

SELF DESTRUCTION.

"DO THYSELF NO HARM," SAYS THE GREAT TABERNACLE PREACHER.

He Admits That Good Christians Have Attempted Self Destruction, but Always To Demolish—Fervent Words Against a Spreading Evil—A Christian's Death.

BROOKLYN, Aug. 12.—Rev. Dr. Talbot, who is now abroad, has selected as the subject for today's sermon through the press the word "Suicide," the text being Acts xvi, 27, 28: "He drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm."

Here is a would-be suicide arrested in his deadly attempt. He was a sheriff, and according to the Roman law a bailiff himself must suffer the punishment due an escaped prisoner, and if the prisoner breaking jail was sentenced to be hanged for three or four years then the sheriff must be hanged for three or four years, and if the prisoner breaking jail was to have suffered capital punishment then the sheriff must suffer capital punishment.

The sheriff had received special charge to keep a sharp lookout for Paul and Silas. The government had not had confidence in bolts and bars to keep into these two clergymen, about whom there seemed to be something strange and supernatural.

In Olden Times. Sure enough, by miraculous power they are free, and the sheriff, waking out of a sound sleep and supposing these ministers have run away, and knowing that they were to die for preaching Christ, and realizing that he must therefore die, rather than go under the executioner's ax on the morrow and suffer public disgrace, resolves to precipitate his own death. But before the sharp, keen, glittering dagger of the sheriff could strike his heart one of the unloosed prisoners arrests the blade by the command, "Do thyself no harm."

In olden times, and where Christianity had not interfered with it, suicide was considered honorable and a sign of courage. Demetrius poisoned himself when told that Alexander's ambassador had demanded the surrender of the Athenian orators. Isocrates killed himself rather than surrender to Philip of Macedonia. Cato, rather than submit to Julius Caesar, took his own life, and after three times his wounds had been dressed to him open and perished. Mithridates killed himself rather than submit to Pompey, the conqueror. Hannibal destroyed his life by poison from his ring, considering life unbearable. Lycorgus, a suicide, Brutus a suicide. After the disaster of Moscow Napoleon always carried with him a preparation of opium, and one night his servant heard the ex-emperor arise, put something in a glass and drink it, and soon after the groans arose all the attendants, and it was only through utmost medical skill he was resuscitated from the stupor of the opiate.

The Crime Spreads. Times have changed, and yet the American conscience needs to be toned upon the subject of suicide. Have you seen a paper in the last month that did not announce the passage out of life by one's own behest? Defaulters, alarmed at the idea of exposure, quit life precipitately. Men losing large fortunes go out of the world because they cannot endure earthly existence. Frustrated affection, domestic infidelity, dyspeptic impatience, anger, remorse, envy, jealousy, destitution, misanthropy, are considered sufficient causes for absconding from this life by Paris green, by landanum, by belladonna, by Othello's dagger, by halter, by leap from the abutment of a bridge, by firearms. More cases of "felo de se" in the last two years of the world's existence. The evil is more and more spreading.

A pulpit not long ago expressed some doubt as to whether there was really anything wrong about quitting this life when it became disagreeable, and there are found in respectable circles people apologetic for the crime which Paul in the text arrested. I shall show you before I get through that suicide is the worst of all crimes, and I shall lift a warning unmistakable. But in the early part of this sermon I wish to admit that some of the best Christians that have ever lived have committed self destruction, but always in dementia and not responsible. I have no more doubt about their eternal felicity than I have of the Christian who dies in his bed in the delirium of typhoid fever. While the shock of the catastrophe is very great, I charge all those who have had Christian friends under cerebral aberration step out of the boundaries of this life to have no doubt about their happiness. The dear Lord took them right out of their dazed and frenzied state into perfect safety. How Christ feels toward the insane you may know from the kind way he treated the demoniac of Gadara and the child lunatic, and the potency with which he hushed the tempests either of sea or brain.

Hugh Miller and Cowper.

Scotland, the land prolific of intellectual giants, had none grander than Hugh Miller, great for science and great for God. He came of the best highland blood, and he was a descendant of David Roy, a man eminent for his piety and the rare gift of second sight. His attainments, climbing up as he did from the quarry and the wall of the stonemason, drew forth the astonished admiration of Buckland and Murchison, the scientists, and Dr. Chalmers, the theologian, and held universities spell-bound while he told them the story of what he had seen of God in the old red sandstone.

