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## THE WORKING WOMAN

Dr. Talmage Speaks Words of Encouragement to Her.

Faith and Trust in God Afford Comfort for Those Who Are Oppressed and Struggling for a Livelihood.

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This discourse of Dr. Talmage is an appeal for mercy in behalf of oppressed womanhood, and offers encouragement to those struggling for a livelihood; text, Ecclesiastes iv. 1. "Behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter."

Very long ago the needle was busy. It was considered honorable for women to toil in olden times. Alexander the Great stood in his place showing garments made by his own mother. The finest tapestries of Babylon were made by the queen of William the Conqueror. Augustus, the emperor, would not wear any garments except those that were fashioned by some member of his royal family. So let the toiler everywhere be respected!

The needle has slain more than the sword. When the sewing machine was invented, some thought that invention would alleviate woman's toil and put an end to the despotism of the needle. But no; while the sewing machine has been a great blessing to well-to-do families in many cases, it has added to the stab of this needle the crush of the wheel, and multitudes of women, notwithstanding the reinforcement of the sewing machine, can only make work hard as they will, between two and three dollars a week.

The greatest blessing that could have happened to our first parents was being turned out of Eden after they had done wrong. Adam and Eve in their perfect state might have got along without work or only such slight employment as a perfect garden with no weeds in it demanded, but as soon as they had sinned the best thing for them was to be turned out where they would have to work. We know what a withering thing it is for man to have nothing to do. Of the 1,000 prosperous and honorable men that you know you had to work vigorously at the beginning. But I am now to tell you that industry is just as important for a woman's safety and happiness. The most unhappy women in our communities today are those who have no engagements to call them up in the morning, who once having risen and breakfasted lounge through the dull forenoon in slippers down at the heel and with disheveled hair, reading the last novel, and who, having dragged through a wretched forenoon and taken their afternoon sleep and having passed an hour and a half at their toilet, pick up their embroidery and go out to make calls, or who pass their evenings waiting for somebody to come in and break up the monotony. Arabella Stuart never was imprisoned in so dark a dungeon as that.

There is no happiness in an idle woman. It may be with hand, it may be with brain, it may be with foot, but work she must or be wretched forever. The little girls of our families must be started with that idea. The curse of American society is that our young women are taught that the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh thing in their life is to get somebody to take care of them. Instead of that the first lesson should be how under God they may take care of themselves. The simple fact is that a majority of them do have to take care of themselves and that, too, after having through the false notions of their parents wasted the years in which they ought to have learned how successfully to maintain themselves. We now and here declare the inhumanity, cruelty and outrage of that father and mother who pass their daughters into womanhood having given them no facility for earning their livelihood.

Mme. de Staël said: "It is not these writings that I am proud of, but the fact that I have facility in ten occupations in any one of which I could make a livelihood." You say you have a fortune to leave them. O man and woman! Have you not learned that, like vultures, like hawks, like eagles, riches have wings and fly away? Though you should be successful in leaving a competency behind you, the trickery of executors may swamp it in a night, or some officials in our churches may get up a mining company and induce your orphans to put their money into a hole in Colorado and if by the most skillful machinery the rascal money cannot be brought up again prove to them that it was eternally decreed that that was the way they were to lose it and that it went in the most orthodox and heavenly style. Oh, the damnable schemes that professed Christians will engage in until God puts his fingers into the collar of the hypocrite's robe and strips it clear down to the bottom! You have no right because you are well off to conclude that your children are going to be well off. A man died leaving a large fortune. His son fell dead in a Philadelphia grogshop. His old comrades came in and said they bent over his corpse. "What is the matter with you, Boggsey?" The surgeon standing over him said: "Hush, ye! He is dead!" "Oh, he is dead!" they said. "Come, boys, let us go and take a drink in memory of poor Boggsey!" Have you nothing better than money to leave your children? If you have not, but send your daughters into the world with empty brains and unskilled hands, you are guilty of assassination, homicide, infanticide.

There are women toiling in our cities for two or three dollars a week who were the daughters of merchant princes. These suffering ones now

would be glad to have the crumbs that once fell from their father's table. That worn-out, broken shoe that she wears is the lineal descendant of the \$12 gaiter in which her mother walked, and that torn and faded calico had ancestry of magnificent brocade that swept Pennsylvania avenue and Broadway clean without any expense to the street commissioners.

