

ANGELIC INCOMPETENCY.

SERMON BY T. DE WITT TALMAGE, DELIVERED IN THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

Phonographically Reported for the St. John Telegraph by William Walton.

"And no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth."—REVELATIONS 14:3.

We are apt to think of the songs of Heaven as unanimous. We are accustomed to think when one palm is lifted, they are all lifted; when one harp is struck, they are all struck; when the great song of redemption rises before the throne, all the voices of eternity are heard in it. My text forbids that idea. It seems that when the song of grace rises in Heaven, there is a great multitude who are incompetent, in that land, to take part in it. Though they may be mighty in intelligence, and mighty in power, and mighty in power, when that particular song is lifted, they put down their harps, they fold their hands, and they do not join the minstrelsy. You and I, and our friends, redeemed by the grace of God, will easily take part; but the seraphim and cherubim and archangels will not be able to catch the strain. If for ten thousand years they should make rehearsal they would never reach the refrain. If some skilled spirit in heaven should bring them under tuition for a million ages, and they should attempt to sing this song, they would break down in the utterance. It is an infinite, an everlasting impossibility that they sing it. "No man can learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand which have been redeemed from the earth." What is the song that utterly defies and overmasters the unfallen spirits of heaven? It is the song of redemption, and I shall give you two or three reasons why these unfallen spirits find it an impossibility to sing it. First—they never were redeemed from sin. The great burden of that redemption song in heaven will be deliverance from bondage. We shall stand in that high place and look down upon the chasms where sin plunged us, and from which grace raised us. We shall think of how we wandered away from home, and of how Jesus called us back. We shall think of how we were unfit to come, and of how Jesus pitied us. We shall think of how we deserved to die, and of how Jesus urged upon us a ransom. Song of sins forgiven, of infirmities compassionated, of ingratitude overlooked. When that chorus of "Worthy is the Lamb" rises before the throne, we shall co-mingle in the anthem and be able to touch all the heights and depths of it. But how could the unfallen spirits of heaven join in that chorus? They know nothing about beating against the bars of spiritual imprisonment. Standing in the light of heaven, they know nothing about the joy of rescue. Having sailed for ages on the smooth seas of heaven, they know nothing about the joy of clambering out from the eternal shipwreck. Beautiful and triumphant song, but they cannot sing it. It is to them an eternal impossibility. "No man can learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand that have been redeemed from the earth." Again, these unfallen spirits of heaven cannot mingle in that anthem because they do not know what it is to be comforted in suffering. You sometimes find a pianist or organist who has been through all the schools, and has his diploma; but there seems to be no feeling in his playing. You say, "What's the matter with that musician?" Why, I will tell you; he has never had any trouble. But after he has lost children, or been thrust into sickness, or passed through any kind of trial, then he begins to pour out the deep emotion of his own soul into the very heart of the instrument and all hearts respond to it. So I suppose that our sorrows and sufferings here will be somewhat preparative for the heavenly accord. It will not be a cold artistic trill, but a chant struck through with all the tenderness of this world's sorrows and sufferings. In some of the churches, on Saturday night they have a rehearsal and they sing over all the hymns for the Sabbath morning, and I suppose that our trials on earth are only the Saturday night rehearsal for the Sabbath morning services of Heaven. All those times when you put the dead out of your sight; all those times when you lie upon beds of sickness; all those times when you went through trial and persecution—I suppose they are only preparations for the new song of Heaven. There, you will think of how Jesus walked beside you in that pilgrimage, of how Jesus put his arm about you when you felt faint and worn out with the troubles of life. The darkness all gone, you can look up in the face of him who never betrayed you. All your tears gone you will bless the hand that wiped them away. You will think then, of Jesus, who never forsook you when all else failed. Song of burdens lifted, of night illuminated, of seas parted, of victories won. Now,

what will seraph and cherub and archangel do with a song like that? Why, they never wept over a grave. What do they know about languishing on a bed of sickness. Other songs they have, but not this. This is a fire song, and only those who have gone through the flame can grasp it. See those sons and daughters of trial coming up, through the grace of God, into heaven. They are rising up before the throne. They come up out of nights of woe, out of inquisitions of torture, out of hovels of poverty. They are before the throne; they are getting ready for the music of heaven. The hundred and forty and four thousand redeemed from the earth rise for the music. Are they all ready? Sing! let them all sing! For no man but the hundred and forty and four thousand who have been redeemed out of the earth can sing that song.

