

## THE GOUT OF A KING.

### WHY THE PHYSICIANS COULD NOT CURE IT.

Rev. Dr. Talmage Shows the Mistake of Shuttling Out God From the Realm of Pharmacy and Therapeutics—A Benediction For Doctors.

NEW YORK, June 6.—It is not often that men of one profession have much encouragement for men of another profession, but this sermon, prepared by Dr. Talmage, contains enthusiastic words of a clergyman to physicians. The text is II Chronicles xvi, 12, 13, "And Asa, in the thirty and ninth year of his reign, was diseased in his feet until his disease was exceeding great; yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers."

At this season of the year, when medical colleges of all schools of medicine are giving diplomas to young doctors, and at the capital and in many of the cities medical associations are assembling to consult about the advancement of the interests of their profession, I feel this discourse is appropriate.

In my text is King Asa with the gout. High living and no exercise have vitiated his blood, and my text presents him with his inflamed and bandaged feet on an ottoman. In defiance of God, whom he hated, he sends for certain conjurers or quacks. They come and give him all sorts of lotions and panaceas. They bleed him. They sweat him. They manipulate him. They blister him. They poultice him. They scarify him. They drug him. They cut him. They kill him. He was only a young man, and had a disease which, though very painful, seldom proves fatal to a young man, and he ought to have got well, but he fell a victim to charlatanism and empiricism. "And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great; yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers." That is, the doctors killed him.

In this sharp and graphic way the Bible sets forth the truth that you have no right to shut God out from the realm of pharmacy and therapeutics. If Asa had said: "O Lord, I am sick. Bless the instrumentality employed for my recovery!" "Now, servant, go and get the best doctor you can find"—he would have recovered. In other words, the world wants divinely directed physicians. There are a great many such. The diplomas they received from the academies of medicine were nothing compared with the diploma they received from the Head Physician of the universe on the day when they started out and he had said to them: "Go heal the sick, and cast out the devils of pain, and open the blind eyes, and unstop the deaf ears." God bless the doctors all the world over, and let all the hospitals and dispensaries and infirmaries and asylums and domestic circles of the earth respond, "Amen."

#### Balm In Gilead.

Men of the medical profession we often meet in the home of distress. We shake hands across the cradle of agonized infancy. We join each other in an attempt at solace where the paroxysm of grief demands an anodyne as well as a prayer. We look into each other's sympathetic faces through the dusk as the night of death is falling in the sickroom. We do not have to climb over any barrier today in order to greet each other, for our professions are in full sympathy. You, doctor, are our first and last earthly friend. You stand at the gates of life when we enter this world and you stand at the gates of death when we go out of it. In the gloaming moments of our earthly existence, when the hand of the wife, or mother, or sister, or daughter shall hold our right hand, it will give strength to our dying moments if we can feel the tips of your fingers along the pulse of the left wrist. We do not meet today, as on other days, in houses of distress, but by the pleasant altars of God, and I propose a sermon of helpfulness and good cheer. As in the nursery children sometimes re-enact all the scenes of the sickroom, so today you play that you are the patient and that I am the physician, and take my prescription just once. It shall be a tonic, a sedative, a dietetic, a disinfectant, a stimulus and an anodyne at the same time. "Is there not balm in Gilead? Is there not a

physician there?"

In the first place, I think all the medical profession should become Christians because of the debt of gratitude they owe to God for the honor he has put upon their calling. No other calling in all the world, except it be that of the Christian ministry, has received so great an honor as yours. Christ himself was not only preacher, but physician, surgeon, aurist, ophthalmologist, and under his mighty power optic and auditory nerve thrilled with light and sound, and catalepsy arose from its fit, and the club foot was straightened, and ankylosis went out of the stiffened tendons, and the foaming maniac became placid as a child, and the streets of Jerusalem became an extemporized hospital crowded with convalescent victims of casualty and invalidism. All ages have woven the garland for the doctor's brow. Homer said:

A wise physician, skilled, our wounds to heal,  
Is more than armies to the public weal.

Cicero said: "There is nothing in which men so approach the gods as when they try to give health to other men." Charles IX made proclamation that all the Protestants in France should be put to death on St. Bartholomew's day, but made one exception, and that the case of Pare, the father of French surgery. The battlefields of the American Revolution welcomed Drs. Mercer and Warren and Rush. When the French army was entirely demoralized at fear of the plague, the leading surgeon of that army inoculated himself with the plague to show the soldiers there was no contagion in it, and their courage rose, and they went on to the conflict. God has honored this profession all the way through. Oh, the advancement from the days when Hippocrates tried to cure the great Pericles with hellebore and flaxseed poultices down to far later centuries when Haller announced the theory of respiration, and Harvey the circulation of the blood, and Ascell the uses of the lymphatic vessels, and Jenner barked the worst disease that ever scourged Europe, and Sydenham developed the recuperative forces of the physical organism, and cinchona bark stopped the shivering agues of the world, and Sir Astley Cooper, and Abernethy, and Hosack, and Romeyn, and Griscom, and Valentine Mott of the generation just past honored God and fought back death with their keen scalpels.

