A DOWNWARD PATH.

DR. TALMAGE'S WARNING AGAINST RUNNING INTO DEBT.

The Evil Influences of Social Life That Drive Men "Like an Ox to the Slaughter"—Rewards of Honesty and Industry.

Rev. Dr. Talmage preached on Sunday morning from Proverbs vii, 22, "As an ox to the slaughter."

There is nothing in the voice or manner of the butcher to indicate to the ox that there is death ahead. The ox thinks he is going on to a rich pasture field of clover where all day he will revel in the herbaceous luxuriance, but after awhile the men and the boys close in upon him with sticks and stones and shouting, and drive him through bars and into a doorway, where he is fastened, and with a well-aimed stroke the ax fells him, and so the anticipation of the redolent pasture field is completely disappointed. So many a young man has been driven on by temptation to what he thought would be paradisical enjoyment, but after awhile influences with darker hue and swarthier arm close in upon him, and he finds that instead of making an excursion into a garden he has been driven "as an ox to the slaughter."

We are apt to blame young men for being destroyed when we ought to blame the influences that destroy them. Society slaughters a great many young men by the behest; "You must keep up appearances. Whatever be your salary, you must dress as well as others, you must give wine and brandy to as many friends, you must smoke as costly cigars, you must give as expensive entertainments and you must live in as fashionable a boarding house. If you haven't the money borrow. If you can't borrow, make a false entry or subtract here and there a bill from a bundle of bank bills. You will only have to make the desception a little while. In a few months or in a year or two you can make it all right. Nobody will be hurt by it, nobody will be the wiser. You yourself will not be damaged." By that awful process a hundred thousand men have been slaughtered for time and slaughtered for eternity.

Suppose you borrow. There is nothing wrong about borrowing money. There is hardly a man who has not sometimes borrowed money. Vast estates have been built on a borrowed dollar. But there are two kinds of borrowed money: Money borrowed for the purpose of starting or keeping up legitimate enterprises and expense and money borrowed to get that which you can do without. The first is right the other is wrong. If you have money enough of your own to buy a coat, however plain, and then you borrow money for a dandy's outfit, you have taken the first revolution of the wheel down grade. Borrow for the necessities; that may be well. Borrow for the luxuries; that tips your prospects over in the wrong direction.

The Bible distinctly says the borrower is servant of the lender. It is a bad state of things when you have to go down some other street to escape meeting someone whom you owe. If young men knew what is the despotism of being in debt, more of them would keep out of it. What did debt do for Lord Bacon, with a mind towering above the centuries? It induces him to take bribes and convict himself as a criminal before all ages. What did debt do for Walter Scott, broken-hearted at Abbotsford? Kept him writing until his hand gave out in paralysis, to keep the sheriff away from his pictures and statuary. Better for him if he had minded the maxim which he had chiseled over the fireplace at Abbotsford, "Waste not, want not."

The trouble is, my friends, that people do not understand the ethics of going in debt, and that if you purchase goods with no expectation of paying for them or go into debt which you cannot meet you steal just so much money. If I go into a grocer's store and I buy sugars and coffees and meats with no capacity to pay for them and no intention of paying for them, I am more dishonest than if I go into the store, and, when the grocer's face is turned the other way, I fill my pockets with the articles of merchandise and carry off a ham. In the one case I take the merchant's time and I take the time of his messenger to transfer the goods to my house, while in the other case I take none of the time of the merchant, and I wait upon myself and I transfer the goods without any trouble to him. In other words, a sneak thief is not so bad as a man who contracts debts he never expects to pay.

No wonder that so many of our merchants fail in business. They are swindled into bankruptcy by these wandering Arabs, these nomads of city life. They cheat the grocers out of the green apples which make them sick, the physician who attends them during their distress, and the undertaker who fits them out for departure from the neighborhood where they owe everybody when they pay the debt of nature, the only debt they ever do pay.