That man did more than any being that ever lived to show that the God of the hills is the God of the Bible, and he struck his tuning fork on the rocks of Cromarty until he brought geology and theology accordant in divine worship. His two books, entitled "Foot-

prints of the Creator" and "The Testimony of the Rocks," proclaimed the banns of an evangelizing marriage between geology and spiritual revelation. On this latter book he labored day and night, through love of nature and love of God, until he could not sleep, and his brain gave way, and he was found dead with a revolver by his side, the cruel instrument having had two bullets—one for him and the other for the graminier who at the lawyer's request was examining it and fell dead. Have you any doubt of the beatification of Hugh Miller after his hot brain had ceased throbbing that winter night in his study at Portobello? Among the mightiest of earth, among the mightiest of heaven.

No one ever doubted the piety of William Cowper, the author of those three great hymns, "Oh, For a Closer Walk With God!" "What Various Hindrances We Meet!" "There is a Fountain Filled With Blood!"—William Cowper, who shares with Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley the chief honors of Christian hymnology. In hypochondria he resolved to take his own life and rode to the river Thames, but found a man seated on some goods at the very point from which he expected to spring and rode back to his home and that night threw himself upon his own knife, but the blade broke, and then he hanged himself to the ceiling, but the rope parted. No wonder that when God mercifully delivered him from that awful dementia he sat down and wrote that other hymn just as memorable:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And lifts up clouds of darkness,
And he will lead us to the dawn
And send us back to us again,
And he will make us plain.
Trenson to God.

While we make this merciful and righteous allowance in regard to those who were plunged into mental incoherence, I declare that the man who in the use of his reason, by his own act, snaps the bond between his body and his soul goes straight into perdition. Shall I prove it? Revelation xxi, 8, "Murderers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Revelation xxii, 15, "Without are dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers." You do not believe the New Testament? Then perhaps you believe the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not kill."

Do you say all these passages refer to the taking of the life of others? Then I ask you if you are not as responsible for your own life as for the life of others? God gave you a special trust in your life. He made you the custodian of your life as he made you the custodian of no other life. He gave you as weapons with which to defend it two arms to strike back assailants, two eyes to watch for invasion and a natural love of life which ought ever to be on the alert. Assassination of others is a mild crime compared with the assassination of yourself, because in the latter case it is treachery to an especial trust, it is the surrender of a castle you were especially appointed to keep, it is treason to a natural law, and it is treason to God added to ordinary murder.

To show how God in the Bible looked upon this crime I point you to the rogues' picture gallery in some parts of the Bible, the pictures of the people who have committed this unnatural crime. Here is the headless trunk of Saul on the walls of Bathsheba. Here is the man who chased little David—10 feet in stature chasing 4. Here is the man who consulted a clairvoyant, witch of Endor. Here is a man who, whipped in battle, instead of surrendering his sword with dignity, as many a man has done, asks his servant to slay him, and when the servant declines then the giant plants the hilt of the sword in the earth, the sharp point sticking upward, and he throws his body on it and expires, the coward, the suicide! Here is Abithophel, the Machiavelli of olden times, betraying his best friend, David, in order that he may become prime minister of Absalom and joining that fellow in his attempt at parricide. Not getting what he wanted by change of politics, he takes a short cut out of a disgraced life into the suicide's eternity. There he is, the ingrate!

Two Cases In Point.

Here is Abimelech practically a suicide. He is with an army bombarding a tower, when a woman in the tower takes a grindstone from its place and drops it upon his head, and with what life he has left in a cracked skull he commands his armor bearer, "Draw thy sword and slay me, lest men say a woman slew me." There is his post mortem photograph in the book of Samuel. But the hero of this group is Judas Iscariot. Dr. Donne says he was a martyr, and we have in our day apostolized him. And what wonder in this day when we have a book revealing Aaron's sin as a pattern of virtue, and in this day when we uncover a statue to George Sand as the benefactress of literature, and in this day when there are betrayals of Christ on the part of some of his pretended apostles—a betrayal so black it makes the infamy of Judas Iscariot white! Yet this man by his own hand, hung up for the execution of all his ages, Judas Iscariot.