Again I remark that the unfallen spirits of heaven cannot join in this anthem of grace, in Heaven, because they were never helped to die. Death is a tremendous pass. He who goes through it alone is sure to be discomfited. But when we have to go, when, with the shutter open at noon-day, it is, nevertheless, dark in the room; we want a divine Christ to stand by us, and say: "Fear not; when thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." Do you not suppose when we get through that dark pass of death we are going to feel gratitude to Christ, and that we will have a glorious anthem of praise to sing to Him? But what will those unfallen spirits of Heaven do with such a song as that? They never felt the death shudder. They never heard the moan of the dismal sea. They know nothing by experience of what is the last word, the last look, the last kiss. They know nothing about the pain, the bliss of dying. When we stand in heaven and in our song celebrate the grace that pardoned us, and the grace that comforted us, and the grace that gave us victory over our last enemy—the unfallen spirits of Heaven will have no capacity to join in the anthem. "No man can learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which have been redeemed from the earth." But you say, "That makes only a half-and-half Heaven, so many of these spirits will be silent." O! there will be anthems in which all the hosts of Heaven can join. The fact that there will be a hundred and forty and four thousand, as stated in the text, intimates that there will be a vast congregation participating.

That song is, getting sweeter and louder all the time. Some of our dear friends have gone up and joined in it. If our hearing were only good enough, we would hear their sweet voices rippling on the night air.

My friends the past few days have been thick with graves. Some eight or nine of our congregation have gone into the eternal world. I call the roll of the dead. Do they make no answer? These dirges are for all of them. These words of comfort are for the fathers, the mothers, the brothers, the sisters, the companions, the sons and daughters who are left to mourn. "Weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning." The day of reunion approaches. There shall be no more pain. But it would naturally be expected that I should speak at greater length of two of these brethren with whom I was more intimately acquainted. Peter Wendover, somewhat disgusted with churches because they have been accustomed to quarrel so much, had not attended upon religious services for some time, said if I were called to this church he would come. We always liked each other, and when I like a man, I like him very much." He was an unpretentious man, but he was a great help to me when I preached. Upon the faces of some of my best friends I never look when I am preaching, because they either look down, or their faces are unresponsive, although their hearts may be all right; but under the sound of the gospel that man's face shone like the sun.

When I got tired in a sermon, or the subject did not unfold as I would like to have it, I looked yonder, and his cheerful face was an inspiration. A few days ago, no one in his house, sitting in a chair in his back parlor, he arose to pass out of the room, and sank down gently on the floor, and his physicians say that without a pang he must have departed. The wife coming in with some friends, in the dusk of the evening, sat in the front parlor, not knowing anything had happened, and on the departure of the friends walked through the back parlor, saw her husband lying there supposed he was only pretending to be asleep—for he was sometimes very playful and jovial—and she besought him that he would not tease her by lying there any longer, and she tried to induce him to get up. Nothing could induce him to get up, or ever will until the trumpet that wakes the dead. O! you afflicted household—you tell me if you could have had some last words, you would have been more submissive; but against that lack, I make this offset: that he had no physi-

cal anguish. You may think of him now not as one wasted and groaning and dying, but you may think of him as cheery, as bringing home something every night to the children, as robust, going out to meet that God with whom he had made his peace eight years ago, at the time we received him publicly into this discipleship. Good, honest, kind-hearted christian Peter Wendover—let his name be held in everlasting remembrance. It needs no Champollion capable of deciphering hieroglyphics to learn the lesson of that death. It is written in capitals that may be read all across this church and across this city: "Be ye also ready!" Where would he have been now, if he had waited for a death-bed repentance? He never had any death-bed. Between the moment when he arose from his chair in the back parlor, to the moment when he sank down lifeless, how short a time he would have had to prepare for a great eternity! Yet there are some of my hearers who, because the life insurance company's physician has told them they are well and strong, and there are no signs of physical weakening, therefore they are proposing to meet God at the bedside of their last sickness. If you should go home to-night, and take all your insurance policies, and all your bonds and mortgages and government securities and receipts and financial documents, and throw them into the fire, you would be doing a wiser thing than the way you are acting in regard to the things of eternity, in regard to the securities for the great day of judgment and the years that are to come, the endless ages. Peter Wendover! what is the best time for this people to prepare for eternity? "Now!" is the voice that cries from the tomb. "Now!" is the voice that drops from the heavens.

