"LOSS AND GAIN."

Talmage's Last Sunday Morning Discourse.

The Great Divine Preacher from the Text "What Shall it Profit a Man, if He Shall Gain the Whole World, and Lose His Own Soul."

Man's Folly in Jeopardizing His Soul for Vast Earthly Possessions—About the Time He Feels Secure in His Title Death Steps in and Serves a Writ of Ejectment and Preemptorily Orders Him Hence.

BROOKLYN, May 6.—The Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D. D., told the congregation at the Tabernacle this morning that a great blessing has gone through the country, saying that at a recent meeting of the officers of the Thirteenth Regiment at his house, he had set before them four kinds of wine. He said: "I will pay a thousand dollars to any charitable institution if it can be proved that one drop of wine or any other intoxicating liquor was offered in my house that evening. The twenty-five gentlemen present may be called upon for testimony. Are there no respectable clergymen or lawyers or detectives may be selected; they also to decide what charity shall have the money. I ask the newspapers all over the land, which have been misled by the falsehood, to correct it."

The opening hymn of the service begins:

"Salvation to the perishing souls!
"Tis pleasure to our ears."

Dr. Talmage announced as the subject of the sermon "Loss and Gain," and his text was: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?—Mark viii, 36.

I am accustomed, Sabbath by Sabbath to stand before an audience of bargain-makers. There are in this place in all conditions and life before me, yet the vast majority of them, I am very well aware, are engaged from Monday morning to Saturday night in the store. In many of the families of my congregation, across the breakfast table and the tea-table are discussed questions of loss and gain. You are every day asking yourself: "What is the value of this? What is the value of that?" You would not think of giving something of greater value for that which is of lesser value. You would not think of selling that which cost ten dollars for five dollars. If you had a property that was worth fifteen thousand dollars, you would not sell it for four thousand dollars. You are intelligent in all matters of bargain-making. Are you as wise in the things that pertain to the matters of the soul? Christ adapted his instructions to the circumstances of those to whom He spoke. When He talked to the fishermen, He spoke of the fishery. When He talked to the farmers, He said: "A sower went forth to sow." When He talked to the shepherds, He said the parable of the lost sheep. And am I not right when speaking this morning to an audience made up of bargain-makers, that I address them in the words of my text, saying: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul.

I propose, as far as possible, to estimate and compare the value of two properties.

First, I have to say that the soul is a very grand property. Its flowers are God's thoughts in bloom. Its rocks are God's thoughts in stone. Its dew-drops are God's thoughts in pearl. This world is God's child—was a child indeed, and it was dandled off through the heavens. But about eighteen years and eighty-six years ago, one Christmas night, God sent out a sister world to call that wanderer back, and it hung over Bethlehem only long enough to get the promise of the wanderer's return, and now that lost world, with soft feet of light, comes treading back through the heavens. The bills, which we see twenty miles off up the edge of the wave white with the foam of crescent! How beautiful the rainbow, the arched bridge on which heaven and earth come and talk to each other in tears, after the storm is over! How sublime the feet of the lamplighters that in a few minutes set all the dome of the night ablaze with brackets of fire! How bright the star of the saffron cloud that rows across the deep sea of heaven! How beautiful the Sabbath with bridal blossoms in her hair! I wonder when it is that best comes in a future morning for the bird orchestra. How gently the harsh drum of the tempest on the roof, may be grander world, which, when it wakes, then that but I think that this is a most exquisite world, and sufficiently for us to dream of immensity! "Oh," you say, "take my soul! give me that world!" I am willing to make the exchange. I am ready now for the bargain. It is so beautiful a world, so sweet a world, so grand a world?"

