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PLAGUE OF GAMBLING.

FIRST OF A SERIES OF SPECIAL SERMONS BY DR. TALMAGE.

They Are Directed Especially at the Three Cities in One (New York, Brooklyn and Jersey City), but They Will Fit in Many Other Places.

NEW YORK, Feb. 22.—A decided sensation was produced in this city and in Brooklyn today by Dr. Talmage's announcement of a series of sermons which he proposes to preach on "The Ten Plagues of These Three Cities." In this sermon, which is the first of the series, he pays his attention to the prevalent curse of gambling. He preached it in the Academy of Music in Brooklyn in the morning, and again this evening at The Christian Herald service in this city. His text was taken from Ex. ix, 13, 14: "Let my people go that they may serve me; for I will at this time send all my plagues."

Last winter, in the museum at Cairo, Egypt, I saw the mummy or embalmed body of Pharaoh, the oppressor of the ancient Israelites. Visible are the very teeth that he gnashed against the Israelitish brickmakers, the sockets of the merciless eyes with which he looked upon the overburdened people of God, the hair that floated in the breeze off the Red Sea, the very lips with which he commanded them to make bricks without straw. Thousands of years after, when the wrappings of the mummy were unrolled, old Pharaoh lifted up his arm as if in imploration, but his skinny bones cannot again clutch his shattered scepter. It was to compel that tyrant to let the oppressed go free that the memorable ten plagues were sent. Sailing the Nile and walking amid the ruins of Egyptian cities, I saw no remains of those plagues that smote the water or the air. None of the frogs croaked in the one, none of the locusts sounded their rattle in the other, and the cattle bore no sign of the murrain, and through the starry nights hovering about the pyramids no destroying angel swept his wing. But there are ten plagues still stinging and befouling and cursing our cities, and like angels of wrath smiting not only the first born but the last born.

THREE CITIES IN ONE.

Brooklyn, New York and Jersey City, though called three, are practically one. The bridge already fastening two of them together will be followed by other bridges and by tunnels from both New Jersey and Long Island shores, until what is true now will, as the years go by, become more emphatically true. The average condition of public morals in this cluster of cities is as good if not better than in any other part of the world. Pride of city is natural to men in all times, if they live or have lived in a metropolis noted for dignity or prowess. Cæsar boasted of his native Rome, Lycurgus of Sparta, Virgil of Andes, Demosthenes of Atheus, Archimedes of Syracuse, and Paul of Tarsus. I should suspect a man of base heartedness who carried about with him no feeling of complacency in regard to the place of his residence; who gloried not in its arts or arms or behavior; who looked with no exultation upon its evidences of prosperity, its artistic embellishments and its scientific attainments.

I have noticed that men never like a place where they have not behaved well. Men who have free rides in prison vans never like the city that furnishes the vehicle. When I see in history Argos, Rhodes, Smyrna, Chios, Colophon and several other cities claiming Homer, I conclude that Homer behaved well. Let us not war against this pride of city, nor expect to build up ourselves by pulling others down. Let Boston have its commons, its Faneuil hall and its magnificent scientific and educational institutions. Let Philadelphia talk about its mint, and Independence hall, and Girard college, and its old families, as virtuous as venerable. When I find a man living in one of those places who has nothing to say in favor of them I feel like asking him, "What mean thing did you do that you do not like your native city?" New York is a goodly city, and when I say that I mean the region between Spuyten Duyvil creek and Jamaica in one direction and Newark flats in the other direction. That which tends to elevate a part elevates all. That which blasts part blasts all. Sin is a giant, and he comes to the Hudson or Connecticut river and passes it as easily as we step across a figure in the carpet. The blessing of God is an angel, and when it stretches out its two wings one of them hovers over that and the other over this.

THE GREAT CITY OF NEW YORK.

In infancy the great metropolis was laid down by the banks of the Hudson. Its infancy was as feeble as that of Moses sleeping in the bulrushes by the Nile; and, like Miriam, there our fathers stood and watched it. The royal spirit of American commerce came down to the water to bathe, and there she found it. She took it in her arms, and the child grew and waxed strong, and the ships of foreign lands brought gold and spices to its feet, and stretching itself up into the proportions of a metropolis, it has looked up to the mountains and off upon the sea—the mightiest of the energies of American civilization. The character of the founder of a city will be seen for many years in its inhabitants. Romulus impressed his life upon Rome. The Pilgrims relaxed not their hold upon the cities of New England. William Penn has left Philadelphia an inheritance of integrity and fair dealing, and on any day in that city you may see in the manners, customs and principles of its people his tastes, his coat, his hat, his wife's bonnet and his plain meeting house. The Hollanders still wield an influence over New York.

