

PETTY BUT MEAN.

REV. DR. TALMAGE ON SMALL ANNOYANCES.

Mental and Physical Horrors of This Mortal Life - Disagreeable Little Remarks and Minor Miseries - Human Beings Tormented by Petty Ills for Their Good - Lessons to Be Drawn from the Minor Misery and Annoyances of This Life - Little Things of Great Power in Shaping the Course of Men's Lives - The Lord's Way Always the Best.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., March 18.-At the lecture this morning the Rev. Dr. DeWitt Talmage, D. D., expounded appropriate passages of Scripture. He then gave out the hymn beginning:

Must Jesus bear the cross alone, And all the world go free? Not there's a cross for every one, And there's a cross for me.

The subject of his discourse was "Stinging Annoyances," and his text Deuteronomy, vii., 20: "The Lord thy God will send the hornet."

It seems as if the insect world was determined to war against the human race. It is every year attacking the grain fields and the orchards and the vineyards. The Colorado beetle, the Nebraska grasshopper, the New Jersey locust, the universal potato destroyer, seem to carry on the work which was begun many years ago when the insects buzzed out of Noah's ark at the door was opened.

In my text the hornet flies out on its mission. It is a species of wasp, swift in its motion and violent in its sting. Its touch is torture to man or beast. We have all seen the cattle run bellowing from the out of its stings. In boyhood we used to stand cautiously looking at the globular nest hung from the tree branch, and while we were looking at the wonderful pasteboard covering we were struck with something that sent us shrieking away.

CONQUERED BY HORNETS. The hornet goes in swarms. It has captured over hundreds, and twenty of them attacking one man will produce certain death. The Persians attempted to conquer a Christian city, but the elephants and the beasts on which the Persians rode were assailed by the hornet, so that the whole army was broken up and the besieged city was rescued. This burning and noxious insect stung out the Hittites and Canaanites from their country. What the gleaming sword and chariot of war could not accomplish was done by the puncture of an insect. The Lord sent the hornet.

My friends, when we are assailed by behemoths of trouble—great behemoths of trouble—we become chivalric, and we assault them; we get on the high-metalled steed of our courage, and make a charge as if they were giants, and God be with us, we come out stronger and better than when we went in. But, alas for these insect annoyances of life—these foes too small to shoot—these things without any avardrop weight—the crickets and the midges, and the flies, and the wasps, and the hornets! In other words, it is the small stinging annoyances of our life which drive us out and use us up. Into the best conditioned life, for some grand and glorious purpose, God sends the hornet.

MINISTERS OF SENSITIVE NERVES. I remark in the first place that these small stinging annoyances may come in the shape of a sensitive nervous system. People who are prostrated under typhoid fever or with broken bones get plenty of sympathy, but who pities anybody that is nervous? The doctors say, and the family says, "Oh, she's only a little nervous; that's all." The sound of a heavy foot, the harsh clearing of a throat, a discord in music, the want of harmony between the shawl and the glove on the same person, a cruel answer, a passing remark, a word from the cook, any one of a hundred annoyances opens the door for the hornet. The fact is, that the vast majority of the people in this country are overworked, and their nerves are the first to give out. A great many people are under the strain of Laxton, when he was told by his physician that if he did not stop working while he was in such poor physical health he would die. He responded: "Doctor, when I am in the street, I must keep going around." These persons of whom I speak have a blending sensitiveness. The flow of light on anything raw, and these persons are like the canaries spoken of in the text, or in the context—they have a very thin covering, and are vulnerable at all points. And the Lord sent the hornet.