Philip Rollans, our lamented trustee, became a Christian at fifteen years of age. Nature had cut him out for great successes. There was not a man in all these cities, who had more brilliant business prospects. He was one of those men who make money easy, and who know how to use it in a proper manner when they get it. He had business enthusiasm, and at the same time, he was celebrated for Christian integrity. I received a letter from one of the best business houses in this city—a letter unsolicited by myself—in which they say in regard to this man: "Having had business with him for nearly a score of years, and coming in contact with him almost daily, we have pleasure in saying that a more upright, honest, straight-forward man we never found. His word was as good as his bond."

What a testimonial to a dead merchant. Generosity is a tame word to describe his openhandedness. When he gave, what he gave was not drawn from him as by a forty horse power; he gave with a perfect glee. Only three of four years in our midst here, and yet identified with all the great projects of the Church. O! how we will miss him. But let us not begrudge him his rest. He worked fast and he got through soon. As a husbandman appoints one man to do this kind of work, and another man to do that kind of work, and while one man works so slowly that he does not get through until six o'clock in the evening, the other man works so rapidly that he gets through at noon—so some of us are working so slowly for God I suppose we will not get through until six o'clock. Philip Rollans got through at eleven o'clock in the morning! His work all done, he had a right to go home. He wanted to get well as every man ought to want to get well who has a wife and child and mother to care for. But when he was told he could not get well, he said: "Is that so? why then it is time I were down on my knees." But he was too weak to kneel, and so from his pillow he uttered his dying prayer. To all who came in he said: "It is all right." His worldly business all right. His Christian foundation all right. The opening Heaven all right. Everybody who knew him knew it could not be otherwise than all right. God will take care of the wife, and the child and the mother. Looking over the bereft family, God will remember how kind Philip Rollans was to all the troubled, and he will pay it all back to that shadowed household. But there is no lonelier home to-night than that. Some men are not much missed when they are gone. They occupy only so much room in the world, as the number of inches of air they displace by their body when they stand up; but there was in this man such a magnetism when he stepped over the threshold that he filled the whole house with his personality. Pray for that widowed soul. I understand she is not here to-night. Let her be honored in the Church of God not only for her own sake, but for his sake. And if his only child be in the room now while I speak, let me say, Philip you have your father's name—copy your father's example. You remember how he put his hands on you in his dying prayer. If in growing up you sometimes feel the need of a father's counsel, go to the Lord and remind Him of a Christian ancestry, and say: "O! Lord God of my father, show

me what to do." To the mother of that departed one, has come a great disappointment. She had a right to expect that he would follow her out to the grave instead of her following him out to the grave. You remember how he appealed to you in his last moment and asked if he had been a good son. He had. He is your son yet. By the throne of God he will yet call you "mother." But what is the lesson for us all? I think of fifty lessons, but there is one lesson that overtops all the others. Philip Rollans! what is the lesson? A voice breaks from the gate of Greenwood and breaks from the gates of Heaven saying: "Be quick! I had only a short time for earthly service; I died at thirty-five years of age; what thy hand findeth to do, do with all thy might, for there is no wisdom, or device or knowledge in the grave where I have come." O! my friends, we want rapid strokes—the push of an intense devotion—the realization of the fact that our life is the flight of a shuttle or the flap of an eagle's wing. If ever there was a church membership that God intended to rouse up, then this church membership ought to be roused up, by the quick rap of the undertaker's hammer and the click of the grave digger's spade, and the tolling of the cemetery tower? It tolled six times for that child gone out of the infant class. It tolled thirty-five times for Philip Rollans. It tolled fifty-seven times for Peter Wendover. How often will it beat for us? O, if our title to Heaven is fading out, if our prayer flies with broken wing, if the altar of our devotion has on it more ashes than fire, let us wake up lest our life be pronounced a failure and our death be a harrowing record and our great future be an appalling catastrophe. But I cannot leave this audience in the darkness. I want to invite them all up into the illuminations of the gospel. It will makethem happy while they live, happy when they die, happy forever. A few days ago, with lanterns and torches and a guide, we went down in the mammoth cave of Kentucky. You may walk fourteen miles and see no sunlight. It is a stupendous place. Some places the roof of the cave is a hundred feet high. The grottoes filled with weird echoes, cascades falling from invisible height to invisible depth. Stalagmites rising up from the floor of the cave—stalactites descending from the roof of the cave joining each other and making pillars of the Almighty's sculpturing. There are rosettes of amethyst in halls of gypsum. As the guide carries his lantern ahead of you, the shadows have an appearance supernatural and spectral. The darkness is fearful. Two people getting lost from the guide years ago, were demented, and for years sat in their insanity. You feel like holding your breath as you walk across the bridges that seem to span the bottomless abyss. The guide throws his calcium light down into the caverns and the light rolls and tosses from rock to rock and from depth to depth, making at every plunge a new revelation of the awful power that could have made such a place as that. A sense of suffocation comes upon you as you think that you are two hundred and fifty feet in a straight line from the sunlit surface of the earth. The guide takes you into what is called the "star chamber," and then he says to you: "sit here, and then he takes the lantern and goes down under the rocks, and it gets darker and darker until the night is so thick that the hand an inch from the eye is unobservable. And then, by kindling one of the lanterns and placing it in a cleft of the rock, there is a reflection cast on the dome of the cave, and there are stars coming out in constellations—a brilliant night Heavens—and you involuntary exclaim, "Beautiful! beautiful!" Then he takes the lantern down in other depths of the cavern, and wanders on and wanders off until he comes up from behind the rocks gradually, and it seems like the dawn of the morning, and it gets brighter and brighter. The guide is a skilled ventriloquist, and he imitates the voices of the morning, and soon the gloom is all gone, and you stand congratulating yourself over the wonderful spectacle.

