GOD'S THRESHING

DR. TALMAGE ON HUMAN TRIALS.

An Eloquent Sermon in Which the Winnowing of Grain Is Used as an Illustration of the Good That Is Brought Out of Evil.

TEXT: *"For the fitches are not thrashed with a thrashing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin, but the fitches are beaten out with a staff and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised because he will not ever be thrashing it."*—Isaiah xxviii., 27, 28.

There are three kinds of seed mentioned—fitches, cummin and corn. Of the last we all know. But it may be well to state that the fitches and the cummin were small seeds like the carraway or the chickpea. When these grains or herbs were to be thrashed, they were thrown on the floor, and the workmen would come around with staff or rod or flail and beat them until the seed would be separated, but when the corn was to be thrashed that was thrown on the floor, and the men would fasten horses or oxen to a cart with iron dented wheels. That cart would be drawn around the thrashing floor, and so the work would be accomplished. Different kinds of thrashing for different products. "The fitches are not thrashed with a thrashing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin, but the fitches are beaten out with a staff and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised because he will not ever be thrashing it."

The great thought that the text presses upon our souls is that we all go through some kind of thrashing process. The fact that you may be devoting your life to honorable and noble purposes will not win you any escape. Wilberforce, the Christian emancipator, was in his day derisively called "Dr. Cantwell." Thomas Babinton Macaulay, the advocate of all that was good long before he became the most conspicuous historian of his day, was caricatured in one of the quarterly reviews as "Babbletongue Macaulay." Norman McLeod, the great friend of the Scotch poor, was industriously maligned in all quarters, although on the day when he was carried out to his burial a workman stood and looked at the funeral procession and said, "If he had done nothing for anybody more than he has done for me, he should shine as the stars forever and ever." All the small wits of London had their fling at John Wesley, the father of Methodism.

If such men could not escape the maligning of the world, neither can you expect to get rid of the sharp, keen stroke of the tribulum. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Besides that there are the sicknesses, and the bankruptcies, and the irritations, and the disappointments which are ever putting a cup of aloes to your lip. Those wrinkles on your face are hieroglyphics which, if deciphered, would make out a thrilling story of trouble. The footstep of the rabbit is seen the next morning on the snow, and on the white hairs of the aged are footprints showing where swift trouble alighted.

Even amid the joys and hilarities of life trouble will sometimes break in. As when the people were assembled in the Charlestown theatre during the Revolutionary war and while they were witnessing a farce and the audience was in great gratulation the guns of an advancing army were heard and the audience broke up in wild panic and ran for their lives, so ofttimes while you are seated amid the joys and festivities of this world you hear the cannonade of some great disaster. All the fitches, and the cummin, and the corn must come down on the thrashing floor and be pounded.

My subject, in the first place, teaches us that it is no compliment to us if we escape great trial. The fitches and the cummin on the thrashing floor might look over to the corn on another thrashing floor and say: "Look at that poor, miserable, bruised corn. We have only been a little pounded, but that has been almost destroyed." Well, the corn, if it had lips, would answer and say: "Do you know the reason you have not been as much pounded as I have? It is because you are not so much worth as I am. If you were, you would be as severely run over."

Yet there men who suppose they are the Lord's favorites simply because their barns are full, and their bank account is flush, and there are no funerals in the house. It may be because they are fitches and cummin, while down at the end of the lane the poor widow may be the Lord's corn. You are but little pounded because you are but little worth, and she bruised and ground because she is the best part of the harvest.

The heft of the thrashing machine is according to the value of the grain. If you have not been much thrashed in life, perhaps there is not much to thrash. If you have not been much shaken of trouble, perhaps there is going to be a very small yield. When there are plenty of blackberries the gatherers go out with large baskets, but when the drought has almost consumed the fruit then a quart measure will do as well. It took the venomous snake on Paul's hand and the pounding of him with stones until he was taken up for dead, and the jamming against him of prison gates, and the Ephesian vociferation, and the skinned ankles of the painful stocks, and the foundering of the Alexandrian corn ship, and the beheading stroke of the Roman sheriff to bring Paul to his proper development.

