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# THOMAS DEWITT TALMAGE

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## BEHOLD THE AMERICAN!

[Speech of Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage at the eighty-first annual dinner of the New England Society in the City of New York, December 22, 1886. The President of the Society, Judge Horace Russell, introduced Dr. Talmage to speak to the toast, "Forefathers' Day."]

MR. PRESIDENT, AND ALL YOU GOOD NEW ENGLANDERS: If we leave to the evolutionists to guess where we came from and to the theologians to prophesy where we are going to, we still have left for consideration the fact that we are here; and we are here at an interesting time. Of all the centuries this is the best century, and of all the decades of the century this is the best decade, and of all the years of the decade this is the best year, and of all the months of the year this is the best month, and of all the nights of the month this is the best night. [Applause and laughter.] Many of these advantages we trace straight back to Forefathers' Day, about which I am to speak.

But I must not introduce a new habit into these New England dinners and confine myself to the one theme. For eighty-one years your speakers have been accustomed to make the toast announced the point from which they start, but to which they never return. [Laughter.] So I shall not stick to my text, but only be particular to have all I say my own, and not make the mistake of a minister whose sermon was a patchwork from a variety of authors, to whom he gave no credit. There was an intoxicated wag in the audience who had read about everything, and he announced the authors as the minister went on. The clergyman gave an extract without any credit to the author, and the man in

sound out the groans of the crushed and the dying that they had carried. These men came from balmy Minnesota, those from Illinois prairies. These were often hummed to sleep by the pines of Oregon, those were New England lumbermen. Those came out of the coal-shafts of Pennsylvania. Side by side in one great cause, consecrated through fire and storm and darkness, brothers in peril, on their way home from Chancellorsville and Kenesaw Mountain and Fredericksburg, in lines that seemed infinite they passed on.

We gazed and wept and wondered, lifting up our heads to see if the end had come, but no! Looking from one end of that long avenue to the other, we saw them yet in solid column, battery front, host beyond host, wheel to wheel, charger to charger, nostril to nostril, coming as it were from under the Capitol. Forward! Forward! Their bayonets, caught in the sun, glimmered and flashed and blazed, till they seemed like one long river of silver, ever and anon changed into a river of fire. No end to the procession, no rest for the eyes. We turned our heads from the scene, unable longer to look. We felt disposed to stop our ears, but still we heard it, marching, marching; tramp, tramp, tramp. But hush,—uncover every head! Here they pass, the remnant of ten men of a full regiment. Silence! Widowhood and orphanage look on and wring their hands. But wheel into line, all ye people! North, South, East, West—all decades, all centuries, all millenniums! Forward, the whole line! Huzza! Huzza! [Great applause.]

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### WHAT I KNOW ABOUT THE DUTCH

[Speech of Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage at the seventh annual dinner of the Holland Society of New York, January 14, 1892. The President of the Society, George M. Van Hoesen, said: "The next regular toast is: 'What I Know about the Dutch,' which will be responded to by a gentleman who needs no introduction—the Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage."]

Oh, Judge Van Hoesen, this is not the first time we have been side by side, for we were college boys together; and I remember that there was this difference between us—you seemed to know about everything, and it would take a very large library, a library larger than the Vatican, to tell all that

I didn't know. It is good to be here. What a multitude of delightful people there are in this world! If you and I had been consulted as to which of all the stars we would choose to walk upon, we could not have done a wiser thing than to select this. I have always been glad that I got aboard this planet. There are three classes of people that I especially admire—men, women, and children. I have enjoyed this banquet very much, for there are two places where I always have a good appetite—at home and away from home. I have not been interfered with as were some gentlemen that I heard of at a public dinner some years ago. A greenhorn, who had never seen a great banquet, came to the city, and, looking through the door, said to his friends who were showing him the sights: "Who are those gentlemen who are eating so heartily?" The answer was: "They are the men who pay for the dinner." "And who are those gentlemen up there on the elevation looking so pale and frightened and eating nothing?" "Oh," said his friend, "those are the fellows who make the speeches."