Though you live in an elegant residence and are sumptuously every day, let your daughters feel it is a disgrace for them not to know how to work. I denounce the idea prevalent in society that, though our young women may embroider slippers and crochet and make mats for lamps to stand on without disgrace, the idea of doing anything for a livelihood is dishonorable. It is a shame for a young woman belonging to a large family to be inefficient when her father toils his life away for her support.

So far as I can understand, the line of respectability lies between that which is useful and that which is useless. If women do that which is of no value, their work is honorable. If they do practical work, it is dishonorable. That our young women may escape the censure of doing dishonorable work, I shall particularize. You may knit a tidy for the back of an armchair, but by no means make the money wherewith to buy the chair. You may with a delicate brush beautify a mantle ornament, but die rather than earn enough to buy a marble mantle. You may learn artistic music until you can squall Italian, but never sing "Ortensville" or "Old Hundredth." Do nothing practical if you would, in the eyes of refined society, preserve your respectability. I scout these finical notions. I tell you a woman, no more than a man, has a right to occupy a place in this world unless she pays a rent for it.

In the course of a lifetime you consume whole harvests and droves of cattle and every day you live and breathe 40 hogheads of good, pure air. You must by some kind of usefulness pay for all this. Our race was the last thing created—the birds and fishes on the fourth day, the cattle and lizards on the fifth day and man on the sixth day. If geologists are right, the earth was 1,000,000 of years in the possession of the insects, beasts and birds before our race came upon it. In one sense we were invaders. The cattle, the lizards and the hawks had preemption right. The question is not what we are to do with lizards and summer insects, but what the lizards and summer insects are to do with us. If we want a place in this world, we must earn it. The partridge makes its own nest before it occupies it. The lark by its morning song earns its breakfast before it eats it, and the Bible gives an intimation that the first duty of an idler is to starve when it says: "If he will not work, neither shall he eat." Idleness ruins the health, and very soon nature says: "This man has refused to pay his rent. Out with him!" Society is to be reconstructed on the subject of woman's toil. A vast majority of those who would have woman industrious shut her up to a few kinds of work. My judgment in this matter is that a woman has a right to do anything she can do well. There should be no department of merchandise, mechanism, art or science barred against her. If Miss Hosmer has genius for sculpture, give her a chisel. If Rosa Bonheur has a fondness for delineating animals, let her make "The Horse Fair." If Miss Mitchell will study astronomy, let her mount the stargazer. If Lydia will be a merchant, let her sell purple. If Lucretia Mott will preach the Gospel, let her thrill with her womanly eloquence the Quaker meeting house.

Years ago, one Sabbath night in the vestibule of our church, after service, a woman fell into convulsions. The doctor said she needed medicine not so much as something to eat. As she began to revive in her delirium she said, gaspingly: "Eight cents! Eight cents! I wish I could get it done. I am so tired. I wish I could get some sleep, but I must get it done. Eight cents! Eight cents!" We found afterward that she was making garments for eight cents apiece and that she could make but three of them in a day. Hear it! Three times eight are 24. Hear it, men and women who have comfortable homes! Some of the worst villains of our cities are the employers of these women. They beat them down to the last penny and try to cheat them out of that. The woman must deposit a dollar or two before she gets the garments to work on. When the work is done it is sharply inspected, the most insignificant flaws picked out and the wages reduced and sometimes the dollar deposited is not given back. The Women's Protective union reports a case where one of the poor souls, finding a place where she could get more wages, resolved to change employers and went to get her pay for work done. The employer said: "I hear you are going to leave me?" "Yes," she said, "and I have come to get what you owe me." He made no answer. She said: "Are you not going to pay me?" "Yes," he said, "I will pay you," and he kicked her downstairs.

Oh, that Women's Protective union! The blessings of Heaven be on it for the merciful and Divine work it is doing in the defense of toiling womanhood. What tragedies of suffering are presented to them day by day! A paragraph from their report: "Can you make Mr. Jones pay me?" "He owes me for three weeks at \$2.50 a week, and I can't get anything, and my child is very sick." The speaker, a young woman lately widowed, burst into a flood of tears as she spoke. She was hidden to come again the next afternoon and repeat her story to the attorney at his usual weekly hearing of frauds and impositions. Means were found by which Mr. Jones was induced to pay the \$7.50. Another paragraph from their re-

port: "A fortnight had passed, when she modestly hinted a desire to know how much her services were worth. 'Oh, my dear,' he replied, 'you are getting to be one of the most valuable hands in the trade. You will always get the very best price. Ten dollars a week you will be able to earn very easily.' And the girl's fingers flew on with her work at a marvelous rate. The picture of ten dollars a week had almost turned her head. A few nights later, while crossing the ferry, she overheard the name of her employer in the conversation of girls who stood near: 'What, John Snipes? Why, he don't pay! Look out for him every time. He'll keep you on trial, as he calls it, for weeks, and then he'll let you go, and get some other fool!' And thus Jane Smith gained her warning against the swindler. But the union held him in the toils of the law until he paid the worth of each of those days of 'trial.'"

