

# THE BROOKLYN MAGAZINE

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## A POET IN HIS DECLINE.

By EDWARD DUFFY.

In a large and luxuriously furnished apartment in a four story brown-stone house on State Street, in the city of Albany, and almost within a stone's throw of the great Capitol, sits, or walks, or reclines throughout the day a man of seventy years of age. With hair that is silvery white, a full beard that is gray-white, a form that is bent and emaciated, a step that is slow and tottering, and a cheek that is pallid and shrunken—his blue eyes yet full and lustrous alone indicate the strength and pride of other days. This man is John Godfrey Saxe, the poet.

It is only a few years since the verses of Saxe were eagerly accepted by the leading periodicals, and his services as a lecturer were everywhere popular. In his day he was a bright member of many a literary gathering, being known personally to all of the most prominent of contemporary poets and prose writers. He was the nation's wit and humorist, whose delicious rhymes brought to himself fame and a competence, and to many a household the cheerful smile or hearty laugh. Even across the sea he was known as "the Thomas Hood of America."

Yet alas! how intensely pathetic is the rounding out of this man's days! For some years he has been dead to all the world. Few people know that he is yet alive; few of his numerous former ardent admirers think of him now other than as one who has been, but who no longer moves among his kind. The


victim of a deep-seated, ever-present melancholy, his closing years are touchingly sad and uneventful, the never-ceasing care of the few relatives that are spared him even failing to rid him of the deep gloom in which unhappily his mind is now shrouded.

Up to the year 1875 John G. Saxe was a splendid and conspicuous specimen of virile manhood. He stood six feet two inches tall, proudly erect and muscular, with a large, round and finely poised head set upon broad and stalwart shoulders. The latest photograph of him, now possessed by his family, represents his face in profile—a broad, high, intellectual forehead, wavy brown hair in abundance, large, keen eyes set in deeply, and with strong and suggestive feature outlines set off by a mustache and "Burnside" whiskers. Less than a dozen years ago this picture was fully justified by its subject.

The beginning of the end was the poet's dreadful experience and remarkable escape from a revolting death in a Western railway disaster in the spring of 1875, while on his return to Brooklyn at the conclusion of a lecture tour in the South. The sleeping-car in which he had a berth was thrown down a steep embankment, and he was rescued therefrom by the merest chance. As he lay wedged in between the broken timbers, stunned and bruised, a fellow-passenger who had escaped bethought him of a sum of money which he had left behind him. On returning to the car,

# DR. TALMAGE'S OUT-OF-TOWN SERMONS.

AUTHORIZED AND REVISED PUBLICATION OF THE SERMONS DELIVERED  
BY REV. T. DE WITT TALMAGE, D.D., DURING HIS SUMMER  
VACATION, JUNE—SEPTEMBER, 1886, AT VARIOUS  
PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

 *The reports of Dr. Talmage's sermons delivered during the past summer vacation, printed in the recent and current numbers of THE BROOKLYN MAGAZINE, are furnished for this publication under special arrangements with the Tabernacle pastor, and receive his personal authorization and revision in every instance.*

## MEASURED BY YOUR OWN YARDSTICK.

DELIVERED ON BATTERY PARK GROUNDS, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, SUNDAY MORNING,  
JULY 25, 1886.

TEXT: "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."—MATTHEW vii. 2.

In the greatest sermon ever preached—a sermon about fifteen minutes long, according to the ordinary rate of speech—a sermon on the Mount of Olives, the Preacher sitting while He spake, according to the ancient mode of oratory, the people were given to understand that the same yardstick that they employed upon others would be employed upon themselves. Measure others by a harsh rule and you will be measured by a harsh rule. Measure others by a charitable rule and you will be measured by a charitable rule. Give no mercy to others and no mercy will be given to you. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

There is a great deal of unfairness in the criticism of human conduct. It was to smite that unfairness that Christ uttered the words of the text, and my sermon will be a re-echo of the divine sentiments. In estimating the misbehavior of others we must take into consideration the pressure of circumstances. It is never right to do wrong, but there are degrees of culpability. When men misbehave or commit some atrocious wickedness we are disposed indiscriminately to tumble them all over the bank of condemnation. Suffer they ought

and suffer they must, but in difference of degree.

