

## CHOOSE CAREFULLY.

Young Woman, Seek Not a Perfect Man, He is Not for You.

Wed Not an Unbeliever, He Will with Iconoclastic Hand Shatter Your Household Gods.

Follow the Example of that Good Old Woman Naomi, and Ask the Lord's Aid.

Special to the Gazette.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., Jan. 17.—The Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D. D., preached to-day in the Brooklyn tabernacle the second of his series of sermons on "The Marriage Ring." Having spoken last Sunday on "The Choice of a Wife," he to-day preached on "The Choice of a Husband." The organist rendered the Sonata in C minor, by Rheinberger. Congregational singing, led by Professor All's organ, included that of the hymn beginning:

"Awake, my soul, to joyful lays!  
And sing thy great Redeemer's praise."

Selecting his text from Ruth 1, 9: "The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband," the eloquent preacher said:

This was the prayer of pious Naomi for Ruth and Orpah, and is an appropriate prayer now in behalf of unmarried womanhood. Naomi, the good old soul, knew that the devil would take their cases in hand if God did not, so she prays: "The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband."

In this series of sermons on "The Marriage Ring," I last Sabbath gave prayerful and Christian advice to men in regard to the selection of a wife, and to-day I give the same prayerful and Christian advice to women in regard to the selection of a husband, but in all these sermons saying much that I hope will be appropriate for all ages and all classes.

I applaud the celibacy of a multitude of women who, rather than make unfit selection, have made none at all. It has not been a lack of opportunity for marital contracts on their part, but their own culture and refinement and their exalted idea as to what a husband ought to be, have caused their declination. They have seen so many women marry imbeciles, or ruffians, or inept men, or life-time incapables, or magnificent nothings, or men who before marriage were angels and afterward devils, that they have been warned and stood back. They saw so many boats go into the millstream that they steered into other waters. Better for a woman to live alone, though she live a thousand years, than to be annexed to one of those masculine failures with which society is afflicted. The patron saint of almost every family circle is some unmarried woman, and among all the families of cousins she moves around, and her coming in each house is the morning, and her going away is the night.

In my large circle of kindred, perhaps twenty families in all, it was an Aunt Phoebe. Paul gave a letter of introduction to one whom he calls "Phoebe, our sister," as she went up from Chelsea to Rome, commending her for her kindness and Christian service, and imploring for her all courtesies. I think Aunt Phoebe was named after her. Was there a sickness in any of the households, she was there ready to sit up and count out the drops of medicine. Was there a marriage, she helped deck the bride for the altar. Was there a new soul incarnated, she was there to rejoice at the nativity. Was there a sore bereavement, she was there to console. The children rushed out at her first appearance, crying "Here comes Aunt Phoebe," and but for parental interference they would have pulled her down with their caresses, for she was not given, and many severe illnesses had strengthened enough glimpses of the next world to make her heavenly-minded. Her table was loaded up with Baxter's "Saints' Rest," Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," and Jay's "Morning and Evening Exercises," and John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and like books, which have fitted out whole generations for the heaven upon which they have already entered.

"DeWitt," she said to me one day, "twice in my life I have been so overwhelmed with the love of God that I fainted away and could hardly be resuscitated. Don't tell me there is no heaven. I have seen it twice." If you would know how her presence would soothe an anxiety, or lift a burden, or cheer a sorrow, or leave a blessing on every room in the house, ask any of the Talmages. She had carried at her early home, taking care of an invalid father until the bloom of life had somewhat faded, but she could interest the young folks with some three or four tender passages in her own history, so that we all knew that it was not through lack of opportunity that she was not the queen of one household, instead of being a benediction upon a whole circle of households. At about seventy years of age she made her last visit to my house, and when she sat in my Philadelphia church I was more embarrassed at her presence than by all the audience, because I felt that in religion I had got no further than the a b c, while she had learned the whole alphabet, and for many years had finished the v and z. When she went out of this life into the next, what a shout there must have been in heaven, from the front door clear up to the back seat in the highest gallery! I saw the other day in the village cemetery of Somerville, N. J., her resting place, the tombstone having on it the words which thirty years ago she told me she would like to have inscribed there, namely, "The morning cometh."

