SUNDAY'S SERMON.

ONE OF REV. DR. TALMAGE'S STERLING DISCOURSES.

Subject. "Two Garlands."

TEXT: *"I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back."*—Isaiah xlii., 6.

Just what my text meant by the north and south I cannot say, but in the United States the two words are so point blank in their meaning that no one can doubt. They mean more than east and west, for although between those last two there have been rivalries and disturbing ambitions and infelicities and silver bills and World's fair controversies, there have been between them no batteries unlimbered, no intrenchments dug, no long lines of sepulchral mounds thrown up. It has never been Massachusetts Fourteenth Regiment against Wisconsin Zouaves; it has never been Virginia artillery against Mississippi rifles.

East and west are distinct words, and sometimes may mean diversity of interest, but there is no blood on them. They can be pronounced without any intonation of wailing and death groan. But the north and the south are words that have been surcharged with tragedies. They are words which suggest that for forty years the clouds had been gathering for a four years' tempest which thirty years ago burst in a fury that shook this planet as it has never been shaken since it swung out at the first world building. I think God that the words have lost some of the intensity which they possessed three decades ago: that a vast multitude of northern people have moved south, and a vast multitude of southern people have moved north, and there have been intermarriages by the ten thousand, and northern colonels have married the daughters of southern captains, and Texas rangers have united for life with the daughters of New York abolitionists, and their children are half northern and half southern and altogether patriotic.

But north and south are words that need to be brought into still closer harmonization. I thought that now, when we are half way between presidential elections, and sectional animosities are at the lowest ebb; and now, just after a presidential journey, when our chief magistrate, who was chiefly elected by the north, has been cordially received at the south; and now, just after two Memorial Days, one of them a month ago strewing flowers on southern graves, and the other yesterday strewing flowers on northern graves, it might be appropriate and useful for me to preach a sermon which would twist two garlands—one for the northern dead and the other for the southern dead—and have the two interlocked in a chain of flowers that shall bind forever the two sections into one; and who knows but that this may be the day when the prophecy of the text made in regard to the ancients may be fulfilled in regard to this country, and the north yield up its prejudices and the south keep not back its confidence? "I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back."

But before I put these garlands on the graves I mean to put them this morning a little while on the brows of the living men and women of the north and south, lest husbands and sons and brothers during the civil strife. There is nothing more soothing to a wound than a cool bandage, and these two garlands are cool from the night dew. What a morning that was on the banks of the Hudson and the Savannah when the son was to start for the war! What fatherly and motherly counsel! What tears! What heartbreaks! What charges to write home often! What little keepsakes put away in the knapsack, or the bundle that was to be exchanged for the knapsack! The crowd around the depot or the steamboat landing shouted, but father and mother and sister cried.

And how lonely the house seemed after they went home, and what an awfully incant chair there was at the Christmas and Thanksgiving table! And after the battle, what waiting for news! What suspense till the long lists of the killed and wounded were made out! All along the Penobscot, and the Connecticut, and the St. Lawrence, and the Ohio, and the Oregon, and the James, and the Albemarle, and the Alabama, and the Mississippi, and the Sacramento there were lamentation and mourning and great woe. Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted because they were not. The world has forgotten it, but father and mother have not forgotten it. They may be now in the eighties or nineties, but it is a fresh wound, and will always remain a fresh wound.

Have you realized the fact that our civil war pitched out upon the farmfields of the north and the plantations of the south a multitude that no man can number, children without fatherly help and protection? Under all the advantages which we had of fatherly guidance, what a struggle life has been to the most of us! But what of the children, two and five and ten years of age, who stood at their mother's lap with great, round, wondering eyes, hearing her read of those who perished in the Battle of the Wilderness, their fathers gone down among the dead host? Come, young men and women, who by such disaster have had to make your own way in life, and I will put the garland on your young and unwrinkled brow. Yes; you have had your own Malvern Hill, and your own South Mountain, and your own Gettysburg all along these twenty years. Come! And, if I cannot spare a whole garland for your brow, I will twist in your locks at least two flowers, one crimson and one white, the crimson for the struggle of your life, which has almost amounted to carnage, and the white for the victory you have gained.

Before I put the two garlands I am twisting upon the northern and southern tombs, I detain the garlands a little while that I may put them upon the brow of the living soldiers and sailors of the north and south, who, though at variance for a long while, are now at peace and in hearty loyalty to the United States government, and ready, if need be, to march shoulder to shoulder against any foreign foe. The twenty-six winters that have passed since the war, I think, have sufficiently cooled the hatreds that once burned northward and southward to allow the remark that they who fought in that conflict were honest on both sides. The chaplains on both armies were honest in their prayers. The faces that went into battle, whether they marched toward the Gulf of Mexico or marched toward the north star, were honest faces.