Now our young men are coming up in this depraved state of commercial ethics, and I am solicitous about them. I want to warn them about being slaughtered on the sharp edges of debt. You want many things you have not, my young friends. You shall have them if you have patience and honesty and industry. Certain lines of conduct always lead out to certain successes. There is a law which controls even those things which seem haphazard. I have been told by those who have observed that it is possible to calculate just how many letters will be sent to the dead letter office every year through misdirection, that it is possible to calculate just how many letters will be detained for lack of postage stamps through the forgetfulness of the senders, and that it is possible to tell just how many people will fall in the streets by slipping on an orange peel. In other words, there are no accidents. The most insignificant event you ever heard of is the link between two eternities—the eternity of the past and the eternity of the future. Read the right way, young man, and you will come out at the right goal.

Bring me a young man and tell me what his physical health is and what his mental calibre and what his habits, and I will tell you what will be his destiny for this world and his destiny for the world to come, and I will not make five inaccurate prophecies out of the 500. All this makes me solicitous in regard to young men, and I want to make them nervous in regard to the contruction of unpayable debts. I give you a paragraph from my own experience.

My first settlement as pastor was in a village. My salary was $800 and a parsonage. The amount seemed enormous to me. I said to myself, "What, all this for one year!" I was afraid of getting worldly under so much prosperity. I resolved to invite all the congregation to my house in groups of 25 each. We began, and as they were the best congregation in all the world and we felt nothing was too good for them we piled all the luxuries on the table. I never completed the undertaking. At the end of six months I was in financial despair. I found that we not only had not the surplus of luxuries, but we had a struggle to get the necessities, and I learned what every young man learns in time to save himself or too late, that you must measure the size of a man's body before you begin to cut the cloth for his coat.

When a young man wilfully and of choice, having the comforts of life, goes into the contraction of unpayable debts, he knows not into what he goes. The creditors get after the debtor, the pack of hounds in full cry, and alas, for the reindeer. They jingle his doorbell before he gets up in the morning; they jingle his doorbell after he has gone to bed at night. They meet him as he comes off his front steps. They send him a postal card or a letter in curtest style, telling him to pay up. They attack his goods. They want cash or a note at 30 days or a note on demand. They call him a knave. They say he lies, they want him disciplined in the church. They want him turned out of the bank. They come at him from this side and from that side and from above and from beneath, and he is insulted and gibbeted, and sued and dunned and sworn at until he gets nervous dyspepsia, gets neuralgia, gets liver complaint, gets heart disease, gets convulsive disorder, gets consumption. Now he is dead, and you say, "Of course they will let him alone."

Oh, no. Now they are watchful to see whether there are any unnecessary expenses at the obsequies, to see whether there is any useless handle on the casket, to see whether there is any surplus plait on the shroud, to see whether the hearse is costly or cheap, to see whether the flowers sent to the casket have been bought by the family, or donated, to see in whose name the deed of the grave is made out.

Then they ransack the bereft household, the books, the pictures, the carpets, the chairs, the sofa, the piano, the mattresses, the pillow on which he died. Cursed be debt! For the sake of your own happiness, for the sake of your good morals, for the sake of your immortal soul, for God's sake, young man, as far as possible keep out of it.

But I think more young men are slaughtered through irreligion. Take away a young man's religion and you make him the prey of evil. We all know that the Bible is the only perfect system of morals. Now, if you want to destroy the young man's morals, take his Bible away. How will you do that? Well, you will caricature his reverence for the Scriptures, you will take all those incidents of the Bible, which can be made mirth of—Jonah's whale, Samson's foes, Adam's rib—then you will caricature eccentric Christians, or inconsistent Christians, then you will pass off as your own all these hackneyed arguments against Christianity which are as old as Tom Paine, as old as Voltaire, as old as sin. Now, you have captured his Bible, and you have taken his strongest fortress. The way is comparatively clear, and all the gates of his soul are set open in invitation to the sins of earth and the sorrows of death, that they may come in and drive the stake for their encampment.