In the first place, in estimating the misdoing of others we must take into calculation the hereditary tendency. There is such a thing as good blood, and there is such a thing as bad blood. There are families that have had a moral twist in them for a hundred years back. They have not been careful to keep the family record in that regard. There have been escapades and maraudings and scoundrelisms and moral deficits all the way back, whether you call it kleptomania or pyromania or dipsomania, or whether it be in a milder form and amount to no mania at all. The strong probability is that the present criminal started life with nerve, muscle, and bone contaminated. As some start life with a natural tendency to nobility, and generosity, and kindness and truthfulness, there are others who start life with just the opposite tendency, and they are born liars, or born malcontents, or born outlaws, or born swindlers.

There is in England a school that is called the Princess Mary school. All the children in that school are the children of convicts. The school is supported by high patronage. I had the pleasure of being present at one of their anniversaries in 1879, presided over by the Earl of Kintore. By a wise law in England, after parents have committed a certain

number of crimes and thereby show themselves incompetent rightly to bring up their children, the little ones are taken from under pernicious influences and put in reformatory schools, where all gracious and kindly influences shall be brought upon them. Of course the experiment is young, and it has yet to be demonstrated how large a percentage of the children of convicts may be brought up to respectability and usefulness. But we all know that it is more difficult for children of bad parentage to do right than for children of good parentage.

In this country we are taught by the Declaration of American Independence that all people are born equal. There never was a greater misrepresentation put in one sentence than in that sentence which implies that we are all born equal. You may as well say that flowers are born equal, or trees are born equal, or animals are born equal. Why does one horse cost \$100 and another horse cost \$5000? Why does one sheep cost \$10 and another sheep cost \$500? Difference in blood. We are wise enough to recognize the difference of blood in horses, in cattle, in sheep, but we are not wise enough to make allowance for the difference in human blood. Now, I demand by the law of eternal fairness that you be more lenient in your criticism of those who were born wrong, in whose ancestral line there was a hangman's knot or who came from a tree the fruit of which for centuries has been gnarled and worm eaten. Dr. Harris, a reformer, gave some marvellous statistics in his story of what he called "Margaret, the Mother of Criminals." Ninety years ago she lived in a village in upper New York State. She was not only poor, but she was vicious. She was not well provided for. There were no almshouses there. The public, however, somewhat looked after her, but chiefly scoffed at her and derided her and pushed her farther down in her crimes. That was ninety years ago. There have been 623 persons in that ancestral line, 200 of them criminals. In one branch of that family there were twenty, and nine of them have been in State prison and nearly all of the others have turned out badly. It is estimated that that family cost the county and State \$100,000, to say nothing of the property they destroyed. Are you not willing, as sensible people, to acknowledge that it is a fearful disaster to be born in such an ancestral line? Does it not make a great difference whether one descends from Margaret, the mother of criminals, or from some mother in Israel? Whether you are the son of Ahab or the son of Joshua? It is a very different thing to swim with the current from what it is to swim against the current, as

some of you have no doubt found in your summer recreation. If a man find himself in an ancestral current where there is good blood flowing smoothly from generation to generation it is not a very great credit to him if he turn out good and honest and pure and upright and noble. He could hardly help it. But suppose he is born in an ancestral line, in a hereditary line, where the influences have been bad and there has been a coming down over a moral declivity, if the man surrender to the influences he will go down under the overmastering gravitation unless some supernatural aid be afforded him. Now, such a person deserves not your execration, but your pity. Do not sit with the lip curled in scorn and with an assumed air of angelic innocence looking down upon such moral precipitation. You had better get down on your knees and first pray Almighty God for their rescue, and next thank the Lord that you have not been thrown under the wheels of that juggernaut.