It is too much to ask either side to believe that those who came out from their homes, forsaking father and mother and wife and child, many of them never to return, were not in earnest when they put their life into awful exigency. Where are the last seven family prayers up among the Green mountains or down by the fields of cotton and sugar cane. Men do not sacrifice their all for fun. Men do not eat moldy bread or go without bread at all for fun. Men do not sleep unsheltered in equinoctial storms for fun.

As chaplain of a Pennsylvania regiment, and as a representative of the United States Christian Commission, I was for a while at the front, and I have hospitals in Fairfax, town and Williamsburg and up and down the Potomac, where all the churches and Christian societies had their representatives dying Federals and Confederates. I forgot amid the horrors to ask on which side they fought when with what little aid I could take them for their suffering bodies, and the lighter aid I could pray for their souls, I passed the days and months amid scenes that in my memory seem like a ghastly dream rather than a possible reality.

When a New Orleans boy, unable to answer my question as to where he was hurt, took out from the folds of the only garment that had not been torn off him in the battle a New Testament, marked with his own life blood, and I saw the leaf turned down at the passage, "My peace I give unto You, not as the world gives give I unto You," it was just as though it had been a northern New Testament. And when I sat down and took from a South Carolinian dying in a barn at Boonsville his last message to his wife and mother and child, it sounded just like a message that a northern man dying far from home would send to his wife and mother and child.

And when I picked up from the battle field of Antietam the fragment of a letter which I have somewhere yet, for the name and the address were torn off, I saw it was the words of a wife to her husband telling him how the little child prayed for their father every night that he might not get hurt in the battle and might come home sound and come home well, but that if anything happened to them they might all meet again in the world where there are no partings, it read just as a northern wife would write to a husband away from home and in April covering the messages of little children. Oh, yes; they were honest on both sides. And those who lived to get home are living yet were just as honest, and ought they not for the suffering they endured have a coronal of some kind?

But we must not detain the two garlands any longer from the pillows of those who for a quarter of a century have been prostrate in dreamless slumber, never oppressed by summer heats or chilled by winter's cold. Both garlands are fragrant. Both have in them the sunshine and the shower of this springtime. The colors of both were mixed by Him who mixed the blue of the sky, and the gold of the sunset, and the green of the grass, and the whiteness of the snow crystal. And I do not care which you put over the northern grave and which over the southern grave.

These august throngs gathered this morning in these pews and aisles and corridors and galleries are insignificant compared with the mightier throngs of heaven who mingle in this service which we render to God and our country while we twist the two garlands. Hail spirits multitudinous! Hail spirits blest! Hail martyred ones come down from from the King's palaces! How glad are we that you have come back again! Take this kiss of welcome and these garlands of reminiscence, ye who languished in hospitals or went down under the thunders and the lightning of Fredericksburg and Cold Harbor and Murfreesboro and Corinth and Yorktown and above the clouds on Lookout Mountain.

Among the thousands of gatherings at the north and at the south for Decoration Days I am conscious that this service is unique, and that it is only one in which there has been twisted two garlands—one for the grave of the northern dead and the other for the grave of the southern dead. O Lord God of the American Union, is it time that we bury forever our old quarrels? Why? Can we not be at peace on earth when this moment in heaven dwell in perfect love, Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, William T. Sherman and Stonewall Jackson, and tens of thousands of northern and southern men who, though they once looked askance at each other from the opposite banks of the Potomac and the Chickahominy and the James and the Tennessee, now are on the same side of the river, keeping jubilee with some of those old angels who near nineteen centuries ago came down one Christmas night to chant over Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will to men"?

I have been waiting for some years for some one else to twist the two garlands, that I to-day twist, but, no one doing it, in the love of God and my country I put now my hand to the work, and next spring about this time, if I am living and well, I will twist two more garlands for northern and southern graves, and every springtime until some man or woman for whom I may have cheered a little in the struggle of this life shall come out and put a pansy or two on my own grave. But if the time should ever come when this land shall be given over to sectional rancor and demagogism, and north and south, or east and west shall forget what the good God gave us in our children, and refuse to be comforted because they were not, the world has forgotten it, but father and mother have not forgotten it. They may be now in the eighties or nineties, but it is a fresh wound, and will always remain a fresh wound.

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