Another paragraph: "Her mortification may be imagined when told that one of the two five-dollar bills which she had just received for her work was counterfeit. But her mortification was swallowed up with indignation when her employer denied having paid her the money and insultingly asked her to prove it. When the Protective union had placed this matter in the courts, the judge said: 'You will pay Eleanor the amount of her claim, \$5.50, and also the costs of the court.'"

How are these evils to be eradicated? Some say: "Give woman the ballot." What effect such ballot might have on other questions I am not here to discuss, but what would be the effect of female suffrage on women's wages? I do not believe that woman will ever get justice by woman's ballot. Indeed woman oppress women as much as men do. Do not women, as much as men, beat down to the lowest figure the woman who sears for them? Are not women as sharp as men on washerwomen, milliners and mantua makers. If a woman asks one dollar for her work, does not her female employer ask her if she will not take 90 cents? You say: "Only ten cents difference." But that is sometimes the difference between Heaven and hell. Women often have no consideration for women than men. If a woman steps aside from the path of rectitude, man may forgive; woman never. Woman will never get justice done for woman's ballot. Neither will she get it from man's ballot. How then? God will rise up for her. God has more resources than we can comprehend.

But there is something for women to do. Let young people prepare to excel in spheres of work, and they will be able after awhile to get larger wages. Unskilled and incompetent labor must take what is given; skilled and competent labor will eventually get its own standing. Admitting that the law of supply and demand regulates these things, I contend that the demand for skilled labor is very great and the supply very small. Start with the idea that work is honorable and that you can do some one thing better than anybody else. Resolve that, God helping, you will take care of yourself. If you are after awhile called into another relation, you will be all the better qualified for it by your spirit of self-reliance, or if you are called to stay as you are you can be happy and self-supporting.

Poets are fond of talking about man as an oak and woman the vine that climbs it, but I have seen many a tree fall that not only went down itself, but took all the vines with it. I can tell you of something stronger than an oak for an ivy to climb on, and that is the throne of the great Jehovah. Single or affianced, that woman is strong who leans on God and does her best. Many of you will go single-handed through life, and you will have to choose between two characters. Young woman, I am sure you will turn your back upon the useless, giggling, irresponsible nonentity which society ignominiously acknowledges in her person and ask God to make you a humble, active, earnest Christian. What will become of that womanly disciple of the world? She is more thoughtful of the attitude she strikes upon the carpet than how she will look in the judgment; more worried about her frockies than her best; more interested in the aping than in her redemption. The dying actress whose life had been vicious said: "The scene closes. Draw the curtain." Generally the tragedy comes first and the farce afterward, but in her life it was first the farce of a useless life and then the tragedy of a wretched eternity.

Compare the life and death of such a one with that of some Christian aunt that was once a blessing to your household. I do not know that she was ever asked to give her hand in marriage. She lived single, that, untrammelled, she might be everybody's blessing. Whenever the sick were to be visited or the poor to be provided with bread she went with a blessing. She could pray or sing: "Rock of Ages" for any sick pauper who asked her. As she got older there were days when she was a little sharp, but for the most part she was a sunbeam, just the one for Christmas eve. She knew better than anyone else how to fix things. Her every prayer, as God heard it, was full of everybody who had trouble. The brightest things in all the house dropped from her fingers. She had peculiar notions, but the grandest notion she ever had was to make you happy. She dressed well, but her highest adornment was that of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price. When she died, you all gathered lovingly about her, and as you carried her out to rest the Sunday School class almost covered her coffin with japonicas, and the poor people stood at the end of the alley, with their eyes to their eyes, sobbing bitterly, and the man of the world said, with Solomon: "Her price was above rubies," and Jesus, as unto the maiden in Juden, commanded: "I say unto thee, arise!"

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