But let us look more minutely into the value of this world. That you will not be properly unless you can get a good title to it. After you have looked at the property and found out that it suits you, you send an attorney to the public office, and he examines the books of deeds, and the book of mortgages, and the book of judgments, and the book of liens, and he decides whether the title is good before you will have anything to do with it. There is a bargain with a worldly property, and in every way exactly suited to your want; but if you can not get a good title, you will take it. Now, I say, that it is impossible to get a good title to this world. If I settle down upon it I am a permanent possessor. I may be driven away from it. Ay, in five minutes after I give up my soul for the world I may have to part with the world; and what kind of a title do you call that? There is only one way in which I can hold an earthly possession, and that is through the senses. All beautiful sights through the eyes; all sweet sounds through the ear; all captivating sounds through the ear, and our ear may be deafened; all luxuriance of fruits and viands through our taste, but our taste may be destroyed; all appreciation of culture and of art through my mind, but I may lose my mind. What's frail hold, then, I have upon an earthly possession!

In course of law, if you want to get a man off a property you must serve upon him a writ of ejectment, giving him a certain time to vacate the premises; but when Death comes in and serves a writ of ejectment, he does not give us one second of forewarning. He says: "Of all this place you have been right any longer in the possession." We might cry out: "Have you a hundred thousand dollars for that property?" We might say: "We have a warranted deed for that property? Is there no way we could be on avail. We might say: "We have a warranted deed for that property? Is there no way we could be on avail. We might say: "We have a warranted deed for that property? Is there no way we could be on avail. We might say: "We have a warranted deed for that property? Is there no way we could do us good. Death is blind, and he does not see a soul, and can not read an indenture. So that, first and last, I want to tell you that when you procure that I give up my soul for the world, you can not give me the first item of title.

Having examined the title of a property, you would not be silly enough to buy a large warehouse that could not possibly be leased. You would not have any building to do with such a property. Now, I ask you what assurance can you give me that this world is not going to be burned up? Absolutely none. Geologists tell us that it will certainly be burned. That the heart of the world is one great living coal of fire. It is just like the ship on fire at sea, the flame not burning out, because the hatches are kept down. And yet you propose to give me off on me, in return for my soul, a world for which, in the second place, there is no title, and in the second place, for which you can give me no assurance. Oh, I'm not an "the water of the oceans will wash over all the land, and put out the fire." Oh no. There are infinitable elements in the world, water, hydrogen and oxygen. Call off the hydrogen, and then the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans will leap into the heaps of sharings. You want me to take this world, for which you can give no possible insurance.

Astronomers have swept their telescopes through the sky, and have found out that there have been thirteen worlds in the last two centuries, and they have disappeared. The first they looked just like other worlds. Then they got sober, and then they got sober, and then they disappeared, showing that even the stars are liable to fire. Yet the geologist be right in his prophecy, then our world is to be burned up, and yet you want me to exchange my soul for it. Ah, no; I want a world that will last forever. Suppose you brought an insurance agent to look at your property for the purpose of giving you a policy upon it, and he said to you, "Is that the house he should say: "That house is on fire now in the adjoining tenement, and we can not say insurance upon it. Yet you talk about this world as though it were a safe investment, as though you could get some insurance upon it, when down in the basement it is on fire.

I remark, also, that this world is a property, with which everybody who has taken it as a possession has had trouble. Now, I know I have a right to say that this is not built on. I ask what is the matter, and I reply that everybody who has had anything to do with this property has had trouble about it. It is just so with this world; everybody that has had anything to do with it, as a possession, has been in perplexity. How was it with Lord Bryon? Did he not sell his immortal soul for the purpose of getting world? Was he satisfied with the possession? Alas! alas! the poem graphically describes his case when it says:

"Dark every day of life passed on,
Heard every bump of fame;
Dark early, dowdy drank,
Dreamed with common millions might have
To deal.
Then died of thirst because there was no more
To deal."

Oh, yes, he had trouble with it; and so did Napoleon. After conquering nations by the force of the sword, he died a prisoner. Ay, he