It was not because Robert Moffat and Lady Rachel Russell and Frederick Oberlin were worse than other people that they had to suffer; it was because they were better and God wanted to make them best. By the carefulness of the thrashing you may always conclude the value of the grain.

Next my text teaches us that God proportions our trials to what we can bear, the staff for the fitches, the rod for the cummin, the iron wheel for the corn. Sometimes people in great trouble say, "Oh, I can't bear it?" But you did bear it, God would not have sent it upon you if He did not know that you could bear it. You trembled, and you swooned, but you got through. God will not take from your eyes one tear too many, nor from your lungs one sigh too deep, nor from your temples one throb too sharp. The perplexities of your earthly business have not in them one tangle too intricate.

You sometimes feel as if our world were full of bludgeons flying haphazard. Oh, no; they are thrashing instruments that God just suits to your case. There is not a dollar of bad debts on your ledger, or a disappointment about goods that you expected to go up, but that have gone down, or a swindle of your business partner, or a trick on the part of those who are in the same kind of business that you are, but God intended to overrule for your immortal help. "Oh," you say, "there is no need talking that way to me. I don't like to be cheated and outraged." Neither does the corn like the corn thrasher, but after it has been thrashed and winnowed it has a great deal better opinion of winnowing mills and corn thrashers.

"Well," you say, "if I could choose my troubles I would be willing to be troubled." Ah, my brother, then it would not be trouble. You would choose something that would not hurt, and unless it hurts it does not get sanctified. Your trial perhaps may be childlessness. You are fond of children. You say: "Why does God send children to that other household, where they are unwelcome and are beaten and banged about, when I would have taken them in the arms of my affections?" You say, "Any other trial but this." Your trial perhaps may be a disfigured countenance or a face that is easily caricatured, and you say, "Oh, I could endure anything if only I was good looking." And your trial perhaps is a violent temper, and you have to drive it like six unbroken horses amid the gunpowder explosions of a great holiday, and ever and anon it runs away with you. Your trial is the asthma. You say, "Oh, if it were rheumatism or neuralgia or erysipelas, but it is this asthma, and it is such an exhausting thing to breathe." Your trouble is a husband, short, sharp, snappy and cross about the house and raising a small riot because a button is off! How could you know the button is off?

Your trial is a wife ever in contest with the servants and she is a sloven. Though she was very careful about her appearance in your presence once, now she is careless, because she said her fortune is made! Your trial is a hard school lesson you cannot learn, and you have bitten your finger nails until they are a sight to behold. Everybody has some vexation or annoyance or trial, and he or she thinks it is the one least adapted. "Anything but this," all say. "Anything but this."

Oh, my hearer, are you not ashamed to be complaining all this time against God? Who manages the affairs of this world anyhow? Is it an infinite Modoc, or a Sitting Bull savage, or an omnipotent Nana Sahib! No, it is the most merciful and glorious and wise Being in all the universe. You cannot teach Omnipotence anything. You have fretted and worried almost enough. Do you not think so? Some of you are making yourselves ridiculous in the sight of the angels.

Here is a naval architect, and he draws out the plan of a ship of many thousand tons. Many workmen are engaged on it for a long while. The ship is done, and some day, with the flags up and the air gorgeous with bunting, that vessel is launched for Southampton. At that time a lad six years of age comes running down the dock with a toy boat which he has made with his own jackknife, and he says: "Here, my boat is better than yours. Just look at this jibboom and these weather cross jack braces," and he drops his little boat beside the great ship, and there is a roar of laughter on the docks.