It is very appropriate that we should celebrate the Hollanders by hearty eating, for you know the royal house that the Hollanders admire above any other royal house, is named after one of the most delicious fruits on this table—the house of Orange. I feel that I have a right to be here. While I have in my arteries the blood of many nationalities, so that I am a cosmopolitan and feel at home anywhere, there is in my veins a strong tide of Dutch blood. My mother was a Van Nest, and I was baptized in a Dutch church and named after a Dutch domine, graduated at a Dutch theological seminary, and was ordained by a Dutch minister, married a Dutch girl, preached thirteen years in a Dutch church, and always took a Dutch newspaper; and though I have got off into another denomination, I am thankful to say that, while nearly all of our denominations are in hot water, each one of them having on a big ecclesiastical fight—and you know when ministers do fight, they fight like sin—I am glad that the old Dutch Church sails on over unruffled seas, and the flag at her masthead is still inscribed with "Peace and goodwill to men." Departed spirits of John Livingston and Gabriel Ludlow, and Dr. Van Draken and magnificent Thomas de Witt, from your thrones witness!

Gentlemen here to-night have spoken much already in regard to what Holland did on the other side of the sea; and neither historian's pen, nor poet's canto, nor painter's pencil nor sculptor's chisel, nor orator's tongue, can ever tell the full story of the prowess of those people. Isn't it strange that two of the smallest sections of the earth should have produced most of the grandest history of the world? Palestine, only a little over 100 miles in length, yet yielding the most glorious event of all history; and little Holland, only about one quarter of the size of the State of New Jersey, achieving wonderful history and wonderful deeds not only at home, but starting an influence under which Robert Burns wrote "A man's a man for a' that," and sending across the Atlantic a thunder of indignation against oppression of which the American Declaration of Independence, and Yorktown and Bunker Hill, and Monmouth and Gettysburg, are only the echoes!

As I look across the ocean to-night, I say: England for manufactories, Germany for scholarship, France for manners, Italy for pictures—but Holland for liberty and for God! And leaving to other gentlemen to tell that story—for they can tell it better than I can—I can to-night get but little further than our own immediate Dutch ancestors, most of whom have already taken the sacrament of the dust. Ah, what a glorious race of old folks they were! May our right hand forget its cunning, and our tongue cleave to the roof of the mouth, if we forget to honor their memories! What good advice they gave us; and when they went away forever—well, our emotions were a little different as we stood over the silent forms of the two old folks. In one case I think the dominant emotion was reverence. In the other case I think it was tenderness, and a wish that we could go with her.—

"Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight;  
Make me a child again, just for to-night!  
Mother, come back from the echoless shore,  
Take me again to your heart as of yore;  
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,  
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair;  
Over my slumbers a loving watch keep;—  
Rock me to sleep, mother—rock me to sleep!"

My, my! doesn't the old Dutch home come back to us, and don't we see the plain cap, and the large round spectacles, and the shoulders that stoop from carrying our burden! Was there ever any other hand like hers to wipe away a tear, or to bind up a wound; for when she put the far-sighted spectacles clear up on her forehead, so that her eyes might the nearer look at the wound, it felt better right away! And have we ever since heard any music like that which she hushed us to sleep with—could any prima donna sing as she could! And could any other face so fill a room with light and comfort and peace!

Mr. President, Dutch blood is good blood. We do not propose to antagonize any other to-night; but at our public dinners, about December 21st, we are very apt to get into the Mayflower and sail around the New England coast. I think it will be good for us to-night to take another boat quite as good, and sail around New York harbor in the Half-Moon.