All the good men and women of this Bible left to God the decision of their earthly terminus, and they could have said with Job, who had a right to commit suicide if any man ever had—what was his destroyed property, and his body all aflame with insufferable carbuncles, and everything gone from his house except the chief curse of it—a pestiferous wife—and four garrulous people pelting him with comfortable talk while he sits on a heap of ashes scratching his scabs with a piece of broken pottery, yet crying out in triumph, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

Notwithstanding the Bible is against this evil and the avenger which it creates by the katheon and ghostly spectacle of those who have hurried themselves out of life and notwithstanding Christianity is against it and the argu-

ments and the useful lives and the glorious deaths of its disciples, it is a fact alarmingly patent that suicide is on the increase. What is the cause? I charge upon infidelity and agnosticism this whole thing. If there be no hereafter or if that hereafter be blissful without reference to how we live and how we die, why not move back the folding doors between this world and the next? And when our existence here becomes troublesome why not pass right over into Elysium? Put this down among your most solemn reflections and consider it after you go to your homes—there has never been a case of suicide where the operator was not either demented, and therefore irresponsible, or an infidel. I challenge all the ages, and I challenge the whole universe. There never has been a case of self destruction while in full appreciation of his immortality and of the fact that that immortality would be glorious or wretched according as he accepted Jesus Christ or rejected him.

Tom Paine's Responsibility.

You say it is business trouble, or you say it is electrical currents, or it is this, or it is that, or it is the other thing. Why not go clear back, my friend, and acknowledge that in every case it is the abdication of reason or the teaching of infidelity which practically says, "If you don't like this life, get out of it, and you will land either in annihilation, where there are no notes to pay, no persecutions to suffer, no gout to torment, or you will land where there will be everything glorious and nothing to pay for it. Infidelity always has been apologetic for self immolation. After Tom Paine's 'Age of Reason' was published and widely read there was a marked increase of self slaughter.

Rousseau, Voltaire, Gibbon, Montaigne, under certain circumstances, were apologetic for self immolation. Infidelity puts up no bar to people's rushing out from this world into the next. They teach us it does not make any difference how you live here or go out of this world, you will land either in oblivion nowhere or a glorious somewhere. And infidelity holds the upper end of the rope for the suicide, and aims the pistol with which a man blows his brains out, and mixes the strychnine for the last swallow. If infidelity could carry the day and persuade the majority of people that it does not make any difference how you go out of the world you will land safely, the rivers would be so full of corpses the ferryboats would be impeded in their progress, and the crack of a suicide's pistol would be no more alarming than the rumble of a street car.

Christ Was Tempted.

Ah, infidelity, stand up and take thy sentence! In the presence of God and angels and men, stand up, thou monster, thy lip blasted with blasphemy, thy cheek scorched with lust, thy breath foul with the corruption of the ages! Stand up, satyr, filthy goat, buzzard of the nations, leper of the centuries! Stand up, thou monster infidelity, part man, part panther, part reptile, part dragon, stand up and take thy sentence! Thy hand is red with the blood in which thou hast washed, thy feet crimson with the human gore through which thou hast waded. Stand up and take thy sentence! Down with thee to the pit and sup on the sob and groans of families thou hast blasted, and roll on the bed of knives which thou hast sharpened for others, and let thy music be the everlasting misere of those whom thou hast damned! I brand the forehead of infidelity with all the crimes of self immolation for the last century on the part of those who had their reason.

My friends, if ever your life through its abrasions and its molestations should seem to be unbearable, and you are tempted to quit it by your own behest, do not consider yourselves as worse than others. Christ himself was tempted to cast himself from the roof of the temple, but as he resisted so resist ye. Christ came to medicine all our wounds. In your trouble I prescribe life instead of death. People who have had it worse than you will ever have it have gone on their way. Remember that God keeps the chronology of your life with as much precision as he keeps the chronology of nations.

A Christian's Life and Death.

