales I have ever made I have never overstated the value of goods; in all the sales I have ever made I have never covered up an imperfection in the fabric; in all the thousands of dollars I have ever made I have not taken one dishonest farthing?" There are men, however, who can say it, hundreds who can say it, thousands who can say it. They are more honest than when they sold their first three or four, or their first firkin of butter, because their honesty and integrity have been tested, tried and come out triumphant. But they remember a time when they could have robbed a partner, or have absconded with the funds of a bank, or made a false assignment, or borrowed illicitly without any efforts at payment, or got a man into a sharp corner and fleeced him. But they never took one step on that pathway of hell fire. They can say their prayers without hearing the chink of dishonest dollars. They can read their Bible without thinking of the time when with a lie on their soul in the custom house they kissed the Book. They can think of death and the judgment that comes after it without any finching—that day when all charlatans and cheats, and jockeys and frauds shall be doubly damned. It does not make their knees knock together, and it does not make their teeth chatter to read "as the partridge sitteth on eggs and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."

What a school of integrity business life is! If you ever have been tempted to let your integrity cringe before present advantage, if you have ever wakened up in some embarrassment and said: "Now, I will step a little aside from the right path and no one will know it, and I will come all right again, it is only once." That only once has ruined tens of thousands of men for this life and blasted their souls for eternity.

A man arose in Fulton street prayer meeting and said: "I wish publicly to acknowledge the goodness of God. I was in business trouble. I had money to pay, and I had no means to pay it, and I was in utter despair, of all human help, and I laid this matter before the Lord, and this morning I went down among some old business friends I had not seen in many years just to make a call, and one said to me: 'Why, I am so glad to see you! Walk in. We have some money on our books due you a good while, but we didn't know where you were, and therefore not having your address, we could not send it. We are very glad you have come.'" And the man standing in Fulton street prayer meeting said: "The amount they paid me was six times what I owed." You say it only happened so? You are unbelieving. God answered that man's prayer.

Oh, you want business grace. Commercial ethics, business honor, laws of trade, are all very good in their place, but there are times when you want something more than this world will give you. You want God. For lack of Him some that you have known have consented to forge, and to maltreat their friends, and to curse their enemies, and their names have been bulletted among scoundrels, and they have been ground to powder, while other men you have known have gone through the very same stress of circumstances triumphantly. There are men here to-day who fought the battle and gained the victory. People come out of that man's store, and they say: "Well, if there ever was a Christian trader, that is one." Integrity kept the books and waited on the customers. Light from the eternal world flashed through the show windows. Love to God and love to man presided in that storehouse. Some day people going through the street notice that the shutters of the window are not down. The bar of that store door has not been removed. People say: "What is the matter?" You go up a little closer, and you see written on the card of that window: "Closed on account of the death of one of the firm." That day all through the circles of business there is talk about how a good man has gone. Boards of trade pass resolutions of sympathy, and churches of Christ pray: "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth." He has made his last bargain, he has suffered his last loss, he has shed with the last fatigue. His children will get the result of his industry, or, if through misfortune there be no dollars left, they will have an estate of prayer and Christian example which will be everlasting. Heavenly rewards for earthly disciplines. There "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

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