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# TRIVIAL TROUBLES.

"THE LORD THY GOD WILL SEND THE HORNET."

## LIFE'S SMALL ANNOYANCES.

Rev. Dr. Talmage Preaches on the Mission of the Hornet-Analogous Ills in Christian Life Which Put to the Test the Individual Fortitude and Patience.

Washington, Oct. 8.—This sermon by Dr. Talmage deals with a subject which appeals to all classes and conditions of men. His text is Deuteronomy vii, 20, "The Lord thy God will send the hornet."

It seems as if the insectile world were determined to extirpate the human race. It bombards the grain-fields and the orchards and the vineyards. The Colorado beetle, the Nebraska grasshopper, the New Jersey locust, the universal potato beetle, 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 man or beast. We have all seen the cattle run bellowing under the cut of its lancet. 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 20 of them alighting on 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 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 hornet."

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 avoirdupois 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.

Again, the small insect annoyances may come to us in the shape of friends and acquaintances who are always saying disagreeable things. There are some people you cannot be with for half an hour but you feel cheered and comforted. Then 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 gossip 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 went forth beautiful and with the finest worldly prospects into another land, but after awhile 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 and 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 awful had you look!" When I entered the ministry, I looked very pale for years, and every year, for four or five years, many times a year I was asked if I had not consumption, and passing through the room, I would sometimes hear people sigh and say, "A-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 day you greet them with a hilarious "Good morning," and they come buzzing at you with some depressing information. "The Lord sent the hornet."

It is astonishing how some people prefer to write and to say disagreeable things. That was the case when Henry M. Stanley returned after his magnificent exploit of finding David Livingstone. When Mr. Stanley stood before the savants of Europe and many of the small critics of the day, under the pretense of getting geographical information, put to him 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 afterwards that man sat down on the western coast of Africa, sick and worn out, with perhaps the grandest 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 after awhile 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 at

the lively 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 a failure."

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 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 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, disconcerting 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 great questions of the country. Sometimes it may be the arrogance and inconsiderateness of employes; 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.

These small insect disturbances may also come in the shape of business irritation. There are men here who went through the 24th of September, 1869, and the panics of 1873 and 1893 without losing their balance who are every day unhorsed by little annoyances—a clerk's bill manners, or a blot of ink on a bill of lading, or the extravagance of a partner who overdraws his account, or the underselling by 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; but you wanted to please somebody else.

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 20,000 wasps, and it does seem as if every annoyance of your life brooded a million. By the help of God, to-day I want to show you the other side. The hornet is of no use? Oh, yes! The naturalist tells 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 on 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 hollow tree 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 cultivate our patience. In the gymnasium you find upright 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 cultivated, reaches after a while 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 cultivated in fair weather. Patience is 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 cultivate it is when you are lied about and sick and half dead.

Nothing but the furnace will ever burn out of us the clinker and the slag. I have formed this 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 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, in piecemeal. Better have five aching teeth than one broken jaw; better ten fifty blisters than an amputation, better 20 squalls than one cyclone. There may be a difference of opinion as to allopathy and homeopathy, but in this matter of trouble I like homeopathy. I do not like to take a dose of small pellets of annoyance rather than some knockdown dose of calamity. Instead of the thunderbolt give us the hornet. If you have a bank, you would a great deal rather that 50 men would come in with checks less than \$100 than to have two depositors come in the same day, each wanting his \$10,000. In this latter case you cough and look down to the floor and you look up to 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? But remember that little as well as great annoyances equally require you to trust in Christ for succor and for deliverance from impatience and irritability. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

How many touches did Mr. Church give to his picture of "Cotopaxi" or his "Heart of the Andes"? I suppose about 50,000 touches. I hear the canvas saying: "Why do you keep me trembling with that pencil so long? Why don't you put it or in one dash?" "No," says Mr. Church; "I know how to make a painting. It will take 50,000 of these touches." And I want you, my friends, to understand that it is these ten thousand annoyances which, under God, are making up the picture 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.

I go into a sculptor's studio and see him shaping a statue. He has a chisel in one hand and a mallet in the other, and he gives a very gentle stroke—click, click, click! I say, "Why don't you strike harder?" "Oh," he replies, "that would shatter the statue. I can't do it that way. I must do it the other way." So he works on, and after awhile the features come out, and everybody that enters the studio is charmed and fascinated. Well, God has your soul under process of development, and it is the little annoyances and vexations of life that are chiseling out your immortal nature. It is click, click, click! I wonder why some great providence does not come and with one stroke prepare you for heaven. Ah, no! God says that is not the way, and so he keeps on by strokes of little vexations until at last you shall be a glad spectacle for angels and for men.

You know that a large fortune may be spent in small change, and a vast amount of moral character may go away in small depletions. It is the little troubles of life that are having more effect upon you than great ones. A swarm of locusts will kill a grainfield sooner than the incursion of three or four cattle. You say, "Since I lost my child, since I lost my property, I have been a different man." But you do not recognize the architecture of little annoyances that are hewing, digging, cutting, shaping, splitting and interjoining your moral qualities. Rats may sink a ship. One lucifer match may send destruction through a block of storehouses. 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 at a Franciscan convent, was led to the discovery of a new world. And there is an intimate connection between trifles and immensities, between nothings and everything.

Now, be careful to let none of those annoyances go through your soul unarraigned. Compel them to administer to your spiritual wealth. The scratch of a sixpenny nail sometimes produces lockjaw, 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.

A returned missionary told me that a company of adventurers rowing up the Ganges were stung to death by flies that infest that region at certain seasons. The earth had been strewn 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 into the conflict because it was only a skirmish, saying: "I am not going to expend my ammunition on a skirmish. Wait until there is 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 men, if you cannot apply the principles of Christ's religion on a small scale you will never be able to apply them on a larger scale. If 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 beds should be covered with upholstery dipped 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 luxuries on your table, and you should have forks of silver and knives of gold, inlaid with diamonds and rubysts.

"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 to myself. He is wiser. It would make fools and sluggards of us if we had our way. No man puts his best picture in the portico 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 aspiring. 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 fagots were placed around him, 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 actually to destroy him with the pincers. The flames would not touch him. Well, my hearer, I want you to understand that, 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 blessings and the promises, as he did to Polycarp. "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." Now you do not understand, but you shall know hereafter. In heaven you will bless God even for the hornet.

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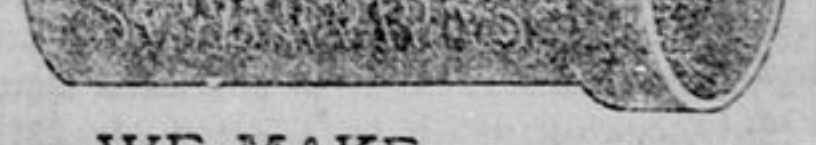
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