I heard, years ago, the difference illustrated between the Yankee and the Dutchman. There was an explosion on a Mississippi River steamboat; the boiler burst, and the passengers were thrown into the air. After the accident, the captain came around to inquire in regard to them, and he found the Dutchman, but not the Yankee; and he said to the Dutchman, "Did you see anything of that Yankee?" The Dutchman replied, "Oh, yes; when I was going up, he was coming down." Now, the Dutch blood may not be quite so quick as the Yankee, but it is more apt to be sure it is right before it goes ahead. Dutch blood means patience, fidelity, and perseverance. It means faith in God also. Yes, it means generosity. I hardly ever knew a mean Dutchman. That man who fell down dead in my native village couldn't have had any Dutch blood in him. He was over eighty years of age, and had never given a cent to any benevolent object during his life; but in a moment of weakness, when he saw a face of distress, he gave a cent to an unfortunate man, and immediately dropped dead; and the surgeon declared, after the post-mortem examination, that he died of sudden enlargement of the heart. Neither is there any such mean man among the Dutch as that man who was so economical in regard to meat that he cut off a dog's

tail and roasted it and ate the meat, and then gave the bone back to the dog. Or that other mean man I heard of, who was so economical that he used a wart on the back of his neck for a collar-button. I have so much faith in Holland blood, that I declare the more Hollanders come to this country the better we ought to like it. Wherever they try to land, let them land on our American soil; for all this continent is going to be after a while under one government. I suppose you have noticed how the governments on the southern part of the continent are gradually melting into our own; and soon the difficulty on the north between Canada and the United States will be amicably settled and the time will come when the United States Government will offer hand and heart in marriage to beautiful and hospitable Canada; and when the United States shall so offer its hand in marriage, Canada will blush and look down, and, thinking of her allegiance across the sea, will say, "Ask mother."

In a suggestive letter which the chairman of the committee wrote me, inviting me to take part in this entertainment, he very beautifully and potently said that the Republic of the Netherlands had given hospitality in the days that are past to English Puritans and French Huguenots and Polish refugees and Portuguese Jews, and prospered; and I thought, as I read that letter, "Why, then, if the Republic of the Netherlands was so hospitable to other nations, surely we ought to be hospitable to all nations, especially to Hollanders." Oh, this absurd talk about "America for Americans!" Why, there isn't a man here to-night that is not descended from some foreigner, unless he is an Indian. Why, the native Americans were Modocs, Chippewas, Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Seminoles, and such like. Suppose, when our fathers were trying to come to this country, the Indians had stood on Plymouth Rock and at the Highlands of the Navesink, and when the Hollanders and the Pilgrim Fathers attempted to land, had shouted, "Back with you to Holland and to England; America for Americans!" Had that watchword been an early and successful cry, where now stand our cities would have stood Indian wigwams; and canoes instead of steamers would have tracked the Hudson and the Connecticut; and, instead of the Mississippi being the main artery of the continent,



it would have been only a trough for deer and antelope and wild pigeons to drink out of. What makes this cry of "America for the Americans" the more absurd and the more inhuman is that some in this country, who themselves arrived here in their boyhood or only one or two generations back, are joining in the cry. Having escaped themselves into this beautiful land, they say: "Shut the door of escape for others." Getting themselves on our shores in the life-boat from the shipwreck, they say: "Haul up the boat on the beach, and let the rest of the passengers go to the bottom." Men who have yet on them a Holland, or Scotch, or German, or English, or Irish brogue, are crying out: "America for the Americans!" What if the native inhabitants of heaven (I mean the angels, the cherubim, and the seraphim, for they were born there) should say to us when we arrive there at last, "Go back. Heaven for the Heavensians!"