A steamer 1500 miles from shore with broken rudder and lost compass and hulk leaking 50 gallons the hour is better off than a young man when you have robbed him of his Bible. Have you ever noticed how despicably mean it is to take away the world's Bible without proposing a substitute? It is meaner than to come to a sick man and steal his medicine, meaner than to come to a cripple and still his crutch, meaner than to come to a poor man and burn his house down. It is the worst of all larcencies to steal the Bible which has been crutch and medicine and food and eternal home to so many. What a generous and magnanimous business infidelity has gone into! This splitting up of lifeboats and taking away of fire escapes and extinguishing of lighthouses. I come out and I say! to such people, "What are you doing all this for?" "Oh," they say, "just for fun!" It is such fun to see Christians try to hold on to their Bibles! Many of them have lost loved ones and have been told that there is a resurrection, and it is such fun to tell them there will be no resurrection. Many of them have believed that Christ came to carry the burdens and to heal the wounds of the world and it is such fun to tell them they will have to be their own savior.

Think of the meanest thing you ever heard of, then go down 1000 feet underneath it and you will find yourself at the top of a stairs 100 miles long. Go to the bottom of the stairs, and you will find a ladder 1000 miles long; then go to the foot of the ladder and look off a precipice half as far as from here to China, and you will find the headquarters of the meanness that would rob this world of its only comfort in life, its only peace in death and its only hope for immortality. Slaughter a young man's faith in God, and there is not much more left to slaughter.

Now, how is this wholesale slaughter to be stopped? There is not a person who is not interested in that question; The object of my sermon is to put a weapon in each of your hands for your own defense. Wait not for Young Men's Christian Associations to protect you or churches to protect you. Appealing to God for help, take care of yourself.

First, have a room somewhere that you can call your own. Whether it be the back parlor of a fashionable boarding house or a room in the fourth story of a cheap lodging I care not. Only have that one room your fortress. Let not the dissipater or unclean step over the threshold. If they come up the long flight of stairs and knock at the door, meet them face to face and kindly yet firmly refuse them admittance. Have a few family portraits on the wall, if you brought them with you from your country home. Have a Bible on the stand. If you can afford it and can play on one, have an instrument of music—harp or flute or cornet, or melodeon or violin or piano. Every morning before you leave that room pray. Every night after you come home in that room pray. Make that room your Gibraltar, your Sebastopol, your Mount Zion. Let no bad book or newspaper come into that room any more than you would allow a cobra to coil on your table.

Take care of yourself. Nobody else will take care of you. Your help will not come up two or three or four flights of stairs. Your help will come through the roof, down from heaven, from that God who in the 6000 years of the world's history never betrayed a young man who tried to be good and a Christian. Let me say in regard to your adverse worldly circumstances in passing that you are on a level now with those who are finally to succeed. Mark my words, young man, and think of it 30 years from now. You will find that those who 30 years from now are the millionaires of this country, who are the orators of the country, who are the poets of the country, who are the strong merchants of the country, who are the great philanthropists of the country—mightiest in church and state—are this morning on a level with you, not an inch above, and you in straitened circumstances now.

Herschel earned his living by playing a violin at parties, and in the interstices of the play he would go out and look up at the midnight heavens, the field of his immortal conquests. George Stephenson rose from being the foreman in a colliery to be the most renowned of the world's engineers. No outfit, no capital to start with. Young man, go down to the library and get some books and read of what wonderful mechanism God gave you in your hand, in your feet, in your eye, in your ear, and then ask some doctor to take you into the dissecting room and illustrate to you what you have read about, and never again commit the blasphemy of saying you have no capital to start with. Equipped! Why, the poorest young man is equipped as only the God of the whole uinverse could afford to equip him. Then his body—a very poor affair when compared with his wonderful soul—oh, that is what makes me solicitous! I am not so much anxious about you, young man, because you have so little to do with as I am anxious about you because you have so much to risk and lose or gain.