In Great Britain and in the United States, in every generation, there are tens of thousands of persons who are fully developed criminals and incarcerated. I say in every generation. Then, I suppose, there are tens of thousands of persons not found out in their criminality. In addition to these there are tens of thousands of persons who, not positively becoming criminals, nevertheless have a criminal tendency. Any one of all those thousands by the grace of God may become Christian and resist the ancestral influence, and open a new chapter of behavior; but the vast majority of them will not, and it becomes all men, professional and unprofessional, ministers of religion, judges of courts, philanthropists and Christian workers to recognize the fact that there are these Atlantic and Pacific surges of hereditary evil rolling on through the centuries.

I say, of course, a man can resist this tendency, just as in the ancestral line mentioned in the first chapter of Matthew, you see in the same line in which there was a wicked Rehoboam and a desperate Manasses there afterward came a pious Joseph and a glorious Christ. But, my friends, you must recognize the fact that these influences go on from generation to generation. I am glad to know, however, that a river which has produced nothing but miasma for a hundred miles may after a while turn the wheels of factories and help support industrious and virtuous populations, and there are family lines which were poisoned that are a benediction now. At the last day it will be found out that there are men who have gone clear over into all forms of iniquity and plunged into utter abandonment, who, before

they yielded to the first temptation, resisted more evil than many a man who has been moral and upright all his life. But supposing now that in this age, when there are so many good people, that I come down into this audience and select the very best man in it. I do not mean the man who could style himself the best, for probably he is a hypocrite; but I mean the man who before God is really the best. I will take you out from all your Christian surroundings. I will take you back to boyhood. I will put you in a depraved home. I will put you in a cradle of iniquity. Who is that bending over that cradle? An intoxicated mother. Who is that swearing in the next room? Your father. The neighbors come in to talk, and their jokes are unclean. There is not in the house a Bible or a moral treatise, but only a few scraps of an old pictorial. After a while you are old enough to get out of the cradle, and you are struck across the head for naughtiness, but never in any kindly manner reprimanded. After a while you are old enough to go abroad, and you are sent out with a basket to steal. If you come home without any spoil you are whipped until the blood comes. At fifteen years of age you go out to fight your own battles in this world, which seems to care no more for you than for the dog that has died of a fit under the fence. You are kicked and cuffed and buffeted. Some day, rallying your courage, you resent some wrong. A man says, "Who are you? I know who you are. Your father had free lodgings at Sing Sing. Your mother, she was up for drunkenness at the criminal court. Get out of my way, you low-lived wretch!" My brother, suppose that had been the history of your advent, and the history of your earlier surroundings. Would you have been the Christian man you are to-day, seated in this Christian assembly? I tell you nay. You would have been a vagabond, an outlaw, a murderer on the scaffold atoning for your crime. All these considerations ought to make us merciful in our dealings with the wandering and the lost.

Again, I have to remark, that in our estimate of the misdoing of people who have fallen from high respectability and usefulness, we must take into consideration the conjunction of circumstances. In nine cases out of ten a man who goes astray does not intend any positive wrong. He has trust funds. He risks a part of these funds in investment. He says, "Now, if I should lose that investment, I have of my own property five times as much, and if this investment should go wrong I could easily make it up; I could five times make it

up." With that wrong reasoning, he goes on and makes the investment, and it does not turn out quite as well as he expected, and he makes another investment, and, strange to say, at the same time all his other affairs get entangled, and all his other resources fail, and his hands are tied. Now he wants to extricate himself. He goes a little further on in the wrong investment. He takes a plunge further ahead, for he wants to save his wife and children; he wants to save his home; he wants to save his membership in the church. He takes one more plunge, and all is lost. Some morning at ten o'clock the bank door is not opened, and there is a card on the door, signed by an officer of the bank, indicating that there is trouble, and the name of the defaulter or the defrauder heads the newspaper column, and hundreds of men say, "Good for him"; hundred of other men say, "I'm glad he's found out at last"; hundreds of other men say, "Just as I told you"; hundreds of other men say, "We couldn't possibly have been tempted to do that—no conjunction of circumstances could ever have overthrown me"; and there is a superabundance of indignation, but no pity. The heavens full of lightning, but not one drop of dew. If God treated us as society treats that man, we would all have been in hell long ago! Wait for the alleviating circumstances. Perhaps he may have been the dupe of others. Before you let all the hounds out from their kennel to maul and tear that man, find out if he has been brought up in a commercial establishment where there was a wrong system of ethics taught; find out whether that man has not an extravagant wife who is not satisfied with his honest earnings, and in the temptation to please her he has gone into that ruin into which enough men have fallen, and by the same temptation, to make a procession of many miles. Perhaps some sudden sickness may have touched his brain and his judgment may be unbalanced. He is wrong, he is awfully wrong, and he must be condemned, but there may be mitigating circumstances. Perhaps under the same temptation you might have fallen. The reason some men do not steal \$200,000 is because they do not get a chance! Have righteous indignation you must about that man's conduct, but temper it with mercy. But you say, "I am so sorry that the innocent should suffer." Yes, I am too—sorry for the widows and orphans who lost their all by that defalcation. I am sorry also for the business men, the honest business men, who have had their affairs all crippled by that defalcation. I am sorry for the venerable