Grand old New York! What southern thoroughfare was ever smitten by pestilence, when our physicians did not throw themselves upon the sacrifice! What distant land has cried out in the agony of famine, and our ships have not put out with breadstuffs! What street of Damascus or Beyrout or Madras that has not heard the step of our missionaries! What struggle for national life in which our citizens have not poured their blood into the trenches! What gallery of exquisite art in which our painters have not hung their pictures! What department of literature or science to which our scholars have not contributed! I need not speak of our public schools, where the children of the cordwainer and milkman and glassblower stand by the side of the flattered sons of merchant princes; or of the insane asylums on all these islands where they who went cutting themselves, among the bombs, now sit, clothed and in their right minds; or of the Magdalen asylums, where the lost one of the street comes to bathe the Saviour's feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head—confiding in the pardon of him who said: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone at her." I need not speak of the institutions for the blind, the lame, the deaf and the dumb, for the incurables, the widow, the orphan, and the outcast; or of the thousand armed machinery that sends streaming down from the reservoirs the clear, bright, sparkling, God given water that rushes through our aqueducts, and dashes out of the hydrants, and tosses up in our fountains, and hisses in our steam engines, and showers out the conflagration, and sprinkles from the baptismal font of our churches; and with silver note, and golden sparkle, and crystalline chime, says to hundreds of thousands of our population, in the authentic words of him who said: "I will: be thou clean!"

THE CURSE OF GAMBLING.

All this I premise in opening this course of sermons on the ten plagues of these three cities, lest some stupid man might say I am deprecating the place of my residence. I speak to you today concerning the plague of gambling. Every man and woman in this house ought to be interested in this theme.

Some years ago, when an association for the suppression of gambling was organized, an agent of the association came to a prominent citizen and asked him to patronize the society. He said, "No, I can have no interest in such an organization. I am in no wise affected by that evil." At that very time his son, who was his partner in business, was one of the heaviest players in Hearne's famous gambling establishment. Another refused his patronage on the same ground, not knowing that his first bookkeeper, though receiving a salary of only a thousand dollars, was losing from fifty to one hundred dollars per night. The president of a railroad company refused to patronize the institution, saying, "That society is good for the defense of merchants, but we railroad people are not injured by this evil;" not knowing that, at that very time, two of his conductors were spending three nights of each week at faro tables in New York. Directly or indirectly, this evil strikes at the whole world.

Gambling is the risking of something more or less valuable in the hope of winning more than you hazard. The instruments of gaming may differ but the principle is the same. The shuffling and dealing cards, however full of temptation, is not gambling, unless stakes are put up; while, on the other hand, gambling may be carried on without cards or dice, or billiards or a ten-pin alley. The man who bets on horses, on elections, on battles—the man who deals in "fancy" stocks, or conducts a business which hazards extra capital, or goes into transactions without foundation, but dependent upon what men call "luck," is a gambler. Whatever you expect to get from your neighbor without offering an equivalent in money or time or skill is either the product of theft or gaming. Lottery tickets and lottery policies come into the same category. Fairs for the founding of hospitals, schools and churches, conducted on the raffling system, come under the same denomination. Do not, therefore, associate gambling necessarily with any instrument, or game, or time or place, or think the principle depends upon whether you play for a glass of wine or one hundred shares of railroad stock. Whether you patronize "auction pools," "French mutuals," or "book-making," whether you employ faro or billiards, rondo and keno, cards or bagatelle, the very idea of the thing is dishonest, for it professes to bestow upon you a good for which you give no equivalent.

TEN "HONEST" GAMBLING HOUSES.

It is estimated that every day in Christendom eighty million dollars pass from hand to hand through gambling practices, and every year in Christendom one hundred and twenty-three billion one hundred million dollars change hands in that way. There are in this cluster of cities about eight hundred confessed gambling establishments. There are about three thousand five hundred professional gamblers. Out of the eight hundred gambling establishments, how many of them do you suppose profess to be honest? Ten. These ten profess to be honest because they are merely the ante chamber to the seven hundred and ninety that are acknowledged fraudulent. There are first class gambling establishments. You go up the marble stairs. You ring the bell. The liveried servant introduces you. The walls are lavender tinted. The mantels are of Vermont marble. The pictures are "Jephthah's Daughter" and Dore's "Dante's and Virgil's Frozen Region of Hell"—a most appropriate selection, this last, for the place. There is the roulette table, the finest, the costliest, most exquisite piece of furniture in the United States. There is the banqueting room, where, free of charge to the guests, you may find the plate and viands and wines and cigars sumptuous beyond parallel.