Had she admission in the world? Certainly. As much as Caroline Herschel, first amanuensis for her illustrious brother, and then his assistant in astronomical calculations, and then discovering worlds for herself, dying at ninety-eight years of age, still busy with the stars till she sped beyond them; as much as had Florence Nightingale, the nurse of the Crimea; or Grace Darling, the oarswoman of the Long Stone light-house; or Mary Lyon, the teacher of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary; or Hannah Moore, the Christian authoress of England; or Dorothea Dix, the angel of mercy for the insane; or Anna Elizeridge, among the wounded of Blackburn's Fort; or Margaret Breckenridge, at Vicksburg; or Mary Shelton, distributing roses, and grapes, and cologne, in Western hospitals; or thousands of other glorious women like them, who never took the marriage sacrament. Appreciate all this, my sister, and it will make you deliberate before you

rush out of the single state into another, unless you are sure of betterment.

Deliberate and pray. Pray and deliberate. As I showed you in my former sermon, a man ought to supplicate divine guidance in such crisis; how much more important that you should it! It is easier for a man to find an appropriate wife than for a woman to find a good husband. This is a matter of arithmetic, as I showed in former discourse. Statistics show that in Massachusetts and New York states, women have a majority of hundreds of thousands. Why this is, we leave others to surmise. It would seem that woman is a favorite with the Lord, and that therefore he has made more of that kind. From the order of the creation in Paradise, it is evident that woman is an improved edition of man. But whatever be the reason for it, the fact is certain, that she who selects a husband has a smaller number of people to select from than he who selects a wife. Therefore a woman ought to be especially careful in her choice of lifetime companion.

She cannot afford to make a mistake. If a man err in his selection, he can spend his evenings at the club, and dull his sensibilities by tobacco smoke, but woman has no club-room for refuge, and would find it difficult to habituate herself to cigars. If a woman make a bad job of marital selection, the probability is that nothing but a funeral can relieve it. Divorce cases in court may interest the public, but the love letter of a married couple are poor reading, except for those who write them. Pray God that you be delivered from irrevocable mistakes!

Avoid alliance with a despoiler of the Christian religion, whatever else he may have or may not have. I do not say he must needs be a religious man, for Paul says the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife; but marriage with a man who hates the Christian religion will insure you a life of wretchedness. He will caricature your habit of kneeling in prayer. He will speak depreciatingly of Christ. He will wound all the most sacred feelings of your soul. He will put your home under the anathema of the Lord God Almighty. In addition to the anguish with which he will fill your life, there is great danger that he will despoil your hope of heaven, and make your marriage relation an infinite and eternal disaster. If you have made such engagement, your first duty is to break it. My word may come just in time to save your soul.

Further: Do not unite in marriage with a man of bad habits, in the idea of reforming him. If now, under the restraint of your present acquaintance, he will not give up his bad habits, after he has won the prize you cannot expect him to do so. You might as well plant a violet in the face of a northeast storm, with the idea of appeasing it. You might as well run a schooner alongside of a burning ship, with the idea of saving the ship. The consequence will be, schooner and ship will be destroyed together. The almshouse could tell a story of a hundred women who married men to reform them. If by twenty-five years of age a man has been gripped by intoxicants he is under such headway that your attempt to stop him would be very much like running up the track with a wheelbarrow to stop a Hudson river express train. What you call an inebriate now-a-days is not a victim of wine or whisky, but to logwood and strychnine and nux vomica. All these poisons have kindled their fires in his tongue and brain, and all the tears of a wife weeping cannot extinguish the flames. Instead of marrying a man to reform him, let him reform first and then give him time to see whether the reform is to be permanent. Let him understand that if he cannot do without his bad habits for two years he must do without you forever.

Avoid union with one supremely selfish or so wound up in his occupation that he has no room for another. You occasionally find a man who spreads himself so widely over the path of life that there is no room for anyone to walk beside him. He is not the one blade of a scissars incomplete without the other blade, but he is a chisel made to cut his way through life alone, or a file full of roughness, made to be drawn across society without any affinity for other files. His disposition is a lifelong protest against marriage. Others are so married to their occupation or profession that the taking of any other bride is a case of bigamy. There are men as severely tied to the literary work as was Chatterton, whose essay was not printed because of the death of the lord mayor. Chatterton made out the following account: "Lost, by the lord mayor's death, in this essay, one pound, eleven shillings and sixpence. Gained in elegies and essays five pounds and five shillings." Then he put what he had gained by the lord mayor's death opposite to what he had lost, and wrote under it: "And glad he is dead by £1 11s. 6d." When a man is as hopelessly literary as that he ought to be a perpetual celibate; his library, his laboratory, his books are all the companionship needed. Indeed some of the most interesting men in the world ever saw have not patronized matrimony. Cowper, Pope, Newton, Swift, Locke, Walpole, Gibbon, Hume, Arbuthnot, were single. Some of these marriage would have helped. The right kind of a wife would have cured Cowper's gloom, and given to Newton more practicability and been a relief to Locke's overtasked brain. A Christian wife might have converted Hume and Gibbon to a belief in Christianity. But Dean Swift did not deserve a wife, from the way in which he broke the heart of Jane Waring first and Esther Johnson afterward, and last of all "Vanessa." The great wit of the day, he was outwitted by his own cruelties.