bank president, in whom the credit of that bank was a matter of pride. Yes, I am sorry also for that man who brought all the distress; sorry that he sacrificed body, mind, soul, reputation, heaven, and went into the blackness of darkness forever.

You defiantly say, "I could not be tempted in that way." Perhaps you may be tested after a while. God has a very good memory, and He sometimes seems to say, "This man feels so strong in his innate power and goodness he shall be tested; he is so full of bitter invective against that unfortunate it shall be shown now whether he has the power to stand." Fifteen years go by. The wheel of fortune turns several times, and you are in a crisis that you never could have anticipated. Now, all the powers of darkness come around and they chuckle, and they chatter, and they say, "Aha! here is the old fellow who was so proud of his integrity and who bragged he couldn't be overthrown by temptation, and was so uproarious in his demonstrations of indignation at the defalcation of fifteen years ago. Let us see." God lets the man go. God, who had kept that man under His protecting care, lets the man go and try for himself the majesty of his integrity. God letting the man go, the powers of darkness pounce upon him. I see you some day in your office in great excitement. One of two things you can do. Be honest and be pauperized and have your children brought home from school, your family dethroned in social influence. The other thing is, you can step a little aside from that which is right, you can only go just half an inch out of the proper path, you can only take a little risk, and then you have all your finances fair and right. You have a large property. You can leave a fortune for your children, and endow a college, and build a public library in your native town. You halt and wait, and halt and wait until your lips get white. You decide to risk it. Only a few strokes of the pen now. But oh, how your hand trembles, how dreadfully it trembles! The die is cast. By the strangest and most awful conjunction of circumstances any one could have imagined you are prostrated. Bankruptcy, commercial annihilation, exposure, crime. Good men mourn and devils hold carnivals, and you see your own name at the head of a newspaper column in a whole congress of exclamation points, and while you are reading the anathema in the reportorial and editorial paragraph, it occurs to you how much this story is like that of the defalcation fifteen years ago, and a clap of thunder shakes the window-sill, saying, "With

what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again!"

You look in another direction. There is nothing like an ebullition of temper to put a man to disadvantage. You, a man with calm pulses and a fine digestion and perfect health, cannot understand how anybody should be capsized in temper by an infinitesimal annoyance. You say, "I couldn't be unbalanced in that way." Perhaps you smile at a provocation that makes another man swear. You pride yourself on your imperturbability. You say with your manner, though you have too much good taste to say it with your words, "I have a great deal more sense than that man has; I have a great deal more of equipoise of temper than that man has; I never could make such a puerile exhibition of myself as that man has made."