Then you come to the second class gambling establishment. To it you are introduced by a card through some "roper-in." Having entered, you must either gamble or fight. Sanded cards, dice loaded with quicksilver, poor drinks, will soon help you to get rid of all your money to a tune in short meter with staccato passages. You wanted to see. You saw. The low villains of that place watch you as you come in. Does not the panther, squat in the grass, know a calf when he sees it? Wrangle not for your rights in that place, or your body will be thrown bloody into the street, or dead into the East river. You go along a little further and find the policy establishment. In that place you bet on numbers. Betting on two numbers is called a "saddle," betting on three numbers is called a "gig," betting on four numbers is called a "horse," and there are thousands of our young men leaping into that "saddle" and mounting that "gig" and behind that "horse" riding to perdition. There is always one kind of sign on the door—"Exchange," a most appropriate title for the door, for there, in that room, a man exchanges health, peace and heaven for loss of health, loss of home, loss of family, loss of immortal soul. Exchange sure enough and infinite enough.

Men wishing to gamble will find places just suited to their capacity, not only in the underground oyster cellar, or at the table back of the curtain, covered with greasy cards, or in the steamboat smoking cabin, where the bloated wretch with rings in his ears instead of his nose, deals the pack, and winks in the unsuspecting traveler—providing free drinks all around—but in gilded parlors and amid gorgeous surroundings.

HAZARDING AN ESTATE.

A young man, having suddenly inherited a large property, sits at the hazard table and takes up in a dice box the estate won by a father's lifetime sweat, and shakes it, and tosses it away. Intemperance soon stigmatizes its victim, kicking him out, a slavering fool, into the ditch, or sending him, with the drunkard's hiccough, staggering up the street where his family lives. But gambling does not in that way expose its victims. The gambler may be eaten up by the gambler's passion, yet you only discover it by the greed in his eyes, the hardness of his features, the nervous restlessness, the threadbare coat and his embarrassed business. Yet he is on the road to hell, and no preacher's voice or startling warning or wife's entreaty, can make him stay for a moment his headlong career. The infernal spell is on him; a giant is aroused within; and though you bind him with cables, they would part like thread; and though you fasten him seven times round with chains, they would snap like rusted wire; and though you piled up in his path heaven high Bibles, tracts and sermons, and on the top should set the cross of the son of God, over them all the gambler would leap, like a roe over the rocks, on his way to perdition.

Again, this sin works ruin by killing industry. A man used to reaping scores or hundreds or thousands of dollars from the gaming table will not be content with slow work. He will say, "What is the use of trying to make these fifty dollars in my store when I can get five times that in half an hour down at 'Billy's?'" You never knew a confirmed gambler who was industrious. The men given to this vice spend their time, not actively engaged in the game, in idleness or intoxication or sleep, or in corrupting new victims. This sin has dulled the carpenter's saw and cut the band of the factory wheel, sunk the cargo, broken the teeth of the farmer's harrow and sent a strange lightning to shatter the battery of the philosopher. The very first idea in gaming is at war with all the industries of society.

This crime is getting its lever under many a mercantile house in our great cities, and before long down will come the great establishment, crushing reputation, home, comfort and immortal souls. How it diverts and sinks capital may be inferred from some authentic statement before us. The ten gaming houses that once were authorized in Paris passed through the banks, yearly, three hundred and twenty-five millions of francs. Where does all the money come from? The whole world is robbed! What is most sad, there are no consolations for the loss and suffering entailed by gaming. If men fail in lawful business, God pities and society commiserates; but where in the Bible or in society is there any consolation for the gambler? From what tree of the forest oozes there a balm that can soothe the gamester's heart? In that bottle where God keeps the tears of his children are there any tears of the gambler? Do the winds that come to kiss the faded cheek of sickness, and to cool the heated brow of the laborer, whisper hope and cheer to the emaciated victim of the game of hazard? When an honest man is in trouble he has sympathy. "Poor fellow!" they say. But do gamblers come to weep at the agonies of the gambler?

In Northumberland was one of the finest estates in England. Mr. Porter owned it, and in a year gambled it all away. Having lost the last acre of the estate, he came down from the saloon and got into his carriage; went back, put up his horses and carriage and town house and played. He threw and lost. He started home, and in a side alley met a friend from whom he borrowed ten guineas; went back to the saloon and before a great while had won twenty thousand pounds. He died at last a beggar in St. Giles. How many gamblers felt sorry for Mr. Porter? Who consoled him on the loss of his estate? What gambler subscribed to put a stone over the poor man's grave? Not one!