Ah, when I told you to take care of yourself you misunderstood me if you thought I meant you are to depend upon human resolution, which may be dissolved in the foam of the wine cup or may be blown out with the first gust of temptation. Here is the helmet, the sword of the Lord God Almighty. Clothe yourself in that panoply, and you shall not be put to confusion. Sin pays well neither in this world nor the next, but right thinking and right believing and right acting will take you in safety through this life and in transport through the next. I never shall forget a prayer I heard a young man make some 15 years ago. It was a very short prayer, but it was a tremendous prayer: "O, Lord, help us! We find it so very easy to go wrong and so hard to do right. Lord, help us!" That prayer, I warrant you, reached the ear of God and reached His heart. And there are a hundred men who have found out—a thousand young men, perhaps—who have found out that very thing. It is so very easy to do wrong and so hard to do right.

I got a letter one day, only one paragraph which I shall read:

"Having moved around somewhat, I have run across many young men of intelligence, ardent strivers after that will-o'-the-wisp—fortune—and of one of these I would speak. He was a young Englishman of 23 or 24 years who came to New York where he had no acquaintances, with barely sufficient to keep him a couple of weeks. He had been tenderly reared, perhaps, I should say, too tenderly and was not used to earning his living and found it extremely difficult to get any possition that he was capable of filling. After many vain efforts in this direction he found himself on a Sunday evening in Brooklyn near your church with about $3 left to his small capital. Providence seemed to lead him to your door and he determined to go in and hear you.

"He told me his going to hear you that night was undoubtedly the turning point in his life for when he went into your church he felt desperate, but while listening to your discourse his better nature got the mastery. I truly believe from what this young man told me that your sounding the depths of his heart alone that night brought him back to his God, whom he was so near leaving."

That is the echo of multitudes. I am not preaching an abstraction but a great reality. O, friendless young man! O prodigal young man, discouraged young man, wounded young man, I commend to you Christ this day, the best friend a man ever had. He meets you this morning.

One Sabbath morningf at the close of the service I saw a gold watch of the world renowned and deeply lamented violinist, Ole Bull. You remember he died in his island home off the coast of Norway. That gold watch he had wound up day after day through his last illness, and then he said to his companion, "Now I want to wind this watch as long as I can, and then when I am gone I want you to keep it wound up until it goes to my friend, Dr. Doremus in New York, and then he will keep it wound up until his life is done, and then I want the watch to go to his young son, my special favorite."

The great musician who more than any other artist had made the violin speak and sing and weep and laugh and triumph—for it seemed when he drew the bow across the strings as if all earth and heaven shivered in de- the close of a life that had done so much to make the world happy. But I have to tell you, young man, if you lightful sympathy—the great musician in a room looking out upon the sea and surrounded by his favorite instruments of music, closed his eyes in death. While all the world was mourning at his departure sixteen crowded steamers fell into line of funeral procession to carry his body to the mainland. There were 50,000 of his countrymen gathered in an amphitheatre of the hills waiting to hear the eulogium, and it was said, when the great orator of the day with stentorian voice began to speak, the 50,000 people on the hillsides burst into tears. Ah, that was the close of a life that had done so much to make the world happy. But I have to tell you, young man, if you live right and die right, that was a tame scene compared with that which will greet you when from the galleries of heaven the one hundred and forty and four thousand shall accord with Christ in crying, "Well, done, thou good and faithful servant!" And the influences that on earth you put in motion will go down from generation to generation, the influences you wound up handed to your children, and their influences wound up and handed to their children, until watch and clock are no more needed to mark the progress, because time itself shall be no longer.

THE RETIRED BURGLAR.

His Curious Experience in a House With Creaking Stairs.