My brother, you do not realize that that man was born with a keen nervous organization; that for forty years he has been under a depleting process; that sickness and trouble have been helping to undo what was left of original healthfulness; that much of his time it has been with him like filing saws; that his nerves have come to be merely a tangle of disorders, and that he is the most pitiable object on earth, who, though he is very sick, does not look sick, and nobody sympathizes. Let me see. Did you not say that you could not be tempted to an ebullition of temper? Some September you come home from your summer watering-place, and you have inside, away back in your liver or spleen, what we call in our day malaria, but what the old folks called chills and fever. You take quinine until your ears are first buzzing beehives, and then roaring Niagaras. You take roots and herbs—you take everything. You get well. But the next day you feel uncomfortable, and you yawn, and you stretch, and you shiver, and you consume, and you suffer, vexed more than you can tell. You cannot sleep, you cannot eat, you cannot bear to see anything that looks happy; you go out to kick the cat that is asleep in the sun. Your children's mirth was once music to you; now it is deafening. You say, "Boys, stop that racket!" You turn back from June to March. In the family and in the neighborhood your popularity is ninety-five per cent off. The world says, "What is the matter with that disagreeable man? What a woe-begone countenance! I can't bear the sight of him!" You have got your pay at last—got your pay. You feel just as that man felt—that man for whom you had no mercy, and my text comes in with marvellous appro-

priateness, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again!"

In the study of society I have come to this conclusion, that the most of the people want to be good, but they do not exactly know how to make it out. They make enough good resolutions to lift them into angelhood. The vast majority of people who fall are the victims of circumstances; they are captured by ambuscade. If their temptations should come out in a regiment and fight them in a fair field they would go out in the strength and the triumph of David against Goliath. But they do not see the giants and they do not see the regiment. Suppose Temptation should come up to a man and say, "Here is alcohol; take three tablespoonfuls of it a day until you get dependent upon it; then after that take half a glass three times a day until you get dependent upon that amount; then go on increasing the amount until you are saturated from morning until night and from night until morning." Do you suppose any man would become a drunkard in that way? Oh, no! Temptation comes and says, "Take these bitters, take this nervine, take this aid to digestion, take this night-cap." The vast majority of men and women who are destroyed by opium and by rum first take them as medicines. In making up your dish of criticism in regard to them, take from the caster the cruets of sweet oil and not the cruets of cayenne pepper. Be easy on them. Do you know how that physician, that lawyer, that journalist, became the victim of dissipation? Why, the physician was kept up night by night on professional duty. Life and death hovered in the balance. His nervous system was exhausted. There came a time of epidemic, and whole families were prostrated, and his nervous strength was gone. He was all worn out in the service of the public. Now he must brace himself up. Now he stimulates. The life of this mother, the life of this child, the life of this father, the life of this whole family must be saved, and all these families must be saved, and he stimulates, and he does it again and again. You may criticise his judgment, but remember the process. It was not a selfish process by which he went down. It was magnificent generosity through which he fell. That attorney at the bar for weeks has been standing in a poorly-ventilated court-room, listening to the testimony and contesting in the dry technicalities of the law, and now the time has come for him to wind up, and he must plead for the life of his client, and his nervous system is all gone. If he fail in that speech his client perishes. If he have eloquence enough in that hour his client is saved.

He stimulates. He must keep up. He says, "I must keep up." Having a large practice, you see how he is enthralled. You may criticise his judgment, but remember the process. Do not be hard. That journalist has had exhausting midnight work. He has had to report speeches and orations that keep him up till a very late hour. He has gone with much exposure working up some case of crime in company with a detective. He sits down at midnight to write out his notes from a memorandum scrawled on a pad under unfavorable circumstances. His strength is gone. Fidelity to the public intelligence, fidelity to his own livelihood, demands that he keep up. He stimulates. Again and again he does that, and he goes down. You may criticise his judgment in the matter, but have mercy. Remember the process. Do not be hard.

My friends, this text will come to fulfilment in some cases in this world. The huntsman in Farmstead was shot by some unknown person. Twenty years after the son of the huntsman was in the same forest, and he accidentally shot a man, and the man in dying said, "God is just. I shot your father just here twenty years ago." A bishop said to Louis XI. of France, "Make an iron cage for all those who do not think as we do—an iron cage in which the captive can neither lie down nor stand straight up." It was fashioned—the awful instrument of punishment. After a while the bishop offended Louis XI., and for fourteen years he was in that same cage, and could neither lie down nor stand up. It is a poor rule that won't work both ways. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Oh, my friends, let us be resolved to scold less and pray more. That which in the Bible is used as the symbol of all gracious influences is the dove, not the porcupine. We may so unskillfully manage the lifeboat that we shall run down those whom we want to rescue. The first preparation for Christian usefulness is warm-hearted common sense, practical sympathy for those whom we want to save. What headway will we make in the judgment, if in this world we have been hard on those who have gone astray? What headway will you and I make in the last great judgment when we must have mercy or perish? The Bible says, "They shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy." I see the scribes of heaven looking up into the face of such a man, saying, "What, you plead for mercy—you, who in all your life never had any mercy on your fellows! Don't you remember how hard you were in your opinions

