"THE DUMB DEVIL."

DR. TALMAGE'S ABLE SERMON AT THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

The Eloquent Divine Preached from the Text, Mark ix, 25, "Thou Dumb and Deaf Spirit, I Charge Thee, Come Out of Him."—The Spirit Still Abroad.

BROOKLYN, May 15.—In his sermon today Rev. Dr. Talmage illustrated, in potent and convincing language, the duty incumbent upon Christians of embracing every opportunity that offers in this life to do good and to advance the cause of the kingdom of Christ by a bold acknowledgment of their principles before men. The text selected was Mark ix, 25, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him."

Here was a case of great domestic anguish. The son of the household was possessed of an evil spirit which, among other things, paralyzed his tongue and made him speechless. When the influence was on the patient, he could not say a word—articulation was impossible. The spirit that captured this member of the household was a dumb spirit—so called by Christ—a spirit abroad today and as lively and potent as in New Testament times. Yet in all the realms of sermonology, I cannot find a discourse concerning this dumb devil which Christ charged upon my text, saying, "Come out of him."

There has been much destructive superstition abroad in the world concerning possession by evil spirits. Under the form of belief in witchcraft this delusion swept the continents. Persons were supposed to be possessed with some evil spirit which made them able to destroy others. In the Sixteenth century, in Geneva, 1,500 persons were burned to death as witches. Under one judge in Lorraine 900 persons were burned to death as witches. In one neighborhood of France 1,000 persons were burned. In two centuries 200,000 persons were slain as witches.

So mighty was the delusion that it included among its victims some of the greatest intellects of all time, such as Chief Justice Matthew Hale and Sir Edward Coke, and such renowned ministers of religion as Cotton Mather, one of whose books Benjamin Franklin said shaped his life, and Richard Baxter and Archbishop Cranmer and Martin Luther, and among writers and philosophers, Lord Bacon. That belief, which has become the laughing stock of all sensible people, counted its disciples among the wisest and best people of Sweden, Germany, England, France, Spain and New England. But while we reject witchcraft, any man who believes the Bible must believe that there are diabolical agencies abroad in the world. While there are ministering spirits to bless, there are infernal spirits to hinder, to poison and to destroy. Christ was speaking to a spiritual existence, when standing before the afflicted one of the text, he said, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, come out of him."

A TIMELY WARNING.

Against this dumb devil of the text I put you on your guard. Do not think that this agent of evil has put his blight on those who by omission of the vocal organs have had the golden gates of speech bolted and barred. Among those who have never spoken a word are the most gracious and lovely and talented souls that were ever incarnated. The chaplains of the asylums for the dumb can tell you enchanting stories of those, who never called the name of father or mother or child, and many of the most devout and prayerful souls will never in this world speak the name of God or Christ. Many a deaf mute have I seen with the angel of intelligence seated at the window of the eye who never came forth from the door of the mouth.

What a miracle of loveliness and knowledge was Laura Bridgman, of New Hampshire! Not only without faculty of speech, but without hearing and without sight, all these faculties removed by sickness when two years of age, yet becoming a wonder at needlework, at the piano, at the sewing machine and an intelligent student of the Scriptures, and confounding philosophers, who came from all parts of the world to study the phenomenon. Thanks to Christianity for what it has done for the amelioration of the condition of the deaf and the dumb. Back in the ages they were put to death as having no right with such paucity of equipment to live, and for centuries they were classed among the idiotic and unsafe.

But in the Sixteenth century came Pedro Ponce, the Spanish monk; and in the Seventeenth century came Juan Pablo Bonet, another Spanish monk, with dactylology or the finger alphabet; and in our own century we have had John Braidwood and Drs. Mitchell and Ackerly and Peet and Gallaudet, who have given to uncounted thousands of those whose tongues were forever silent the power to spell out on the air by a manual alphabet their thoughts about this world and their hopes for the next. We rejoice in the brilliant inventions in behalf of those who were born dumb.

One of the most impressive audiences I ever addressed was in the far west two or three years ago—an audience of about 600 persons, who had never heard a sound or spoken a word, an interpreter standing beside me while I addressed them. I congratulated that audience on two advantages they had over the most of us—the one that they escaped hearing a great many disagreeable things, and on the other fact that they escaped saying things they were sorry for afterward. Yet after all the alleviations a shackled tongue is an appalling limitation. But we are not this morning speaking of congenital mutes. We mean those who are born with all the faculties of vocalization and yet have been struck by the evil one mentioned in the text—the dumb devil to whom Christ called when he said, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him."

SILENCE MAY BE A CRIME.

