

DO THYSELF NO HARM

SUICIDE THE SUBJECT OF REV. DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

Declares That a Sane Man Who Takes His Own Life Is a Traitor to God—Infidelity a Cause of Self Slaughter—Enter Eternity Through God's Command.

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WASHINGTON, July 10.—This sermon of Dr. Talmage which we sent out today seems startlingly appropriate to this theme when so many are leaving this life by their own hand, an evil about which all reasonable people are agreed; text, Acts xvi, 23, "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 endunged for three or four years then the sheriff must be endunged 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 much confidence in bolts and bars to keep safe these two clergymen, about whom there seemed to be something strange and supernatural. 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 decease. 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."

Suicide Among the Ancients.

In olden times and where Christianity had not interfered with it suicide was considered honorable and a sign of courage. Demosthenes 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 Macedon. Cato, rather than submit to Julius Caesar, took his own life, and three times after his wounds had been dressed tore them 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. Lycurgus a suicide. Brutus a suicide. After the disaster of Moscow Napoleon always carried with him a preparation of poison, and one night his servant heard the emperor arise, put something in a glass and drink it, and soon after the groans aroused all the attendants, and it was only through utmost medical skill that he was resuscitated. Times have changed, and yet the American conscience needs to be toned up on 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 infelicity, dyspeptic impatience, anger, remorse, envy, jealousy, destitution, misanthropy, are considered sufficient causes for absconding from this life by paris green, by laudanum, 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 than any two years of the world's existence, and more in the last month than in any 12 months. 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 off 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 way he treated the demoniac of Gadara and the child lunatic, and the potency with which he hushed tempests either of sea or brain.

Merciful Allowance.

Scotland, the land profile of intellectual giants, had none grander than Hugh Miller, great for science and great for God. He was an elder in St. John's Presbyterian church. Because of the best highland blood and was a descendant of Donald Roy, a man eminent for 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 spellbound while he told them the story of what he had seen of God in "The Old Red Sandstone." That man lived more than any other 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 Creomarty until he brought geology and theology accordant in divine worship. His two books, entitled "Footprints of the Creator" and "The Testimony of the Rocks," proclaimed the banns of an everlasting marriage between genuine science and revelation. On this latter book he toiled 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 gunsmith who at the coroner's inquest 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 doubted the piety of William Cowper, the author of those three great hymns, "O 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 that 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 broke. 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 rides upon the storm.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan his work in vain.
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

Treasure to the Almighty.

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 that 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 life and made you the custodian of your life, and 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 assassina-

tion of yourself, because in the latter case 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 Bathshan. Here is a 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 that servant declined, then the giant plants the hilt of his sword in the earth, the sharp point sticking upward, and he throws his body on it and expires—the coward, the suicide! Here is Ahitophel, 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 disgraceful life into the suicide's eternity. There he is, the ingrate!

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 his 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 apologists for him. And what wonder, in this day when we have a book revealing Aaron Burr as a pattern of virtue, and this day when we uncover a statue of 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 execration of all ages, Judas Iscariot.

Increase of Self Murder.

All the good men and women of the 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 with his destroyed property and his body all aflame with insufferable carbuncles and everything gone from his home except the chief curse of it, a pestiferous wife and four garrulous people pelting him with comfortless 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 comes."

Notwithstanding the Bible is against this evil and the aversion which it creates by the loathsome and ghastly spectacle of those who have hurled themselves out of life, and notwithstanding Christianity is against it and the arguments and the useful lives and the illustrious 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. 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 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.

You say it is a 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 has always been apologetic for self immolation. After Tom

was a page of Rousseau was pronounced and widely read there was a marked increase of self slaughter.

Evils of Unbelief.

A man in London heard Mr. Owen deliver his infidel lecture on socialism and went home, sat down and wrote these words, "Jesus Christ is one of the weakest characters in history, and the Bible is the greatest possible deception," and then shot himself. David Hume wrote these words: "It would be no crime for me to divert the Nile or the Danube from its natural bed. Where, then, can be the crime in my diverting a few drops of blood

from their ordinary channel?" And, having written the essay, he loaned it to a friend, the friend read it, wrote a letter of thanks and admiration and shot himself. Appendix to the same book.

Rousseau, Voltaire, Gibbon, Montaigne, were apologetic for self immolation. Infidelity puts up no bar to people 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 an oblivious 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 in this country that it does not make any difference how you go out of this world you will land safely, the Potomac would be so full of corpses the boats would be impeded in their progress, and the crack of the suicide's pistol would be no more alarming than the rumble of a street car.

I have sometimes heard it discussed whether the great dramatist was a Christian or not. He was a Christian. In his last will and testament he commends his soul to God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I know that he considered appreciation of a future existence the mightiest hindrance to self destruction:

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,

The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,

The insolence of office and the spurs

That patient merit of the unworthy takes

When he himself might his quietus make

With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,

To grunt and sweat under a weary life,

But that the dread of something after death—

The undiscovered country from whose bourne

No traveler returns—puzzles the will?

Would God that the coroners would be brave in rendering the right verdict, and when in a case of irresponsibility they say, "While this man was demented he took his life," in the other case say, "Having read infidel books and attended infidel lectures, which obliterated from this man's mind all appreciation of future retribution, he committed self slaughter."

Religion's Bright Light.

Have nothing to do with an infidelity so cruel, so debasing. Come out of that bad company into the company of those who believe the Bible. Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Of this Jesus of Nazareth I have to say that the system of morals he left and the religion he has given us are the best things the world has ever seen or is likely to see." Patrick Henry, the electric champion of liberty, says, "The book worth all other books put together is the Bible." Benjamin Rush, the leading physiologist and anatomist of his day, the great medical scientist—what did he say? "The only true and perfect religion is Christianity." Isaac Newton, the leading philosopher of his time—what did he say? "The sublimest philosophy on earth is the philosophy of the gospel." David Brewster, at the pronouncement of whose name every scientist the world over bows his head—David Brewster saying, "Oh, this religion has been a great light to me, a very great light all my days." President Thiers, the great French statesman, acknowledging that he prayed when he said, "I invoke the Lord God, in whom I am glad to believe." David Livingstone, able to conquer the lion, able to conquer the panther, able to conquer the savage, yet conquered by this religion, so when they find him dead they find him on his knees.

Salmon P. Chase, chief justice of the supreme court of the United States, appointed by President Lincoln, will take the witness stand. "Chief Justice Chase, please to state what you have to say about the book commonly called the Bible." The witness replies: "There came a time in my life when I doubted the divinity of the Scriptures, and I resolved as a lawyer and judge I would try the book as I would