#### Heroes of Medicine.

If we who are laymen in medicine would understand what the medical profession has accomplished for the insane, let us look into the dungeons where the poor creatures used to be incarcerated. Madmen chained naked to the wall. A kennel of rotten straw their only sleeping place. Room unventilated and unlighted. The worst calamity of the race punished with the very worst punishment. And then come and look at the insane asylums of Utica and Kirkbride—sofaed and pictured, librated, concerted, until all the arts and adornments come to coax recreant reason to assume her throne. Look at Edward Jenner, the great hero of medicine. Four hundred thousand people annually dying in Europe from the smallpox, Jenner finds that by the inoculation of people with vaccine from a cow the great scourge of nations may be arrested. The ministers of the gospel denounced vaccination; small wits caricatured Edward Jenner as riding in a great procession on the back of a cow, and grave men expressed it as their opinion that all the diseases of the brute creation would be transplanted into the human family, and they gave instances where, they said, actually horns had come out on the foreheads of innocent persons and people had begun to chew the cud! But Dr. Jenner, the hero of medicine, went on fighting for vaccination until it has been estimated that that one doctor in 50 years has saved more lives than all the battles of any one century destroyed!

Passing along the streets of Edinburgh a few weeks after the death of Sir James Y. Simpson, I saw the photograph of the doctor in all the windows of the shops and stores, and well might that photograph be put in every window, for he first used chloroform as an anesthetic agent. In other days they tried to dull human pain by the hashesh of the Arabs and the mardrepore of the Roman and the Greek. But it was left to Dr. James Simpson to introduce chloroform as an anesthetic. Alas for the wretched subjects of surgery in other centuries! Blessed be God for that wet sponge or vial in the hand of the operating surgeon in the clinical department of the medical college, or in the sickroom of the domestic circle, or on the battlefield

amid thousands of amputations.

Napoleon after a battle rode along the line and saw under a tree, standing in the snow, Larrey the surgeon, operating upon the wounded. Napoleon passed on and 24 hours afterward came along the same place, and he saw the same surgeon operating in the same place, and he had not left it. Alas for the battlefields without chloroform. But now the soldier boy takes a few breaths from the sponge and forgets all the pang of the gunshot fracture, and while the surgeons of the field hospital are standing around him he lies there dreaming of home and mother and heaven. No more parents standing around a suffering child, struggling to get away from the sharp instrument, but mild slumber instead of excruciation, and the child wakes up and says: "Father, what's the matter? What's the doctor here today for?" Oh, blessed be God for James Y. Simpson and the heaven descended mercies of chloroform.

#### Public Hygiene.

The medical profession steps into the courtroom, and after conflicting witnesses have left everything in a fog, by chemical analyses shows the guilt or innocence of the prisoner, as by mathematical demonstration, thus adding honors to medical jurisprudence.

This profession has done wonders for public hygiene! How often they have stood between this nation and Asiatic cholera, and the yellow fever! The monuments in Greenwood and Mount Auburn and Laurel Hill tell something of the story of those men who stood face to face with pestilence in southern cities, until, staggering in their own sickness, they stumbled across the corpses of those whom they had come to save. This profession has been the successful advocate of ventilation, sewerage, drainage and fumigation, until their sentiments were well expressed by Lord Palmerston when he said to the English nation at the time a fast had been proclaimed to keep off a great pestilence: "Clean your streets or death will ravage, notwithstanding all the prayers of this nation. Clean your streets, and then call on God for help."

See what this profession has done for human longevity. There was such a fearful subtraction from human life that there was a prospect that within a few centuries this world would be left almost uninhabitable. Adam started with a whole eternity of earthly existence before him, but he cut off the most of it and only comparatively few years were left—only 700 years of life, and then 500, and then 400, and then 200, and then 100, and then 50, and then the average of human life came to 40, and then it dropped to 18. But medical science came in, and since the sixteenth century the average of human life has risen from 18 years to 44, and it will continue to rise until the average of human life will be 60, and it will be 60, and it will be 70, and a man will have no right to die before 90, and the prophecy of Isaiah will be literally fulfilled, "And the child shall die 100 years old." The millennium for the souls of men will be the millennium for the bodies of men. Sin done, disease will be done—the clergyman and the physician getting through with their work at the same time.