There has been apotheosization of silence. Some one has said silence is golden, and sometimes the greatest triumph is to keep your mouth shut. But sometimes silence is a crime, and the direct result of the baleful influence of the dumb devil of our text. There is hardly a man or woman in this house today who has not been present on some occasion when the Christian religion became a target for raillery. Perhaps it was over in the store some day when there was not much going on, and the clerks were in a group; or it was in the factory at the noon spell; or it was out on the farm under the trees while you were resting; or it was in the clubroom; or it was in a social circle; or it was in the street on the way home from business; or it was on some occasion which you remember without my describing it.

Some one got the laugh on the Bible and caricatured the profession of religion as hypocrisy, or made a pun out of something that Christ said. The laugh started and you joined in, and not one word of protest did you utter. What kept you silent? Modesty? No. Incapacity to answer? No. Lack of opportunity? No. It was a blow on both your lips by the wing of the dumb devil. If some one should malign your father or mother or wife or husband or child you would flush up quick, and either with an indignant word or doubled up fist make response.

And yet here is our Christian religion, which has done so much for you and so much for the world that it will take all eternity to celebrate it, and yet, when it was attacked, you did not so much as say: "I differ, I object, I am sorry to hear you say that. There is another side to this." You Christian people ought in such times as these to go armed, not with earthly weapons, but with the sword of the spirit. You ought to have four or five questions with which you could confound any man who attacks Christianity.

A SCOFFER ROUTED.

A man ninety years old was telling me a few days ago how he put to flight a scoffer. My aged friend said to the skeptic, "Did you ever read the history of Joseph in the Bible?" "Yes," said the man; "it is a fine story, and as interesting a story as I ever read." "Well, now," said my old friend, "suppose that account of Joseph stopped half way?" "Oh," said the man, "then it would not be entertaining." "Well, now," said my friend, "we have in this world only half of everything, and do you not think that when we hear the last half things may be consistent, and that then we may find that God was right?" Oh, friends, better load up with a few interrogation points. You cannot afford to be silent when God and the Bible and the things of eternity are assailed. Your silence gives consent to the bombardment of your father's house. You allow a slur to be cast on your mother's dying pillow.

In behalf of the Christ, who for you went through the agonies of assassination on the rocky bluff back of Jerusalem, you dared not face a sickly joke. Better load up with a few questions so that next time you will be ready. Say to the scoffer: "My dear sir, will you tell me what makes the difference between the condition of woman in China and the United States? What do you think of the sermon on the mount? How do you like the golden rule laid down in the Scriptures? Are you in favor of the ten commandments? In your large and extensive reading have you come across a lovelier character than Jesus Christ? Will you please to name the triumphant deathbeds of infidels and atheists?

"How do you account for the fact that among the out and out believers in Christianity were such persons as Benjamin Franklin, John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Babington Macauley, William Penn, Walter Scott, Charles Kingsley, Horace Bushnell, James A. Garfield, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Admiral Foote, Admiral Farragut, Ulysses S. Grant, John Milton, William Shakespeare, Chief Justice Marshall, John Adams, Daniel Webster, George Washington? How do you account for their fondness for the Christian religion? Among the innumerable colleges and universities of the earth will you name me three started by infidels and now supported by infidels? Down in your heart are you really happy in the position you occupy antagonistic to the Christian religion? When do you have the most rapturous views of the next world?"

Go at him with a few such questions and he will get so red in the face as to suggest apoplexy, and he will look at his watch and say he has an engagement and must go. You will put him in a sweat that will beat a Turkish bath. You will put him on a rout compared with which our troops at Bull Run made no time at all. Arm yourself, not with arguments but interrogation points, and I promise you victory. Shall such a man as you, shall such a woman as you surrender to one of the meanest spirits that ever smoked up from the pit—the dumb devil spoken of in the text?

A PLEA FOR CHURCH SINGING.

But then there are occasions when this particular spirit that Christ exercised when he said, "I charge thee to come out of him," takes people by the wholesale. In the most responsive religious audience have you noticed how many people never sing at all? They have a book, and they have a voice, and they know how to read. They know many of the tunes, and yet are silent while the great raptures of music pass by. Among those who sing not one out of a hundred sings loud enough to hear his own voice. They hum it. They give a sort of religious grunt. They make the lips go, but it is inaudible. With a voice strong enough to stop a street car one block away, all they can afford in the praise of God is about half a whisper. With enough sopranos, enough altos, enough basses to make a small heaven between the four walls they let the opportunity go by unimproved.

The volume of voice that ascends from the largest audience that ever assembled ought to be multiplied about two thousand fold. But the minister rises and gives out the hymn; the organ begins; the choir or precentor leads; the audience are standing so that the lungs may have full expansion, and a mighty harmony is about to ascend, when the evil spirit spoken of in my text—the dumb devil—spreads his two wings, one over the lips of one-half the audience and the other wing over the lips of the other half of the audience, and the voices roll back into the throats from which they started, and only here and there anything is heard, and nine-tenths of the holy power is destroyed; and the dumb devil, as he flies away, says, "I could not keep Isaac Watts from writing that hymn, and I could not keep Lowell Mason from composing the tune to which it is set, but I smote into silence or half silence the lips from which it would have spread abroad to bless neighborhoods and cities, and then mount the wide open heavens." Give the long meter doxology the full support of Christendom and those four lines would take the whole earth for God.