of those who were astray? Don't you remember when you ought to have given a helping hand you employed a hard heel? Mercy? You must misspeak yourself when you plead for mercy here. Mercy for others, but no mercy for you. Look," say the scribes of heaven, "look at that inscription over the

throne of judgment, the throne of God's judgment. See it coming out letter by letter, word by word, sentence by sentence, until your startled vision reads it and your remorseful spirit appropriates it, 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Depart, ye cursed!'"

## THE BIBLE: THE KING OF BOOKS.

DELIVERED AT LAKESIDE, OHIO, SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1886.

TEXT: "The statutes of the Lord are right."—PSALM xix. 8.

Old books go out of date. When they were written they discussed questions which were being discussed; they struck at wrongs which had long ago ceased, or advocated institutions which excite not our interest. Were they books of history, the facts have been gathered from the imperfect mass, better classified and more lucidly presented. Were they books of poetry, they were interlocked with wild mythologies which have gone up from the face of the earth like mists at sunrise. Were they books of morals, civilization will not sit at the feet of barbarism; neither do we want Sappho, Pythagoras, and Tully to teach us morals. What do the masses of the people care now for the pathos of Simonides, or the sarcasm of Menander, or the gracefulness of Philemon, or the wit of Aristophanes? Even the old books we have left, with a few exceptions, have but very little effect on our times. Books are human; they have a time to be born; they are fondled; they grow in strength; they have a middle life of usefulness. Then comes old age; they totter and they die. Many of the national libraries are merely the cemeteries of dead books. Some of them lived flagitious lives and died deaths of ignominy. Some were virtuous and accomplished a glorious mission. Some went into the ashes through inquisitorial fires. Some found their funeral pile in sacked and plundered cities. Some were neglected and died as foundlings at the door of science. Some expired in the author's study; others in the publisher's hands. Ever and anon there comes into your possession an old book, its author forgotten and its usefulness done, and with leathern lips it seems to say, "I wish I were dead." Monuments have been raised over poets and philanthropists. Would that some tall shaft might be erected in honor of the world's buried books. The

world's authors would make pilgrimage thither, and poetry and literature and science and religion would consecrate it with their tears.

Not so with one old book. It started in the world's infancy. It grew under theocracy and monarchy. It withstood storms of fire. It grew under prophet's mantle and under the fisherman's coat of the apostles. In Rome and Ephesus, and Jerusalem and Patmos, tyranny issued edicts against it and infidelity put out the tongue and Mohammedanism from its mosques hurled its anathemas, but the old Bible lived. It crossed the British Channel and was greeted by Wickliffe and James I. It crossed the Atlantic and struck Plymouth Rock, until, like that of Horeb, it gushed with blessedness. Churches and asylums have gathered all along its way, ringing their bell and stretching out their hands of blessing, and every Sabbath there are ten thousand heralds of the cross with their hands on this open, grand, free old English Bible. But it will not have accomplished its mission until it has climbed the icy mountains of Greenland, until it has gone over the granite cliffs of China, until it has thrown its glow amid the Australian mines, until it has scattered its gems among the diamond districts of Brazil, and all thrones shall be gathered into one throne, and all crowns by the fires of revolution shall be melted into one crown, and this book shall at the very gate of heaven have waved in the ransomed empires—not until then will this glorious Bible have accomplished its mission.

In carrying out, then, the idea of my text—"the statutes of the Lord are right"—I shall show you that the Bible is right in authentication, that it is right in style, that it is right in doctrine, that it is right in its effects. Can you doubt the authenticity of the Scriptures? There is not so much evidence that Walter Scott wrote "The Lady of the Lake," not so much evidence that Shakespeare wrote "Hamlet," not so much evidence that John Milton