Ah, my friends, that great ship is your life as God planned it—vast, million tonned, ocean destined, eternity bound. That little boat is your life as you are trying to hew it out and fashion it and launch it. Ah, do not try to be a rival of the great Jehovah. God is always right, and in nine cases out of ten you are wrong. He sends just the hardships, just the bankruptcies, just the cross that it is best for you to have. He knows what kind of grain you are, and He sends the right kind of thrashing machine. It will be a rod or staff or iron wheel just according as you are fitches or cummin or corn.

Again, my subject teaches us that God keeps trial on us until we let go. The farmer shouts "whoa!" to his horses as soon as the grain has dropped from the stalk. The farmer comes with his fork and tosses up the straw, and he sees that the straw has let go the grain and the grain is thoroughly thrashed. So God. Smiting rod and turning wheel both cease as soon as we let go. We hold on to this world with its pleasures and riches and emoluments, and our knuckles are so firmly set that it seems as if we could hold on forever. God comes along with some thrashing trouble and beats us loose.

We started under the delusion that this was a great world. We learned out of our geography that it was so many thousand miles in diameter and so many thousand miles in circumference, and we said, "Oh, my, what a world!" Troubles came in after life, and this trouble sliced off one part of the world, and that trouble sliced off another part of the world, and it has got to be a smaller world, and in some of your estimations a very insignificant world, and it is depreciating all the time as a spiritual property. Ten per cent. off, fifty per cent. off, and there are those here who would not give ten cents for this world—for the entire world—as a soul possession.

We thought that friendship was a grand thing. In school we used to write compositions about friendship, and perhaps we made our graduating speech on commencement day on friendship. Oh, it was a charmed thing. But does it mean as much to you as it used to? You have gone on in life, and one friend has betrayed you, and another friend has misinterpreted you, and another friend has neglected you, and friendship comes now sometimes to mean to you merely another ax to grind!

So with money. We thought if a man had a competency he was safe for all the future, but we have learned that a mortgage may be defeated by an unknown previous incumbrance; that signing your name on the back of a note may be your business death warrant; that a new tariff may change the current of trade; that a man may be rich to-day and poor to-morrow. And God, by all these misfortunes, is trying to loosen our grip, but still we hold on. God smites us with a staff, but we hold on. And He strikes us with a rod, but we hold on. And He sends over us the iron wheel of misfortune, but we hold on.

There are men who keep their grip on this world until the last moment who suggest to me the condition and conduct of the poor Indian in the boat in the Niagara rapids coming on toward the fall. Seeing that he could not escape, a moment or two before he got to the verge of the plunge he lifted a wine bottle and drank it off and then tossed the bottle into the air. So there are men who clutch the world, and they go down through the rapids of temptation and sin, and they hold on to the very last moment of life, drinking to their eternal damnation as they go over and go down.

Oh, let go! Let go! The best fortunes are in heaven. There are no absconding cashiers from that bank, no failing in promises to pay. Set your affections on things above, not on thing on the earth. Let go! Depend upon it that God will keep upon you the staff, or the rod, or the iron wheel until you do let go.

Another thing my text teaches us is that Christian sorrow is going to have a sure terminus. My text says: "Bread corn is bruised because he will not be ever thrashing it." Blessed be God for that. Pound away, O flail. Turn on, O wheel? Your work will soon be done. "He will not be ever thrashing it." Now the Christian has almost as much use in the organ for the stop tremulant as he has for the trumpet. But after awhile he will put the last dirge into the portfolio forever. So much of us as is wheat will be separated from so much as is chaff, and there will be no need of pounding.

They never cry in heaven because they have nothing to cry about. There are no tears of bereavement, for you shall have your friends all round about you. There are no tears of poverty because each one sits at the King's table and has his own chariot of salvation and free access to the wardrobe where princes get their array. No tears of sickness, for there are no pneumonias on the air, and no malarial exhalations from the rolling river of life, and no crutch for the lame limb, and no splint for the broken arm, but the pulses throbbing with the health of the eternal God in a climate like our June before the blossoms fall, or our gorgeous October before the leaves scatter.