DISAGREEABLE LITTLE REMARKS. As these small insect annoyances may come in the shape of friends and acquaintances who are always saying disagreeable things. There are some people you can not be with for half an hour but you feel cheered and comforted. Then there are other people you can not be with for five minutes before you feel miserable. They do not mean to disturb you, but they sting you to the bone. They gather on all the yarn which the gossip spins and peddle it. They gather up all the loose ends of the conversation, and pry about your business, about your homes, about your church, and they make your ear the funnel into which they pour it. They laugh heartily when they tell you as though it were a good joke, you so strong that you can not be hurt by anything. These people are brought to our attention in the Bible, in the book of Ruth: Naomi went forth beautiful and with the finest of worldly prospects into another land, but after a while she came back a widow, and with a very thin covering, and she was vulnerable at all points. What did her friends do when she came back to the city? They all went out and instead of giving her common-sense consolation, what did they do? Read the book of Ruth and find out. They threw up their hands and said: "Is this Naomi?" as much as to say, "How very bad you look!" When I entered the ministry I looked very pale for years, and every year for four or five years, a hundred times a year, I was asked if I was not in consumption. And passing through the room I would sometimes, hear people sigh and cry, "Ah! not long for this world!" I resolved in those times that I never, in any conversation, would say anything depressing, and by the help of God I have kept the resolution. These people of whom I speak reap and bind in the great harvest field of discouragement. Some days you greet them with a hilarious "good morning," and they come bustling at you with some depressing information. The Lord sent the hornet.

CRITICISM OF STANLEY. It is astonishing how some people prefer to write and to say disagreeable things. There was the case when years ago Henry M. Stanley returned after his magnificent exploit of finding Dr. David Livingstone, and when Mr. Stanley stood before the straits of Europe, and many of the small critics of the day, under pretense of getting geographical information, put to him most insolent questions he folded his arms and refused to answer. At the very time when you would suppose all decent men would have applauded the heroism of the man there were those to hiss. The Lord sent the hornet. And when afterward that man sat down on the western coast of Africa, sick and worn perhaps in the grand achievement of the age in the way of geographical discovery, there were small critics all over the world to buzz and buzz, and caricature and deride him, and when a few weeks after that he got the London papers, as he opened them, out flew the hornet. When I see that there are so many people in the world who like to say disagreeable things, and write disagreeable things, I come almost in my weaker moments to believe what a man said to me in Philadelphia one Monday morning. I went to get the horse that was at the liver, and the hostler, a plain man, said to me: "Mr. Talmage, I saw that you presided to the young men yesterday." I said "Yes." He said, "No use, no use, man's a failure."

MINOR PERSONAL ANNOYANCES. The small insect annoyances of life sometimes come in the shape of a local physical trouble which does not amount to a positive prostration, but which bothers you when you want to feel the best. Perhaps it is a sick headache which has been the plague of your life, and you suppose some occasion of mirth, or sociality, or usefulness, and when the clock strikes the hour you cannot make your appearance. Perhaps the trouble is between the ear and the forehead, in the shape of a con-

rage twinge. Nobody can see it or sympathize with you; but just at the time when you want to do your best, and your disposition is brightest, you feel a sharp, keen, disconcerting thrust. The Lord sent the hornet. Perhaps these small insect annoyances will come in the shape of a domestic irritation. The partner and the kitchen do not always harmonize. To get good service and to keep it is one of the great questions of the country. Sometimes it may be the arrogance and insubordination of the employees; but whatever be the fact, we all admit there are these insect annoyances winging their way out from the culinary department. If the grace of God be not in the heart of the housekeeper, she cannot maintain her equilibrium. The men come home at night and hear the story of these annoyances and say, "Oh! these home troubles are very little things." They are small, small as wasps, but their sting, Martha's nerves were all unstrung when she rushed in asking Christ to remove Mary, and there are tens of thousands of women who are dying, stung to death by these pestiferous domestic annoyances. The Lord sent the hornet.

MERCHANTS FALL UNDER NOTHING. These small insect disturbances may also come in the shape of business irritations. There are men here who went through 1857 and 1858, and who went through 1873 and 1874, and who went through 1892, without being hurt. These men are every day imbued by little annoyances—a clerk's ill manners, or a blot of ink on a bill of lading, or the extravagance of a partner who overdraws his account, or the unyieldingness of a business rival, or the whispering of business confidences in the street, or the making of some little bad debt which was against your judgment just to please somebody else. It is a family of troubles which kill the merchants. Panic comes only once in ten or twenty years. It is the constant din of these every-day annoyances which is sending so many of our best merchants to the grave. When our national commerce fell flat on its face, these men stood up and felt almost defiant; but their life is giving way now under the swarms of these pestiferous annoyances. The Lord sent the hornet.