During the cotton famine in Lancashire, England, when the suffering was something terrific, as the first wagon load of cotton rolled in the starving people unhooked the horses and drew the load themselves, singing until all Lancashire joined in with triumphant voices, their cheeks sopping with tears, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." When Commodore Perry, with his warship, the Mississippi, lay off the coast of Japan, he bombarded the shores with "Old Hundred" played by the marine band. Glorious "Old Hundred," composed by William Franc, of Germany.

In a war prison, at 10 o'clock at night, the poor fellows far from home and wounded and sick and dying, one prisoner started the "Old Hundred Doxology," and then a score of voices joined, then all the prisoners on all the floors took up the acclaim until the building, from foundation to top stone, fairly quaked with the melodious ascription. A British man-of-war, lying off a foreign coast, heard a voice singing that doxology, and immediately guessed and guessed aright, that there was an Englishman in captivity to the Mohammedans, and in the small boats the sailors rowed to shore and burst into a guardhouse and set the captive free.

I don't know what tune the trumpets of resurrection shall play, but it may be the doxology which is now sounding across Christendom. How much more hearty we would be in our songs, and how easily we could drive back the dumb devil from all our worshiping assemblages, if we could realize that nearly all our hymns have a stirring history. That glorious hymn, "Stand Up for Jesus," was suggested by the last words of Dudley Tyng, who was dying from having his right arm torn off by a thrashing machine. That hymn, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," heard through a telephone, converted an obdurate soul. "Shall We Gather at the River?" was a hymn first sung in our Brooklyn Prospect park, at the children's May anniversary, and then started to encircle the world.

"Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" is a song that has saved hundreds of dissipated young men. Tom, the drummer boy in the army, was found crying and an officer asked him what was the matter! "Oh," he said, "I had a dream last night. My sister died ten years ago, and my mother never was herself again and she died soon after. Last night I dreamed I was killed in battle, and that mother and sister came down to meet me." After the next battle was over, some one crossing the field heard a voice that he recognized as the voice of Tom, the drummer boy, singing "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." But at the end of the first verse the voice became very feeble, and at the end of the second verse it stopped, and they went up and found Tom, the drummer boy, leaning against a stump and dead.

"OH, FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES."

That hymn, "Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing," was suggested to Charles Wesley by Peter Bohler, who, after his conversion, said, "I had better keep silent about it." "No," said Wesley, "if you had ten thousand tongues you had better use them for Christ." And then that angel of hymnology penned the words:

> Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
> My dear Redeemer's praise,
> The glories of my God and king,
> The triumphs of his grace.
>
> Jesus, the name that calms our fears,
> That bids our sorrows cease;
> 'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
> 'Tis life and health and peace.

While much of the modern music is a religious doggerel, a consecrated nonsense, a sacred tomfoolery, I would like to see some great musician of our time lift the baton and marshal Luther's Judgment Hymn, Yarmouth, Dundee, Ariel, Brattle Street, Uxbridge, Pleyel's Hymn, Harwell, Antioch, Mount Pisgah and Coronation, with few regiments of mighty tunes made in our own time, and storm Asia, Africa and America for the kingdom of God. But the first thing to do is to drive out the dumb devil of the text from all our churches.

Do not, however, let us lose ourselves in generalities. Not one of us but has had our lives sometimes touched by the evil spirit of the text—this awful dumb devil. We had just one opportunity of saying a Christian word that might have led a man or woman into a Christian life. The opportunity was fairly put before us. The word of invitation or consolation or warning came to the inside gate of the mouth, but there it halted. Some hindering power locked the jaws together so that they did not open. The tongue lay flat and still in the bottom of the mouth as though struck with paralysis. We were mute.

Though God had given us the physiological apparatus for speech, and our lungs were filled with air which, by the command of our will, could have made the laryngeal muscles move and the vocal organs vibrate, we were wickedly and fatally silent. For all time and eternity we missed our chance. Or it was a prayer meeting, and the service was thrown open for prayer and remarks, and there was a dead halt—everything silent as a graveyard at midnight. Indeed it was a graveyard and midnight. An embarrassing pause took place that put a wet blanket on all the meeting. Men, bold enough on business exchange or in worldly circles, shut their eyes as though they were praying in silence, but they were not praying at all. They were busy hoping somebody else would do his duty.