Amid so many possibilities of fatal mistake, am I not right in urging you to seek the morning wisdom of God, and before you are inflamed? Because most marriages are fit to be made convalesces in that they are divinely arranged. Almost every cradle has an affinity toward some other cradle. They may be on the opposite sides of the earth, but one child gets out of this cradle and another child gets out of that cradle, and with their first steps they start for each other. They may diverge from the straight path, going toward the north or south or east or west. They may fall down, but the two rise facing each other. They are approaching all through infancy. The one all through the years of boyhood is going to meet the one who is coming through all the years of girlhood to meet him. The decision of parents as to what is best concerning them and the changes of fortune may for a time seem to arrest the two journeys; but on they go. They may never have seen each other. They may never have heard of each other. But the two pilgrims who started at the two cradles, are nearing. After eighteen, twenty or thirty years the two come within sight. At the first glance they may feel a dislike, and they may slacken their step, yet something that the world calls fate and that religion calls Providence, urges them on and on. They must meet. They come near enough to join hands in social acquaintance, after a while to join hands in

friendship, after a while to join hearts. The delegate from the one cradle comes up the east side of the church with her father. The delegate from the other cradle comes up the west side of the church. The two long journeys end at the snowdrift of the bridal veil. The two chains made out of many years are forged together by the golden link which the groom puts upon the third finger of the left hand. One on earth, may they be one in heaven!

But there are so many exceptions to the general rule of natural affinity, that only those are safe who pray for a heavenly hand to lead them. Because they depended on themselves and not on God, there are thousands of women every year going to the slaughter. In India women leap on the funeral pyre of a dead husband. We have a worse spectacle than that in America—women, innumerable, leaping on the funeral pyre of a living husband.

Avoid all proposed alliances through newspaper advertisements. Many women, just for fun, have answered such advertisements, and have been led on from step to step to catastrophe infinite. All the men who write such advertisements are villains and lepers—all, without a single exception. All! All! Do you answer them just for fun? I will tell you a safer and healthier fun. Thrust your hand through the cage of a caged lion, and stroke the back of a cobra from the East Indies. Put your head in the mouth of a Numidian lion to see if he will bite. Take a glassful of Paris green mixed with some delightful beverage. These are safer and healthier fun than answering newspaper advertisements for a wife.

My advice is: Marry a man who is a fortune in himself. Houses, lands and large inheritance are well enough but the wheel of fortune turns so rapidly that through some investment all these in a few years may be gone. There are some things, however, that are a perpetual fortune—good manners, gentility of soul, kindness, intelligence, sympathy, courage, perseverance, industry and wholeheartedness. Marry such a one and you have a million of fortune, whether he have an income of \$50,000 per year or as income of \$500. A bank is secure according to its capital stock and not to be judged by the deposits for a day or a week. A man is rich according to his sterling qualities and not according to the vacillation of circumstances, which may leave with him a large amount of resources to-day and withdraw them to-morrow. If a man is worth nothing but money he is poor indeed. If a man have upright character he is rich. Property may come and go, he is independent of the markets. Nothing can buy him out, nothing can sell him out. He may have more money one year than another but his better fortunes never vacillate.

Yet do not expect to find a perfect man. If you find one without any faults, incautious of mistakes, never having guessed wrongly, his patience never having been perturbed, immaculate in speech, in temper, in habits, do not marry him. Why? Because you would enact a swindle. What would you do with a perfect man, who are not perfect yourself? And how dare you hint your imperfection fast on such supernatural excellence? What a companion you would make for an angel! In other words there are no perfect men. There never was but one perfect pair and they slipped down the banks of paradise together. We occasionally find a man who says he never sins. We know he lies when he says it. We have had financial dealings with two or three perfect men, and they cheated us woefully. Do not, therefore, look for an immaculate husband, for you will not find him.