Why was it that at midnight, just at midnight, the destroying angel struck the blow that set the Israelites free from bondage? The 430 years were up at 12 o'clock that night. The 430 years were not up at 11, and 1 o'clock would have been tardy and too late. The 430 years were up at 12 o'clock, and the destroying angel struck the blow, and Israel was free. And God knows just the hour when it is time to lead you up from earthly bondage. By his grace make not the worst of things, but the best of them. If you must take the pills, do not chew them. Your everlasting rewards will accord with your earthly perturbations, just as Cain gave to Agrippa a chain of gold as heavy as had been his chain of iron. For your asking you may have the same grace that was given to the Italian martyr, Algerius, who, down in the darkest of dungeons, dated his letter from "the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison."

There is a sorrowless world, and it is so radiant that the noonday sun is only the lowest doorstep, and the aurora that lights up our northern heavens, confounding astronomers as to what it can be, is the waving of the banners of the procession come to take the conquerors home from church militant to church triumphant, and you and I have 10,000 reasons for wanting to go there, but we will never get there either by self immolation or impenitency. All our sins slain by the Christ who came to do that thing, we want to go in at just the time divinely arranged and from a couch divinely spread, and then the clang of the sepulchral gates behind us will be overpowered by the clang of the pining of the solid pearl before us. O God, whatever others may choose, give me a Christian's life, a Christian's death, a Christian's burial, a Christian's immortality!

Most of the scorching words printing about the famous Chicago convention of 880 have been published, but here is one that seems to be new: Ex-Judge Dittenhoefer was in Chicago working against Grant and a third term. Bernard Biglin was there in the interest of Grant. Both were old personal friends. The night before the balloting began Biglin and two others were appointed a committee to look after several southern delegations, among them being the Kentucky delegation.

When Biglin and his associates arrived at the Kentucky headquarters, they found that Dittenhoefer had got ahead of them. He had the floor and was delivering a strong speech against Grant saying, among other things, that Grant could not carry New York. Biglin saw that Dittenhoefer's remarks were having great weight, and he realized that he was no match for him as a talker. What to do to break the force of Dittenhoefer's speech was the problem that confronted Biglin. This was the method he selected. In the midst of Dittenhoefer's peroration Biglin called out in loud voice, "Who is that man?"

"Why, he is ex-Judge Dittenhoefer of New York," said a member of the Kentucky delegation.

"Oh, no, that's not Judge Dittenhoefer," said Biglin. "I know Judge Dittenhoefer well. This man may pretend to be Dittenhoefer to strangers, but he knows better than to try to work any such racket with New Yorkers. I tell you he's a fraud."

Biglin's remarks made a sensation. Suspicious glances were cast at Dittenhoefer by members of the Kentucky delegation. The former got red in the face and walked up to Biglin. "Barney," he said, holding out his hand, "that's a pretty good joke of yours, not to know me."

"Joke," shouted Biglin in contempt. "It's no joke, I can tell you. I will just bet you \$30 that you are not Judge Dittenhoefer of New York." Biglin flourished a \$30 bill in Dittenhoefer's face. Of course he had to accept the challenge. The money was put up in the hands of a member of the delegation. Dittenhoefer hurried away to get some one to identify him. When he returned, Biglin had disappeared, likewise the stakeholder. After the convention Dittenhoefer met Biglin in the hotel corridor. "What did you mean," he said, "by saying you did not know me that night at the Kentucky headquarters?"

"What did you mean," said Biglin, "by saying that Grant could not carry New York?"

"That was politics," answered Dittenhoefer.

"Well," said Biglin, "it was politics my not knowing you."

Dittenhoefer and Biglin are still friends.—New York Press.

Suicide Among European Soldiers.

The following figures give the annual number of suicides in the various armies of Europe per 100,000 men: Austria, 131; Germany, 67; Italy, 40; France, 29; Belgium, 24; England, 23; Russia, 20, and Spain, 14.

Close Friends.

"I think I have the most tender hearted husband in the world," remarked Mrs. Glim. "He can't bear to beat his children, even when they need it ever so bad."

"That's nothing," replied Mrs. Glim, "my husband is so tender hearted I can't get him to beat the carpet."—Detroit Free Press.

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Respectfully yours,
J. M. NEWTON,
Aberdeen, Brown County, O.

Capt. A. D. Johnston.

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