"You know how the stairs puff up," said the retired burglar, "after you stop using 'em nights? You crowd 'em down close together, solid, treading on 'em all day long, and then when you let up on 'em the fibres of the wood lift up again, and the stairs seem to swell. You know how they creak, sometimes, and snap a little, when you go down 'em first in the morning; and some of the steps yield a little under the tread? That's them settle down into place again.

"I love to hear 'em in the morning. It seems kind o' like the stairs wakin' up and speakin' to you as you go along down. But I don't like to hear 'em at night. And at the time I go about they've had a chance to do considerable puffin', and no matter how velvet-footed a man may be he can't lessen his weight very well, and so I learned early to tread near the wall or near the banisters going up stairs, and not on the bow in the middle. The creak, or the little soft snapping, that sounds so pleasant in the morning, and that nobody wouldn't notice then, sounds mighty loud at night, when every thing is still. If anybody was awake, you know, you could hear it from one end of the house to the other. To be sure it might not alarm anybody, because there's other sounds in a house at night; sounds that just make themselves. Due, I suppose, to changes in temperature. Boards swell and shrink and shift a little, and you might hear a little snap somewhere in the house any time of night. But I always hated to hear the stairs creak when I was going up 'em, all the same. Because I always thought that as likely as not it would wake up somebody, and that I should find somebody sitting up in bed looking for me when I looked into the door of a room, and, as a matter of fact, that did sometimes happen.

"I looked one night after a wretched pair of stairs, into a half-lighted room where I saw a man, sitting up in bed, over on the other side of the room, and looking plumb at the door that I was standing in. As I told you, I was always on the lookout for just this thing, but this man surprised me, for all that. He sat there in bed all keyed up, and looking square at me. I could see him perfectly plain, and I knew he could see me just as plain, and I expected every minute he'd find his voice and begin to holler.

"But instead of that he threw the clothes back off his legs and swung his legs around out of bed, and stood up. He put his right hand out to locate a chair that stood by the head of the bed, and then he started for the door, hands out a little on each side of him, and feelin' out a little on both sides and sort of ahead of him as he came along.

"Humph! Blind. He'd heard the noise and was going to look for it. I might have stood there and slugged him easy as he went by, but I didn't want no rattle with a blind man. I just went out and left him there lookin'."

HER DOG LICKED HER FACE.

A Young French Woman Dies of Rabies, Though She Had Not Been Bitten.

There is a startling warning in the fate of the Paris young woman who died of hydrophobia a few days ago. She was not bitten, but allowed a pet dog which was ill to lick her face.

Mlle. Santasiero had a bull terrier, Bob, of which she was very fond. Bob, two months ago, fell ill, His mistress nursed and caressed him and he showed his gratitude by licking her hands and face. He then ran from her and howled if she went near him. The brute may have felt an irresistible desire to bite and so he preferred not to have an opportunity.

He grew worse and bit three men some days ago. They went to the Pasteur Institute and seem to be doing well. His mistress, whose foot he attempted to bite, fell ill last week though the dog's teeth had not pierced her shoe. Fever supervened and then she had convulsions. When her mother went to kiss her she cried: "You must not. I only kissed Bob and, see, I have his distemper." Finally she died in convulsions.

WHERE IT FAILED.

Didn't I see Hossiekus going into a doctor's office a little while ago?

Yes.

I thought he was a believer in the faith sure.

He is as a general thing, but the persuasion that he had a big boil on the back of his neck was so strong upon him this time that it wouldn't yield to the faith treatment.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON, OCT. 31.

"Paul's Voyage and Shipwreck," Acts 27. 13-26. Golden Text, Acts 27 : 25.

PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 14. Not long after. Probably while the vessel was still off the southern coast of Crete. Tempestuous winds. A wind with whirling eddies and sudden changes in direction. Euroclydon. One of those furious storms still common on the Mediterranean, and known as a "Levanter." So in life, "the gentle south wind of to-day may be followed by a storm to-morrow."