But do not become cynical on this subject. Society has a great multitude of grand men, who know how to make home happy. When they come to be husbands they evince a nobility of nature and a self-sacrificing spirit that surprise even the wife. These are the men who cheerfully sit in dark and dirty business offices, ten feet by twelve, in summer time hard at work while the wives and daughters are off at Saratoga, Mount Desert or the White Sulphur. These are the men who never having had much education themselves, have their sons at Yale and Harvard and Virginia university. These are the men who work themselves to death by fifty years of age, and go out to Greenwood, leaving large estates and generous life insurance provision for their families. These are husbands and fathers here by the hundreds who would die for their households. If outlawry should ever become dominant in our cities, they would stand in their doorway, and with their one arm would cleave down, one by one, fifty invaders, face to face, foot to foot, and every stroke a demolition. This is what makes an army in defense of a country fight more desperately than an army of conquest. It is not so much the abstract sentiment of a flag as it is wife and children and home, that turns enthusiasm into a fury. The world has such men by the million and the homineers that infect all our communities must not hinder women from appreciating the glory of true manhood.

I was reading of a bridal reception. The young man had brought home the choice of his heart, in her elaborate and exquisite apparel. As she stood in the gay drawing-room, and amid the gay group, the young man's eyes filled with tears of joy as he thought that she was his. Years passed by, and they stood at the same parlor on another festive occasion. She wore the same dress, for business had not opened as brightly to the young husband as he expected, and he had never been able to purchase for her another dress. Her face was not as bright and smooth as it had been years before, and a care-worn look had made its signature on her countenance. As the husband looked at her he saw the difference between this occasion and the former, and he went over where she sat and said: "You remember the time when we were here before. You have the same dress on. Circumstances have somewhat changed, but you look to me far more beautiful than you did then." There is such a thing as conjugal fidelity, and many of you know it in your own homes.

But, after all the good advice we may give you, we come back to the golden pillar from which we started, the tremendous truth that no one but God can guide you in safety about this matter, that may decide your happiness for two worlds, this and the next. So, my sister, I put your case where Naomi put that of Ruth and Orpah when she said: "The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband."

I imagine the hour for which you pledged your troth has arrived. There is much merrymaking among your young friends, but there is an undertone of sadness in all the house. Your choice may have been the gladder and the best, and the joy of the whole round of relatives, but when a young esquire is about to leave the old nest and is preparing to put out into sunshine and storm for itself, it feels its wings tremble somewhat. So she has a good cry before leaving home,

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and at the marriage father and mother always cry, or feel like it. If you think it is easy to give up a daughter in marriage, though it be with brightest prospects, you will think differently when the day comes. To have all along watched her from infancy to girlhood, and from girlhood to womanhood, studied of her welfare, her slightest illnesses an anxiety, and her presence in your home an ever-increasing joy, and then have her go away to some other home—aye, all the redolence of orange blossoms and all the chime of marriage bells, and all the rolling of wedding march in full diapason, and all the hilarious congratulations of your friends, cannot make you forget that you are suffering a loss irreparable. But you know it is all right, and you have a remembrance of an embarkation just like it twenty-five or thirty years ago, in which you were one of the parties, and, suppressing as far as possible your sadness, you say: "Good-bye."

I hope that you, the departing daughter, will not forget to write often home, for whatever betide you, the old folks will never lose their interest in your welfare. Make visits to them also as often and stay as long as you can, for there will be changes at the old place after a while. Every time you go, you will find more gray hairs on father's head, and more wrinkles on mother's brow, and, after a while you will notice that the elastic step has become decrepitude. And some day one of the two pillars of your early home will fall, and after awhile the other pillar of that home will fall, and it will be a comfort to yourself if, when they are gone, you can feel that while you are faithful in your new home, you never forget your old home, and the first friends you ever had, and those to whom you are more indebted than you ever can be to anyone else, except to God—I mean your father and mother. Alexander Pope put it in effective rhythm, when he said: "Me, let the tender office long engage To rock the cradle of repining age; With lullaby and a sweet mother's breath, Make languor smile and smooth the bed of death; Explore the thought, explain the aching eye, And keep a childless parent from the solitary night."

And now I commend all this precious and splendid young womanhood before me to-day to the God "who setteth the solitary in families."

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