GAMBLING THE CAUSE OF OTHER CRIMES.

Futhermore, this sin is the source of uncounted dishonesties. The game of hazard itself is often a game of cheat. How many tricks and deceptions in the dealing of the cards! The opponent's hand is ofttimes found out by fraud. Cards are marked so that they may be designated from the back. Expert gamesters have their accomplices, and one wink may decide the game. The dice have been found loaded with platina, so that "doublets" come up every time. These dice are introduced by the gamblers, unobserved by honest men who have come into the play; and this accounts for the fact that ninety-nine out of a hundred who gamble, however wealthy they began, at the end are found to be poor, miserable, ragged wretches, that would not now be allowed to sit on the doorstep of the house that they once owned. In a gambling house in San Francisco a young man having just come from the mines deposited a large sum upon the ace, and won twenty-two thousand dollars. But the tide turns. Intense excitement comes upon the countenances of all. Slowly the cards went forth. Every eye is fixed. Not a sound is heard until the ace is revealed favorable to the bank. There are shouts of "Foul!" "Foul!" but the keepers of the table produce their pistols, and the uproar is silenced and the bank has won ninety-five thousand dollars. Do you call this a game of chance? There is no chance about it.

But these dishonesties in the carrying on of the game are nothing when compared with the frauds which are committed in order to get money to go on with the nefarious work. Gambling with its greedy hand has snatched away the widow's mite and the portion of the orphans; has sold the daughter's virtue to get the means to continue the game; has written the counterfeit signature, emptied the banker's money vault and wielded the assassin's dagger. There is no depth of meanness to which it will not stoop. There is no cruelty at which it is appalled. There is no warning of God that it will not dare. Merciless, unappeasable, fiercer and wilder it blinds, it hardens, it rends, it blasts, it crushes, it damns. It has peopled our prisons and lunatic asylums. How many railroad agents and cashiers and trustees of funds it has driven to disgrace, incarceration and suicide! Witness years ago a cashier of a railroad who stole one hundred and three thousand dollars to carry on his gaming practices. Witness forty thousand dollars stolen from a Brooklyn bank within the memory of many of you, and the one hundred and eighty thousand dollars taken from a Wall street insurance company for the same purpose! These are only illustrations on a large scale of the robberies every day committed for the purpose of carrying out the designs of gamblers. Hundreds of thousands of dollars every year leak out without observation from the merchant's till into the gambling hell. A man in London keeping one of these gambling houses boasted that he had ruined a nobleman a day; but if all the saloons of this land were to speak out they might utter a more infamous boast, for they have destroyed a thousand noble men a year.

IT RUINS DOMESTIC HAPPINESS.

Notice also the effect of this crime upon domestic happiness. It has sent its ruthless ploughshare through hundreds of families, until the wife sat in rags, and the daughters were disgraced, and the sons grew up to the same infamous practices or took a short cut to destruction across the murderer's scaffold. Home has lost all charms for the gambler. How tame are the children's caresses and a wife's devotion to the gambler! How drearily the fire burns on the domestic hearth! There must be louder laughter, and something to win and something to lose; an excitement to drive the heart faster and fillip the blood and fire the imagination. No home, however bright, can keep back the gamester. The sweet coil of love bounds back from his iron soul, and all endearments are consumed in the flame of his passion. The family Bible will go after all other treasures are lost, and if his crown in heaven were put into his hand he would cry: "Here goes one more game, my boys! On this one throw I stake my crown of heaven." A young man in London, on coming of age, received a fortune of one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, and, through gambling, in three years was thrown on his mother for support. An only son went to a southern city; he was rich, intellectual and elegant in manners. His parents gave him on his departure from home their last blessing. The sharpers got hold of him. They flattered him. They lured him to the gaming table, and let him win almost every time for a good while, and patted him on the back and said, "First rate player." But fully in their grasp they fleeced him, and his thirty thousand dollars were lost. Last of all he put up his watch and lost that. Then he began to think of his home and his old father and mother, and wrote thus:

"My Beloved Parents—You will doubtless feel a momentary joy at the reception of this letter from the child of your bosom, on whom you have lavished all the favors of your declining years. But should a feeling of joy for a moment spring up in your hearts when you should have received this from me, cherish it not. I have fallen deep—never to rise. Those gray hairs that I should have honored and protected I shall bring down with sorrow to the grave. I will not curse my destroyer, but oh! may God avenge the wrongs and impositions practised upon the unwary in a way that shall best please him. This, my dear parents, is the last letter you will ever receive from me. I humbly pray your forgiveness. It is my dying prayer. Long before you have received this letter from me the cold grave will have closed upon me forever. Life to me is insupportable. I cannot, nay, I will not, suffer the shame of having ruined you. Forgot and forgive is the dying prayer of your unfortunate son."

