

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

HE TALKS ON THE PETTY ANNOYANCES OF LIFE.

The Hornet on Its Mission—Varieties of Insect Annoyances—Necessity for Little Troubles—They Are All Blessings in Disguise.

A World of Trouble.

Dr Talmage Sunday chose for his discourse a theme that will appeal to most people—viz., "The Petty Annoyances of Life." His text was, "The Lord thy God will send the hornet." Deuteronomy vii, 20.

It seems as if the insectile world were determined to extirpate the human race. It boudoirs the granaries and the orchards, the vineyards. The Colorado beetle, the Nebraska grasshopper, the New Jersey locust, the universal potato bug seem to carry on the work which was begun ages ago when the insects buzzed out of Noah's ark as 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 men or beast. We have all seen the cattle run bellowing under the cut of its lance. 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 covering we were struck with something that sent us shrieking away. The hornet goes in swarms. It has captains over hundreds, and twenty of them alight on one man will produce death.

The Persians attempted to conquer a Christian city, but the elephants who 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 the Canaanites from their country. What gleaming sword and chariot of war could not accomplish was done by the puncture of an insect. The Lord sent the hornets.

Small Annoyances.

My friends, when we are assaulted by great behemoths of trouble, we become chivalric, and we assault them. We get on the high mettled steed of our courage, and we make a cavalry charge at them, and if God be with us, we come out stronger and better than when we went in. But, alas, for these insectile annoyances of life—these foes too small to shoot—these things without any avenging weight, the gnats, 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. In the best conditioned life, for some grand and glorious purpose, God has sent the hornet.

I remark, in the first place, that these small, stinging annoyances may come in the shape of a nervous organization. People who are prostrated under typhoid fevers or with broken bones get plenty of sympathy, but who pities anybody that is nervous? The doctors say, and the family say, and everybody 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, a want of harmony between the shawl and the glove on the same person, a curt answer, a passing slight, the wind from the east, any one of 10,000 annoyances opens the door for the hornet. The fact is that the vast majority of the people in this country are overworked and overworn, and are the first to give out. A great multitude are under the strain of Loyden, who, 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, responded, "Doctor, whether I live or die, the wheel must keep going round." These sensitive persons of whom I speak have a bleeding sensitiveness. The flies love to light on anything raw, and these people are like the Canaanites 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."

Like Insects.

Again, the small insect annoyances may come to us in the shape of friends and acquaintances that are always saying disagreeable things. There are some people you cannot be with for half an hour but you feel cheered and comforted. There are other people you cannot 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 up all the yarn which the gossips spin and retail it. They gather up all the adverse criticisms about your person, about your business, about your home, 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, and you laugh, too—outside.

These people are brought to our attention in the Bible, in the book of Ruth. Naomi was a most beautiful and with the finest of worldly prospects, and into another land, but, after some time, she came back widowed and sick and poor. What did her friends do when she came 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 throw up their hands and said, "Is this Naomi?" as much as to say, "How awful you do 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 had not the consumption, and passing through the room I would sometimes hear people sigh and say, "Ach, no! for this world!" I was sold out for those times that I never in any conversation would be depressed, and by the help of God I have kept the resolution. These people of whom I speak reap and bind in the green harvest field of disengagement. Some day you greet them with a hilarious "good-morning," and they come buzzing at you with some depressing information. "The Lord sent the hornet."

When I see 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 at the livery stable, and the hostler, a plain man, said to me, "Mr. Talmage, I saw that you preached to the young men yesterday!" I said, "Yes." He said, "No—use no—use—man's failure."

Physical Troubles.

The small insect annoyances of life sometimes come in the shape of 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 appoint some occasion of mirth or sympathy 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 neuralgic twinge. Nobody can see it or sympathize with it, but just at the time when you want your intellect clearest and your disposition brightest you feel a sharp, keen, stinging thrust. "The Lord sent the hornet."

Perhaps these small insect annoyances will come in the shape of a domestic irritation. The parlor and the kitchen do not always harmonize. To get good service and to keep it is one of the greatest questions of the country. Sometimes it may be the arrogance and inconsiderateness of employers, 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 can annihilate 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 they sting. Martha's nerves were all unstrung when she rushed in, asking Christ to scold 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."

These small insect disturbances may also come in the shape of business irritations. There are men here who went through 1857 and the 24th of September, 1869, without losing their balance, who are every day unburdened by little annoyances—a clerk's ill manners, or a blot on a bill of lading, or the extravaganza of a partner who overdraws his account, or the disappearance of a business rival, or the whispering of store confidences in the street, or the making of some little bad debt which was against your judgment, just to please somebody else.

The Lord Sends Hornets.

It is not the panics that kill the merchants. Panics come only once in ten or twenty years. It is the constant din of these everyday 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 going away now under the swarm of these pestiferous annoyances. "The Lord sent the hornet."

I have noticed in the history of some that their annoyances are multiplying and that they have a hundred where they have ten. The naturalist tells us that a wasp sometimes has a family of 20,000 wasps, and it does seem as if every annoyance of life had a family of a million. By the help of God I want to show you the other side. The hornet is no use? Oh, yes! The naturalists tell us they are very important in the world's economy. They kill spiders, and they clear the atmosphere, and I really believe God sends the annoyances of our life upon us to kill the spiders of the soul and to clear the atmosphere of our skies.

These annoyances are sent to us, I think, to wake us up from our lethargy. 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 everything that was attractive and soft and easy, what would we want of heaven? We think that the hornet sends the hornet, or we may think that the devil sends the hornet. I want to correct your opinion. "The Lord sent the hornet."

Then I think these annoyances come on us to culture our patience. In the gymnasium you find upright parallel bars, upright 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 awhile the ceiling. And it seems to me that these annoyances in life are a moral gymnasium, each worriment a peg with which we are to climb higher and higher in Christian attainment. We all love to see patience, but it cannot be cultured in fair weather. Patience is a child of the storm. If you had everything desirable and there was nothing more to get, you would have no patience? Then I had my way with you, I would have you possess all possible worldly prosperity. I would have you each one a garden, a river flowing through it, geraniums and shrubs on the sides, and the grass and flowers 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 draped in the setting sun. I would have every hall in your house set with statues and statuettes, and then I would have the four quarters of the globe pour in all their treasures on each table, and you should have forks of solid gold, knives of gold, inlaid with diamonds and amethysts. Then you should each one of you have the finest horses, and your pick of the equipments of the world. Then I would have you live 150 years, and you should not have a pain or ache until the last breath.

Wisdom in All Things. A returned missionary told us that a company of adventurers rowing up the Ganges were stung to death by flies 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 enter into the conflict because it was only a skirmish, saying: "I am not going to expend my ammunition on a skirmish. Wait until there comes 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 be nothing in a general engagement." And I have to tell you O Christian, man, if you cannot apply the principles of Christ's religion on a small scale you will never be able to apply them on a large scale.

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