The women flushed under the awful pause and made their fans more rapidly flutter. Some brother with no cold coughed, by that sound trying to fill up the time, and the meeting was slain. But what killed it? The dumb devil. This is the way I account for the fact that the stupidest places on earth are some prayer meetings. I do not see how a man keeps any grace if he regularly attends them. They are spiritual refrigerators. Religion kept on ice. How many of us have lost occasions of usefulness!

In a sculptor's studio stood a figure of the god Opportunity. The sculptor had made the hair fall down over the face of the statue so as to completely cover it, and there were wings to the feet. When asked why he so represented Opportunity, the sculptor answered, "The face of the statue is thus covered up because we do not recognize Opportunity when it comes, and the wings to the feet show that Opportunity is swiftly gone."

THE DUMB DEVIL IN POLITICS.

But do not let the world deride the church because of all this, for the dumb devil is just as conspicuous in the world. The two great political parties will soon assemble to build platforms for the presidential candidates to stand on. A committee of each party will be appointed to make the platform. After proper deliberation the committees will come in with a ringing report, "Whereas" and "Whereas" and "Whereas." Pronunciamentoes all shaped with the one idea of getting the most votes.

All expression in regard to the great moral evils of the country ignored. No expression about the liquor traffic, for that would lose the rum vote. No expression in regard to the universal attempt at the demolition of the Lord's day. No recognition of God in the history of this nation, for that would lose the vote of the atheists. But "Whereas" and "Whereas" and "Whereas." Nine cheers will be given for the platform. The dumb devil of the text will put one wing over the Republican platform and the other wing over the Democratic platform. There is nothing involved in the next election except offices. The great conventions will be opened with prayer by their chaplains.

If they avoid platitudes and tell the honest truth in their prayers, they will say: "O Lord, we want to be postmasters and consuls and foreign ministers and United States district attorneys. For that we are here, and for that we will strive till the election next November. Give us office, or we die, forever and ever. Amen." The world, to say the least, is no better than the church on this subject of silence at the wrong time. In other words, is it not time for Christianity to become pronounced and aggressive as never before? Take sides for God and sobriety and righteousness. "If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him." Have you opportunity of rebuking a sin? Rebuke it. Have you a chance to cheer a disheartened soul? Cheer it. Have you a useful word to speak? Speak it.

Be out and out, up and down for righteousness. If your ship is afloat on the Pacific ocean of God's mercy, hang out your colors from masthead. Show your passport if you have one. Do not smuggle your soul into the harbor of heaven. Speak out for God! This morning close up the chapter of lost opportunities, and pitch it into the East river, and open a new chapter. Before you get to the door on your way out this morning shake hands with some one and ask him to join you on the road to heaven. Do not drive up to heaven in a two wheeled "sulky," with room only for one, and that yourself, but get the biggest Gospel wagon you can find, and pile it full of friends and neighbors, and shout till they hear you all up and down the

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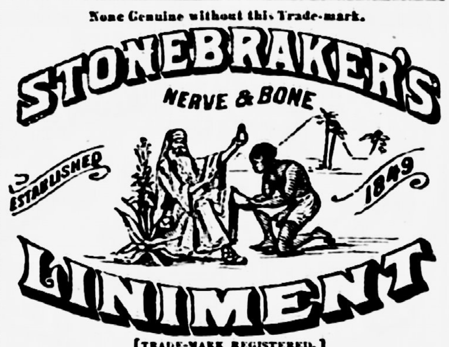

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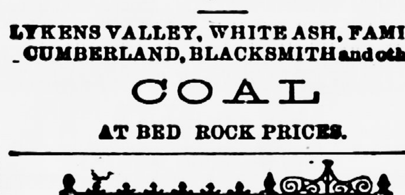

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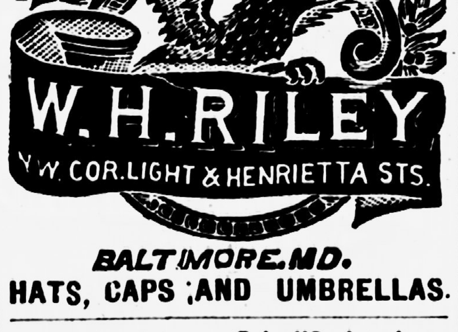

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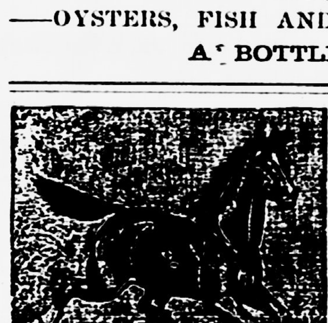

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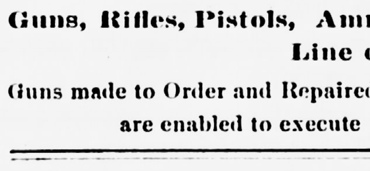

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