In that land the souls will talk over the different modes of thrashing. Oh, the story of the staff that struck the fitches, and the rod that beat the cummin, and the iron wheel that went over the corn! Daniel will describe the lions, and Jonah leviathans, and Paul the elmwood whips with which he was scourged, and Eve will tell how aromatic Eden was the day she left it, and John Rogers will tell of the smart of flame, and Elijah of the fiery team that wheeled him up the sky steeps, and Christ of the numbness and paroxysm and hemorrhages of the awful crucifixion. There they are before the throne of God. On one elevation all those who were struck of the staff. On a higher elevation all those who were struck of the rod. On a highest elevation, and amid the highest altitudes of heaven, all those who were under the wheel. He will not ever be thrashing it.

Oh, my hearers, is there not enough salve in this text to make a plaster large enough to heal all your wounds? When a child is hurt, the mother is very apt to say to it, "Now, it will soon feel better." And this is what God says when He unbosoms all the trouble in the hush of this great promise. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." You may leave your pocket handkerchief sopping wet with tears on your death pillow, but you will go up absolutely sorrowless. They will wear black; you will wear white. Cypresses for them, palms for you.

You will say: "Is it possible that I am here? Is this heaven? Am I so pure now I will never do anything wrong? Am I so well that I will never again be sick? Are these companionships so firm that they will never again be broken? Is that Mary? Is that John? Is that my loved one I put away into darkness? Can it be that these are the faces of those who lay so wan and emaciated in the back room on that awful night dying? Oh how radiant they are! Look at them! How radiant they are!

"Why, how unlike this place is from what I thought when I left the world below. Ministers drew pictures of this land, but how tame compared with the reality! They told me on earth that death was sunset. No, no! It is sunrise? Glorious sunrise! I see the light now purpling the hills, and the clouds flame with the coming day."

Then the gates of heaven will be opened, and the entranced soul, with the acuteness and power of the celestial vision, will look ten thousands of miles down upon the bannered procession—a river of shimmering splendor—and will cry out, "Who are they?" And the angel of God standing close by will say, "Don't you know who they are?" "No," says the entranced soul, "I cannot guess who they are." The angel will say: "I will tell you, then, who they are. These are they who came out of great tribulation, or thrashing, and had their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb."

Oh, that I could administer some of these drops of celestial anodyne to those nervous and excited souls. If you would take enough of it, it would cure all your pangs. The thought that you are going to get through with this after awhile—all this sorrow and all this trouble. We shall have a great many grand days in heaven, but I will tell you which will be the grandest day of all the million ages of heaven. You say, "Are you sure you can tell me?" Yes, I can. It will be the day we get there. Some say heaven is growing more glorious. I suppose it is, but I do not care much about that. Heaven now is good enough for me.

History has no more gratulatory scene than the breaking in of the English army upon Lucknow, India. A few weeks before a massacre had occurred at Cawnpore, and 260 women and children had been put in a room. Then five professional butchers went in and slew them. Then the bodies of the slain were taken out and thrown into a well. As the English army came into Cawnpore they went into the room, and, oh, what a horrid scene! Sword strokes on the wall near the door, showing that the poor things had crouched when they died, and they saw also that the floor was ankle deep in blood. The soldiers walked on their heels across it lest their shoes be submerged of the carnage. And on that floor of blood there were flowing locks of hair and fragments of dresses.

Out in Lucknow they had heard of the massacre, and the women were waiting for the same awful death, waiting amid anguish untold, waiting in pain and starvation, but waiting heroically, when one day Havelock and Outram and Norman and Sir David Baird and Peel, the heroes of the English army—huzza for them!—broke in on that horrid scene, and while yet the guns were sounding, and while cheers were issuing from the starving, dying people on the one side and from the travel worn and powder blackened soldiers on the other, right there in front of the king's palace there was such a scene of handshaking and embracing and boisterous joy as would utterly confound the pen of the poet and the pencil of the painter.