FOUL! FOUL!

The old father came to the postoffice, got the letter and fell to the floor. They thought he was dead at first; but they brushed back the white hair from his brow and fanned him. He had only fainted. I wish he had been dead, for what is life worth to a father after his son is destroyed? When things go wrong at a gaming table they shout, "Foul! foul!" Over all the gaming tables of the world I cry out: "Foul! foul! Infinitely foul."

Shall I sketch the history of the gambler? Lured by bad company he finds his way into a place where honest men ought never to go. He sits down to his first game, but only for pastime and the desire of being thought sociable. The players deal out the cards. They unconsciously play into Satan's hands, who takes all the tricks and both the players' souls for trumps—he being a sharper at any game. A slight stake is put up just to add interest to the play. Game after game is played. Larger stakes and still larger. They begin to move nervously on their chairs. Their brows lower and eyes flash, until now they who win and they who lose, fired alike with passion, sit with set jaws, and compressed lips, and clinched fists, and eyes like fire balls that seem starting from their sockets, to see the final turn before it comes; if losing, pale with envy and tremulous with unuttered oaths cast back red hot upon the heart—or, winning, with hysteric laugh—"Ha! ha! I have it! I have it!"

A few years have passed and he is only the wreck of a man. Seating himself at the game ere he throws the first card, he stakes the last relic of his wife, and the marriage ring which sealed the solemn vows between them. The game is lost, and staggering back in exhaustion he dreams. The bright hours of the past mock his agony, and in his dreams fiends with eyes of fire and tongue of flame circle about him with joined hands to dance and sing their orgies with hellish chorus, chanting "Hail! brother!" kissing his clammy forehead until their loathsome locks, flowing with serpents, crawl into his bosom and sink their sharp fangs and suck up his life's blood, and coiling around his heart pinch it with chills and shudders unutterable.

BE WARNED IN TIME.

Take warning! You are no stronger than tens of thousands who have by this practice been overthrown. No young man in our cities can escape being tempted. Beware of the first beginnings! This road is a down grade, and every instant increases the momentum. Launch not upon this treacherous sea. Split hulks strew the beach. Everlasting storms howl up and down, tossing unwary crafts into the Hellgate. I speak of what I have seen with my own eyes. I have looked off into the abyss, and I have seen the foaming, and the hissing, and the whirling of the horrid deep in which the mangled victims writhed, one upon another, and struggled, strangled, blasphemed and died—the death stare of eternal despair upon their countenances as the waters gurgled over them.

To a gambler's deathbed there comes no hope. He will probably die alone. His former associates come not nigh his dwelling. When the hour comes his miserable soul will go out of a miserable life into a miserable eternity. As his poor remains pass the house where he was ruined, old companions may look out a moment and say, "There goes the old carcass—dead at last," but they will not get up from the table. Let him down now into his grave. Plant no tree to cast its shade there, for the long, deep, eternal gloom that settles there is shadow enough. Plant no "forget-me-nots" or eglantines around the spot, for flowers were not made to grow on such a blasted heath. Visit it not in the sunshine, for that would be mockery, but in the dismal night, when no stars are out and the spirits of darkness come down horsed on the wind, then visit the grave of the gambler!

One of Bill Nye's Stories.

A company of artists, writers and publishers gathered at the Aldine club to smoke and to listen to stories. Among the story tellers were Bill Nye, Frank R. Stockton, F. Hopkinson Smith, Dr. Henry Van Dyke and John Kendrick Bangs.

Mr. Appleton opened the evening when the smoke had got sufficiently thick by introducing Bill Nye. Nye told a story of a preacher friend of his in Indianapolis who was named Dr. Reed. This Dr. Reed had also been in congress. One Sunday morning he was opening the service in his church with the customary prayer. While he was in the midst of the praying a man entered the church and took a seat far back.

Dr. Reed was praying in a low voice, and the man in the rear, after straining his ears for a while, called out: "Pray louder, Dr. Reed; I can't hear you." Dr. Reed paused, opened his eyes, turned them around the church until they rested upon the man in the rear, then he said: "I was not addressing you, sir; I was speaking to God."—New York Sun.

He Was Deceived.

An eastern phrenologist who made a study of noses offered to wager $100 that he could go out on the street and pull certain makes of noses and not even be blasted in return. The first one he tried, however, brought a blow which laid him unconscious and lost him four good teeth. His diagnosis was off.—Detroit Free Press.

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