native possession the military boots that he wore on having worn out the soles of them. So it has been with men who had better advantages. Chatterton, one of the most gifted and lovable souls, after he had won the applause of all intelligent minds through the wonderful genius, she down in a restaurant in Paris, looks to the other end of the room, and wonders whose that forlorn and wretched face is; rising up after a while, he finds that it is Chatterton! Ah, the value of this world is a cheat. Talk about a man gaining the world! Why, where is he to be found there? Who ever gained a continent? Who ever owned Asia? Who ever gained a city? Who ever gained Europe? Who ever gaining the world? No man ever gained it, for the hundred-thousandth part of it. Men are demanding that I sell my soul, not for this world, but for a fraction of it. Why, is a man who has had a large estate for forty or fifty years. He lies down to die. You say: "That man is worth millions of dollars." Is he? You call up a surveyor, with his compass and chain, and say to him: "There is a property extending three miles in another direction." Is that the way to measure that man's property? No! You do not want any surveyor, with his compass and chains. That is not the way to measure that man's property now. It is an undertaker that you want, with his tape-line and put his finger in his mouth, and bite off a tape-line, and he will measure five feet nine inches one way, and two feet and a half the other way. That is the man's property, sir, no, I forgot; not so much as that for he does not own even the place in which he lies, but only a portion of it, and that belongs to the executors and the heirs. Oh, what a property you propose to give me for my soul! If you sell a bill of goods, you go into the counting room, and say to your partner:

Do you think that man is good for this bill? Shall I give the goods to him? Will he meet this payment?" Now, when you are offered this world as a possession, I want you to test the matter. I do not want you to go into this bargain blindly. I want you to ask about the title, about the assurance, about whether men have ever had any trouble with it, whether it will last, and I want you to see whether you can get all, or the ten thousandth, or one-hundred-thousandth part of it.

There is the world now. I shall say no more about it. Take it and look at it for yourself, as I shall, before God, have to make up my mind for myself, and for the rest of this world. I can not afford to make a mistake for your soul.

Now, let us look at the other property — the soul. We can not make a bargain without ascertaining comparative value. The soul! How shall I estimate the value of the soul? It is a quisite organization. It is the most wonderful piece of mechanism ever put together. Machinery is of value in proportion as it is mighty and silent at the same time. You look at a locomotive and the machinery in the Philadelphia Mint, and, as you see it performing its wonderful work, you will be surprised to find how silently it goes. Machinery four years and tears soon destroys itself; but silent machinery is often most of value. Now, so it is with the soul of man with all its tremendous faculties—reasoning the soul, Judgment, without any racket, lifting its scales; memory, without any noise, bringing down all its treasures; conscience, taking its judgment-seat without any excitement; the understanding, and the will doing their work. Velocity, majesty, might; but silence —silence. Hear it listen at the door of your heart. You can hear no sound. The soul is all right. It is a delicate as instrument that no human hand can touch it. You break a bone, and with splinters and bandages the surgeon sets it, the bone becomes lifted, the apothecary's wash cools it; but a soul off the track, unbalanced, no human power can readjust it. With one sweep of its wing it circles the universe, and overvaults the throne of God. Why, in the hour of death the soul is so mighty, it throws aside the bole as though it were a straw. It drives death before it impotent. It breaks through the circle of loved ones and amazed spectators of dying couch. With one leap it springs beyond the sepulchral sun, and chasms of immensity. Oh, it is a soul worth saving! Shall I give it for this? No fire can consume it; no floods can drown it; no time can wear it out. No, it only impede it; no time can exhaust it. It wants no bridge to bridge the cross a chasm. It wants no plummet with which to sound a depth. A soul so mighty, so swift, so silent, so enduring!

I calculate the value of the soul, also, by its capacity for happiness. How much joy it can get in this world out of friendships, out of the sea, out of flowers, out of ten thousand things; and yet all the joy it can get in this does not test its capacity. You are in a concert room, and you hear the sweep of the instruments preparing—the sharp snap of the violins and the scraping of the bow across the viol. "There is no music in that," you say. It is only getting ready for the music. And all the enjoyment of the sense in this world, the enjoyment we think is real enjoyment, is only preparative for the real rapture; it is only the first stages of the tuning of the instruments, the beginning of that which shall be the orchestral harmonies and adjustments of the redeemed.