I have noticed in the history of some of my congregation that their annoyances are multiplying, and that they have a hundred where they used to have ten. The naturalist tells us that a wasp sometimes has a family of ten or a thousand wasps, and it does seem as if every annoyance of your life bred a million. By the help of God to-day I want to show you the other side. The hornet is of no use! O, my friends, the naturalist tells us that there are thousands of wasps, and they kill spiders and they clear the atmosphere of our skies. These annoyances are sent on us, I think, to wake us up from our lethargy.

LESSONS OF THE SMALL ILLS. There is nothing that makes a man so lively as a nest of "yellow jackets," and I think that these annoyances are intended to persuade us of the fact that this is not a world for us to stop in. If we had a bed of every thing that was attractive and soft and easy, what would we want of heaven? You think that the hollow tree sends the hornet; I want to correct your opinion. The Lord sent the hornet.

Then I also think these annoyances come upon us to culture our patience. In the gymnasium you see the parallel bars, and parallel bars with holes over each other for pegs to be put in. Then the gymnast takes a peg in each hand and he begins to climb one inch at a time, or two inches, and getting his strength cultured, reaches after while the ceiling, and it seems to me that the annoyances in life are a moral gymnasium, each worry a peg by which we are to climb higher and higher in Christian attainment. We all love to see patients who are afflicted with a disease, and who are a child of the storm. If you had everything desirable and there was nothing more to get, what would you want with patience? The only time to culture it is when you are afflicted with a disease, and you are a child of the storm. If you had everything desirable and there was nothing more to get, what would you want with patience? The only time to culture it is when you are afflicted with a disease, and you are a child of the storm.

THOUGHTS IN VARIOUS SHAPES. I have found my theory in regard to small annoyances and vexations. It takes just so much trouble to fit us for usefulness and for heaven. The only question is, whether we shall take it in the bulk or pulverized and granulated. Here is one man who takes it in the bulk. His back is broken, or his eyesight put out, or some other awful calamity befalls him, while the vast majority of people take the thing piecemeal. Which way would you rather have it? Of course this is a false, but I have five aching teeth than one broken jaw. Better ten fly blisters than one amputation. Better twenty squalls than one cyclone. There may be a difference of opinion as to whether you would rather have a great deal of trouble like homoeopathic doses—small pellets of annoyance rather than some knock-down dose of calamity. Instead of the thunderbolt, give us the hornet. If you have a bank you would a great deal rather that fifteen should come in with checks less than a hundred dollars than to have two depositors come in the same day each wanting his \$10,000. In this latter case, you cough and look down at the floor and at the ceiling. Before you look into the safe. Now, my friends, would you not rather have these small drafts of annoyance on your bank of faith than some all-staggering demand upon your endurance? I say, "Why don't you strike harder?" "I don't surrender to small annoyances. In the village of Hamlin, tradition says, there was an invasion of rats, and these small creatures almost devoured the town and threatened to leave it forever. Of course this is a fable, but I wish I could, on the sweet flute of the gospel, draw forth all the nibbling and burrowing annoyances of your life and play them down into the depths forever.

THE VALUE OF PERFECT LIVES. How many touches did the artist give to his picture of "Cottopaxi," or his "Heart of the Andes"? I suppose about fifty thousand touches. I hear the canvas saying: "Why do you keep me trembling with that pencil? No wonder you put it on in one dash!" "No," says the artist, "I know how to make a painting; it will take fifty thousand touches." And I want you, my friends, to understand that it is these ten thousand annoyances which, under God, are making pictures of your life, to be hung at last in the galleries of heaven, fit for angels to look at. God knows how to make a picture. It is the little troubles of life that are laying a block of stone-houses. Catherine de Medici got her death from smelling a poisonous rose. Columbus, by stopping and asking for a piece of bread and a drink of water, a Franciscan convent, was led to the discovery of a new world. And there is an intimate connection between trifles and immensities, between minutiae and epochal things.

Now, be careful to let none of those annoyances go through your soul unarranged. Consult them to administer to your spiritual wealth. The scratch of a sixpenny nail sometimes produces lock-jaw, and the clip of a most infinitesimal annoyance may damage you forever. Do not let any annoyance or perplexity come across your soul without its making you better. Our national government does not think it belittling to put a tax on pins, and a tax on buckles, and a tax on shoes. The individual taxes do not amount to much, but in the aggregate it would be a great revenue of spiritual strength and satisfaction. A bee can suck honey even out of a nettle; and if you have the grace of God in your heart, you can get sweetness out of that which would otherwise irritate and annoy.