15. The ship was caught. Being whirled helplessly in the changing blast. Could not bear up into the wind. Literally, "could not eye the wind," from the fact that a pair of eyes were generally painted on the prow of ancient ships. We let her drive. As the vessel could not face the storm, it must needs be swept on by it.

16. Running under. That is, under the lee or shelter of. A certain island . . . called Clauda. A small isle near the southwestern extremity of Crete. Much work to come by the boat. Found it difficult to hoist on board the little boat which was towed astern. These little details show that an eye witness wrote the history.

17. Undergirding. By passing strong ropes tightly around the vessel to aid in holding it together. The quicksands. Two large sandbanks off the coast of Africa, called the Upper and Lower Syrtes, and greatly dreaded by navigators. Strake sail. Lowered the rigging, in order to save the ship.

18. Lightened the ship. By casting overboard the articles not absolutely necessary.

19. With our own hands. A work in which not only the sailors, but also the prisoners and passengers took part.

20. Neither sun nor stars. Thus they could neither take observation nor reckon whither they were driven at the mercy of the gate. "Yet one star shone for Paul, the promise Thou must bear witness at Rome' "—Besser. Many days. We learn from verse 33 that the gale lasted a fortnight, an uncommon, though not unprecedented, period for a Levanter. All hope. . . . taken away. Hope clings to the last blessing; when that leaves despair alone remains. "The strain both of mind and body, the incessant demand for labor, the terror of the passengers, the hopeless working at the pumps, the laboring of the ship's frame and cordage, the driving of the storm, the benumbing effect of the cold and wet, make up a scene of no ordinary confusion, anxiety and fatigue."

21. Long abstinence. Probably not entire, but partial; from the difficulty of preparing food the constant need of labor, and the general dejection of spirits. Paul stood forth. In times of trial true character comes to the front. Dangers and distress which conquer common men, only inspire great souls. Ye should have hearkened unto me. He reminds them of this, not as a rebuke, but to impart confidence in his present words.

22. Be of good cheer. Not only is the believer himself cheerful, but he carries cherer to other troubled hearts.

23. There stood by me . . the angel. "Paul knows not where he is himself, but God's angel knows where to find him out."—Henry. God, whose, I am. Would that all disciples might all men! Whom I serve. Noblest amthus boldly confess their Lord before ong the sons of men. Paul proudly acknowledges himself a servant.

24. Brought before Caesar "Man is immortal till his work is done;" Paul's career is not complete until he has borne testimony for Christ before the highest in the Roman realm. God hath given thee all. He had doubtless prayed for their safety and received assurance of an answer. Even sinners may be thankful that saints are in the world.

25 I believe God. It is easy to believe God's word in prosperity, but to rest on the promises in adversity tests faith.

26. A certain island. The result is revealed, but not the particular plan. What island Paul knew not, though he knew that God was guiding the shattered bark over the waste to some land of rest. Inspiration and prophecy have their limits.

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE.

One of the neighbors of Mrs. Bracenbit, the wife of a carpenter, called in one morning to have a friendly chat.

I must have been very careless as I came up your front steps she said. I see I have caught my dress on something and torn a big hole in the skirt.

You caught it from a nail sticking up from the bottom step, replied Mrs. Bracenbit. John was mending that step when the men came along and told him the union had ordered a strike. He had that nail half driven in, but he threw down the hammer and said he wasn't going to do another lick till the strike was called off. It's very inconvenient for us, of course, but it's a matter of principle with John.

Well, rejoined the neighbor, shrugging her shoulders and looking out of the window at the offending nail, there's nothing like sticking up for principle.

IN HARD LUCK.

Billiken—What's the matter, Williken?

Williken—Matter enough. You know, some time ago I assigned all my property to my wife, to—to keep it out of the hands of—of people I owe, you know.

Yes.

Well, she's taken the money and gone off—says she won't live with me because I swindled my creditors.