les of heaven seem to be descending in stalactite, making a pillar on the other side, and you push against the gate which swings between these two pillars, and that gate flashes open, you find it is one of the twelve gates which are twelve pearls. Blessed be God that through this gospel the mammoth cave of the sepulchre has become the illumined star chamber of the King.

ATHEISM AT YALE AND HARVARD COLLEGES.

BY JOSEPH COOK.

You remember that when Timothy Dwight began his career at Yale College in 1795, only one student out of the whole undergraduate studentship of that university remained at the Lord's Supper. Young men there were accustomed to name themselves after French infidels. The college was full of unrepentant vice. Those were the days, says Lyman Beecher, who was then in college, when boys, as they dressed flax in the barn, read Tom Paine and believed him. For a long period our land had been full of enthusiasm for France. Jefferson had just come to the presidential chair. There was hardly a leading individual in public life in his administration, who held what are now called evangelical opinions. President Dwight met the senior class at New Haven, and they presented to him the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures. He discussed it; he heard them oppose what he regarded as Christian established truth; he urged them to be thorough; he listened to their best attacks patiently, and answered them fully and fairly. For six months he delivered massive courses of thought against socialism in religious science; and from that time infidelity ran into hiding-places in Yale College.

Harvard University, over yonder,—dear to me as my Alma Mater, as are the ruddy drops that visit this sad heart,—was as full as Yale with the unrest of this French skepticism at the end of the Revolution. Lafayette turned the whole heart of our people toward France. Young men over yonder used to name themselves after the French infidels. The atrociously shallow and unclean, but brilliant and audacious, Parisian infidelity of the period, a scheme of thought which we now regard with pity, and which no scholar cares to hear named, was then attractive even to scholarly undergraduates. Harvard never had a President Dwight to take the poison of our French period out of her veins. In that fact begins the history of Boston skepticism. That is frank speech; it is not bitter. It is the sad truth; but it will do to tell this now and here, for we have slowly outgrown the poison.

RICHES AND REASON.—The experience of the late Mr. John Daly, of this city, who got rich but lost of his reason and committed suicide, points a moral for our time. The case of Dr. Ayer, the well known millionaire, who is in an Asylum for the insane, furnishes a commentary on the failure which some men are making by their appetite for money. There are scores of similar cases of insanity caused by a too intense application to business. Brains are of more account than bank notes, even in this world, truthfully says the "Christian at Work," and it is never wise to risk one's head to accumulate a property for other people to quarrel over.

OBITUARY.

MRS. HANNAH HUNTER.

Hannah the beloved wife of James Hunter exchanged mortality for life, on the 3rd of April, 1877, being then in the 83rd year of her age. Hannah Lunn, was born at Maquapit Lake, on the Sheffield Circuit in the year 1794, and in the year 1811 was married to Mr. James Hunter, who still survives her, though bowed down with the weight of more than 90 years. The writer has no means of ascertaining the exact time when our departed sister was converted to God; but Society tickets were in her possession bearing date 1837. So that for forty years, if not more she has been a member of our church. Forty years of service for God. Many of them years of toil doubtless, for the care of a large family devolved upon her. But by grace she was enabled to "Walk with God." When the last sickness came, it found her trusting in Jesus, yet craving for brighter manifestations of his love and favor. The desire of her heart was granted. "The Sun of Righteousness" arose "with healing in his wings." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," shone in her heart, "to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Her end was peaceful and happy. "She sleeps in Jesus." "And them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." E. S.

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