Of course, we do not want foreign nations to make this a convict colony. We wouldn't let their thieves and anarchists land here, nor even wipe their feet on the mat of the outside door of this continent. When they send their criminals here, let us put them in chains and send them back. This country must not be made the dumping-ground for foreign vagabondism. But for the hard-working and industrious people who come here, do not let us build up any wall around New York harbor to keep them out, or it will after a while fall down with a red-hot thunderburst of God's indignation. Suppose you are a father, and you have five children. One is named Philip, and Philip says to his brothers and sisters: "Now, John, you go and live in the small room at the end of the hall. George, you go and stay up in the garret. Mary, you go and live in the cellar, and Fannie, you go and live in the kitchen, and don't any of you come out. I am Philip, and will occupy the parlor; I like it; I like the lambrequins at the window, and I like the pictures on the wall. I am Philip, and, being Philip, the parlor shall only be for the Philipians." You, the father, come home, and you say: "Fannie, what are you doing in the kitchen? Come out of there." And you say to Mary, "Mary, come out of that cellar." And you say to John, "John, don't stay shut up in that small room. Come out of there." And you say to George, "George, come down

out of that garret." And you say to the children, "This is my house. You can go anywhere in it that you want to." And you go and haul Philip out of the parlor, and you tell him that his brothers and sisters have just as much right in there as he has, and that they are all to enjoy it. Now, God is our Father, and this world is a house of several rooms, and God has at least five children—the North American continent, the South American continent, the Asiatic continent, the European continent, and the African continent. The North American continent sneaks away, and says: "I prefer the parlor. You South Americans, Asiatics, Europeans, and Africans, you stay in your own rooms; this is the place for me; I prefer it, and I am going to stay in the parlor; I like the front windows facing on the Atlantic, and the side windows facing on the Pacific, and the nice piazza on the south where the sun shines, and the glorious view from the piazza to the north." And God, the Father, comes in and sends thunder and lightning through the house, and says to his son, the American continent: "You are no more my child than are all these others, and they have just as much right to enjoy this part of my house as you have."

It will be a great day for the health of our American atmosphere when this race prejudice is buried in the earth. Come, bring your spades, and let us dig a grave for it; and dig it deep down into the heart of the earth, but not clear through to China, lest the race prejudice should fasten the prejudice on the other side. Having got this grave deeply dug, come, let us throw in all the hard things that have been said and written between Jew and Gentile, between Protestant and Catholic, between Turk and Russian, between French and English, between Mongolian and anti-Mongolian, between black and white; and then let us set up a tombstone and put upon it the epitaph: "Here lies the monster that cursed the earth for nearly three thousand years. He has departed to go to perdition, from which he started. No peace to his ashes."

From this glorious Holland dinner let us go out trying to imitate the virtues of our ancestors, the men who built the Holland dikes, which are the only things that ever conquered the sea, slapping it in the face and making it go

back. There was a young Holland engineer who was to be married to a maiden living in one of the villages sheltered by these dikes, and in the evening there was to be a banquet in honor of the wedding, which was to be given to the coming bridegroom. But all day long the sea was raging and beating against the dikes. And this engineer reasoned with himself: "Shall I go to the banquet which is to be given in my honor, or shall I go and join my workmen down on the dikes?" And he finally concluded that it was his duty to go and join his workmen on the dikes, and he went. And when the poor fellows toiling there saw that their engineer was coming to help them, they set up a cheer. The engineer had a rope put around him and was lowered down into the surf, and other men came and had ropes put about them, and they were lowered down. And after a while the cry was heard: "More mortar and more blocks of stone!" But there were no more. "Now," said the Holland engineer, "men, take off your clothes!" and they took them off, and they stopped up the holes in the dikes. But still the stones were giving way against the mighty wrath of the strong sea which was beating against them. And then the Holland engineer said: "We cannot do any more. My men, get on your knees and pray to God for help." And they got down on their knees and they prayed; and the wind began to silence, and the sea began to cease its angry wavings, and the wall was saved; and all the people who lived in the village went on with the banquet and the dance, for they did not know their peril, and they were all saved.

What you and I ought to do is to go out and help build up the dikes against the ocean of crime and depravity and sin which threatens to overwhelm this nation. Men of Holland, descend!—to the dikes! to the dikes! Bring all the faith and all the courage of your ancestors to the work, and then get down on your knees, and kneel with us on the creaking wall, and pray to the God of the wind and of the sea that He may hush the one and silence the other.