You can not test the full power of the soul for happiness in this world. How much power he will have to find out friendships in friendships! but oh, the grander friendships for the soul in the skies! How will not be there here! but how much sweeter they will be there! I do not think that when flowers die on earth, they will die forever. I think that the fragrance of the flowers is the spirit because it was made to live forever. I think that are palm trees in heaven and fruits in heaven. I do not know what the fruits are, but I know in the sunny valleys of heaven, shall not the marigold grow? Shall not the lily of heaven, will not the amaranth bloom? On the crystal walls of heaven, will not the jasmine climb? "My soul is as a watered garden to gather lilies." No flowers in heaven! Where, then, do they get their garlands for the brows of the righteous!

Christ is glorious to our souls now, but how much grander our appreciation after a while! A conqueror comes back after the battle. He has been fighting for us. He comes upon the platform. He has one arm in a sling, and perhaps one leg is crutch. As he mounts the platform, oh, the enthusiasm of the audience! They say: "That man fought for us, and imperilled his life for us!" and how wild the hurza that followed hurza! When the Lord Jesus first shall at last stand out before the multitudes of the redeemed of earth, and we meet him face to face, and feel that he was wounded in the side, and wounded in the hands, and wounded in the feet, and wounded in the side for us, methinks we will be overwhelmed. We will sit some gazing in silence, until some leader amidst the white-robed choir cut upon one of the harps, and give the song, and that it is time to wake the song of jubilee, and all heaven will then break forth into: "Hosanna! hosanna! hosanna! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

I calculate the value of the soul by the price that has been paid for it. In St. Petersburg there is a museum. The government said two hundred thousand dollars for it. "No," you say, "it must have been very valuable, if the government said that they have paid two hundred thousand dollars for it." Well, I see what you are driving at. You and what your soul is worth, by seeing what has been paid for it. The most imperial soul, the richest blood that was ever shed. Perhaps you say that was ever uttered, all the griefs of earth compressed into one cry, the sufferings of earth gathered into one paroxysm of pain, and strangled in this heart. Does it not imply tremendous value?

I argue, also, the value of the soul from the house that has been fitted up for it in the skies. Some people have thought a street of adamant would have done. No, it is made of gold. One would have thought a wall of granite would have done. No, it is made of sardonyx mingling with the green of emerald. One would have thought that an ordinary doxology would have done. No! It is a repeated song. If the apes of heaven marched in a straight line, some day, in the distant future, perhaps, might pass out of sight; but the apes of heaven do not march in a straight line, but in a circle around about the throne of God; forever, forever, tramp, tramp! A soul so bought, so equipped, so adorned, so fitted up for glorious soul, a majestic soul, a tremendous soul.

Now, you have seen the two properties—the world, the soul. One perishing, the other immortal. One unsatisfying, the other capacity of the greatest satisfaction. Which will you trade? Will you trade even? Remember I am at it in business, and you can make. If a man sell a bill of goods worth five thousand dollars, and he is cheated out of it, he may get five thousand dollars somewhere else. But the man who invests his soul, invests all. Losing that, he can not get it back again. Ah, no! In the light of my text, it seems to me as if you were this morning offering your soul to the highest bidder; and I say to you, if the world is bid for it, my deathless spirit! What is it worth? Will you take for it the world? Will You say: "Begone! that is no equivalent. Take your world back! Take it back! Begone!" But there is some one else in the audience who is not at that. He says: "What is bid for my immortal soul? What is bid for it? Bid the world. "The world! Going at the world at three, going at the world! Done forever!

"What is the thing of greatest price,
The whole creation round?
"Tis Christ who lived in Bethlehem
That which to Christ is found.
"Tis Christ who died on Calvary
The knowledge to obtain:
"Tis Christ who rose on Easter day
Six evenings gone."

Well, there are a great many people in the house who say: "I will not sell my soul for the world, but I will take the world in addition to my portion." What, then, will you do with your soul? Will you put it into your safe? Will you give my soul to Christ?" Will you? That is a good resolution for ever made. Will you give it to Christ? Will you? Will you? No; now, I congratulate you if you have the nerve to make such a decision. Ah, when, in the eternal Spirit of God would come down upon this audience, and above the temples of this world, and the immense importance of Christ's religion, and the infinite value of your own immortal souls, that a man would say: "I will give my soul to Christ."