#### The Dispensaries.

But it seems to me that the most beautiful benediction of the medical profession has been dropped upon the poor. No excuse now for any one's not having scientific attendance. Dispensaries and infirmaries everywhere under the control of the best doctors, some of them poorly paid, some of them not paid at all. A half starved woman comes out from the low tenement house into the dispensary and unwraps the rags from her babe, a bundle of ulcers and rheum and pustules, and over that little sufferer bends the accumulated wisdom of the ages from Esculapius down to last week's autopsy. In one dispensary in one year 150,000 prescriptions were issued. Why do I show you what God has allowed this profession to do? Is it to stir up your vanity? Oh, no. The day has gone by for pompous doctors, with conspicuous gold headed canes and powdered wigs, which were the accompaniments in the days when the barber used to carry through the streets of London Dr. Brockelsby's wig, to the admiration and awe of the people, saying: "Make way. Here comes Dr. Brockelsby's wig." No, I announce these things not only to increase the appreciation of laymen in regard to the work of physicians, but to stir in the hearts of the men of the medical profession a feeling of gratitude to God

that they have been allowed to put their hand to such a magnificent work and that they have been called into such illustrious company. Have you never felt a spirit of gratitude for this opportunity? Do you not feel thankful now? Then I am afraid, doctor, you are not a Christian, and that the old proverb which Christ quoted in his sermon may be appropriate to you, "Physician, heal thyself."

Another reason why I think the medical profession ought to be Christians is because there are so many trials and annoyances in that profession that need positive Christian solace. I know you have the gratitude of a great many good people, and I know it must be a grand thing to walk intelligently through the avenues of human life and with anatomic skill poison yourself on the nerves and fibers which cross and recross this wonderful physical system. I suppose a skilled eye can see more beauty even in malformation than an architect can point out in any of his structures, though it be the very triumph of arch and plinth and abacus. But how many annoyances and trials the medical profession have! Dr. Rush used to say, in his valedictory address to the students of the medical college, "Young gentlemen, have two pockets—a small pocket and a big pocket; a small pocket in which to put your fees, a large pocket in which to put your annoyances."

#### A Doctor's Sacrifices.

In the first place, the physician has no Sabbath. Busy merchants and lawyers and mechanics cannot afford to be sick during the secular week, and so they nurse themselves along with lozenges and bore-bound candy until Sabbath morning comes, and then they say, "I must have a doctor." And that spoils the Sabbath morning church service for the physician. Besides that, there are a great many men who dine but once a week with their families. During the secular days they take a hasty lunch at the restaurant, and on the Sabbath they make up for their six days' abstinence by especial gormandizing, which before night makes their amazed digestive organs cry out for a doctor. And that spoils the evening church service for the physician.

Then they are annoyed by people coming too late. Men wait until the last fortress of physical strength is taken and death has dug around it the trench of the grave, and then they run for the doctor. The slight fever which might have been cured with a footbath has become virulent typhus, and the hacking cough, killing pneumonia. As though a captain should sink his ship off Amagansett, and then put ashore in a yawl and then come to New York to the marine office and want to get his vessel insured. Too late for the ship, too late for the patient.

Then there are many who always blame the doctor because the people die, forgetting the Divine enactment, "It is appointed unto all men once to die." The father in medicine who announced the fact that he had discovered the art by which to make men in this world immortal himself died at 47 years of age, showing that immortality was less than half a century for him. Oh, how easy it is, when people die, to cry out, "Malpractice." Then the physician must bear with all the whims, and the sophistries, and the deceptions, and the stratagems, and the irritations of the shattered nerves and the beclouded brains of women, and more especially of men, who never know how gracefully to be sick, and who with their salivated mouth curse the doctor, giving him his dues, as they say—about the only dues he will in that case collect. The last bill that is paid is the doctor's bill. It seems so incoherent for a restored patient, with ruddy cheeks and rotund form, to be bothered with a bill charging him for old calomel and jalap. The physicians of this country do more missionary work without charge than all the other professions put together. From the concert room, from the merry party, from the comfortable couch on a cold night, when the thermometer is 5 degrees below zero, the doctor must go right away; he always must go right away. To keep up under this nervous strain, to go through this night work, to bear all these annoyances, many physicians have resorted to strong drink and perished. Others have appealed to God for sympathy and help and have lived. Which were the wise doctors, judge ye?

#### Piety and Medical Skill.

Again, the medical profession ought to be Christian because there are professional exigencies when they need God. Asa's destruction by unblest physicians was a