CONQUERING PETTY ILLS. A returned missionary told me that a company of adventurers roving up the Ganges were stung to death by flies that infested that region at certain seasons. I have seen the earth strewed with the carcasses of men slain by insect annoyances. The only way to get prepared for the great troubles of life is to conquer these small troubles. What would you say of a soldier who refused to load his gun, or to go to the conflict because it was only a skirmish, saying: "I am not going to expend my ammunition on a skirmish, and I am not there for a general engagement, and then you will see how courageous I am, and what battling I will do!" The general would say to such a man, "If you are not faithful in a skirmish, you would find nothing in a general engagement." And I have to tell you, O Christian men, if you can not apply the principles of Christ's religion on a small scale, you will never be able to apply them on a large scale.

If I had my way with you I would have you possess all worldly prosperity. I would have you each own a garden—a river flowing through it, geraniums and shrubs on the borders, and a flower bed as beautiful as though the rainbow had fallen. I would have you a house, a splendid mansion, and the bed should be covered with upholstery dipped in the setting sun. I would have every hall in my house carpeted with the finest of carpets, and then I would have the four quarters of the globe pour in all their luxuries on your table, and I should have forks of silver and knives of gold, inlaid with diamonds and emeralds. Then I should send each one of you the finest horses and your pick of the equipages of the world. Then I would have you live 150 years, and you should not have a pain or ache until the last breath.

GOD'S WAY ALWAYS BEST. "Not each one of us?" you say. Yes; each one of you. "Not to your enemies?" Yes; the only difference I would make with them would be that I would put a little extra gilt on their walls and a little extra embroidery on their slippers. But you say, "Why does not God give us all these things?" Ah! I bethink myself. He is wiser. It would make fools and braggards of us if we had our way. No man puts his best picture in the parlor or vestibule of his house. God meant this world to be only the vestibule of heaven, that great gallery of the universe toward which we are striving. We must not have it too good in this world or we would want no heaven.

Polycarp was condemned to be burned to death. The stake was planted. He was fastened to it. The faggots were placed around him, and the fire kindled, but history tells us that the flames bent outward like the canvas of a ship in a stout breeze, so that the flames, instead of destroying Polycarp, were only a wall between him and his enemies. They had a great deal to do with the matter; the flames would not touch him. Well, my hearer, I want you to understand that by God's grace the flames of trial, instead of consuming your soul, are only going to be a wall of defense and a canopy of blessing. God is going to fulfill to you the blessing and the promise as he did to Polycarp: "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned." Now you do not understand, you do not know, hearer, in heaven you will bless God even for the hornet.

CORRECTING A MISTAKE. The tender of a drawbridge over Harlem river, who had swung his portcullis to allow a schooner to pass up the river, was warmly and violently assailed by the captain of the craft for some slight inattention to duty a few days previous.

"If I had you down on the deck of this vessel I'd break your neck," said the skipper, shaking his fist like a small ham.

"Yer would, would ye, yer check-headed salt-horse? If ye was on the plankin' of the bridge I'd knock the dure wid yer ugly carcass, an' hang yer up to dry on the truss."

"Shut up, you animated slush bucket. For two brass plus I'd send my cabin boy up to feed distillery hogs with your remains, you chop-snooted son of a gun."

"Arrah, ye bandy-legged horse-marine, I've a big notion to drop down off the bridge an' maul yer to a pulp."

"Well, why don't yer drop?" sneered the captain. "Just drop and I'll feed fishes with you."

"Yer a lyin' skip-jack."

"Yer a red-nosed scavenger with blue mould and a cock eye. I am going to tie ye up just above here, and I'll give you a lively interview when I get ashore."

"Is it tie ye yer bridge to be after doin'?" inquired the grudge tender anxiously.

"That's just what I'm going to do, cap."

"Kerret, me lud. When yer have tied up yer schooner, kum oop here, and we'll take in the lager beer saloon jist ferminst the ast end of the bridge. Perhaps I've made a mistake."

"All right, my heartie. Mebbe I too was a little the quick, but I'll be there, because when I drink I always aim to do it with gentlemen."

"An' it's a gentleman yer is, cap."

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