And no wonder, when these emaciated women, who had suffered so heroically for Christ's sake, marched out from their incarcerations one wounded English soldier got up in his fatigue and wounds and leaned against the wall and threw his cap up and shouted, "Three cheers, my boys, for the brave women!"

Oh, that was an exciting scene But a gladder and more triumphant scene will it be when you come up into heaven from the conflicts and incarcerations of this world, streaming with the wounds of battle and won with hunger. And while the hosts of God are cheering their great hosanna you will strike hands of congratulation and eternal deliverance in the presence of the throne. On that night there will be bonfires on every hill of heaven, and there will be illumination in every palace, and there will be a candle in every window. Ah, no; I forget, I forget. They will have no need of the candle or of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever. Hail, hail, sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty!

The Famed Blue Laws.

The blue laws of Connecticut were so called because they were printed on blue tinged paper. These are some of them:

"No one shall be a freeman or have a vote unless he is converted and a member of one of the churches allowed in the dominion."

"No dissenter from the essential worship of this dominion shall be allowed to give a vote for electing magistrates or any other officer."

"No food or lodging shall be offered to a heretic."

"No one shall cross the river on the Sabbath but an authorized clergyman."

No one shall travel, cook victuals, make beds, sweep houses, cut hair or shave on the Sabbath day."

"No one shall kiss his or her children on the Sabbath or feasting day."

"The Sabbath day shall begin at sunset Saturday."

"Whoever wears clothes trimmed with gold, silver or bone lace above one shilling a yard shall be presented by the grand jurors, and the selectmen shall tax the estate £300."

"Whoever brings cards or dice into the dominion shall be fined £5."

"No one shall eat mince pies, dance, play cards or play any instruments of music except the drum, trumpet or jewsharp."

"No man shall court a maid in person or by letter without obtaining the consent of her parents: £5 penalty for the first offence, £10 for the second and for the third imprisonment during the pleasure of the Court."

Sizes in Tiger Skins.

That the Royal Bengal tiger is no inconsiderable beast is a well-known fact, but to even give an approximate guess on the length of one of the monster's skins would puzzle many persons who really believe themselves to be naturalists. For the benefit of the Republic's scientific readers, as well as the would-be Nimrods, who wish to appear to be loaded with animal statistics and facts of all kinds, I will say that the length of the largest tiger skin ever taken (after being stretched and dried) was 13 feet 6½ inches. This must not be taken as meaning the actual length of the living beast, for the skins expand surprisingly while undergoing the curing process, a green skin of ten feet being accounted a wonder; in fact, Mr. Inglis, the recognized tiger authority of Great Britain and India, says that the greatest known length of an undressed skin was 10 feet 2½ inches. It is believed, however, that the predecessors of the present tribe of Bengalese cats were from a fifth to a third larger than the gigantic striped feline that roams the Indian jungles of to-day, and that the old stories of their carrying off full-grown oxen are not exaggerations.—St. Louis Republic.

The Wonderful Esquimaux Whip.

There was a contest between four Esquimaux in the village at the Fair, writes a Chicago correspondent of the New York World. The prize was a contest for a five cent piece, which some American willing to encourage sport had buried in the soil so that only a fragment of its glittering rim was visible. The men stood eight feet apart, with whips forty feet long. Such a whip would have been a terror in the hands of an Esquimaux if it had had a real handle; but of the forty feet thirty-nine feet and a half were lash. The handle was a stout piece of white wood six inches long, to which the lash of rawhide was fastened. Such whips are used by the Esquimaux upon the teams of dogs which drag them over the snow. The contest this afternoon demonstrated the fact that it must be very uncomfortable to be an Esquimaux dog within forty feet of the driver. It would be no trouble at all for the Esquimaux to remove an ear or a pound of flesh, full weight, from any dog in the team.

The most expert whip among the Esquimaux was a little man, not much more than four feet high with slanting eyes, and a spiky, black beard, that made him look very Japanese. A movement of his wrist sent the forty feet of lash curving back in a straight line like a long snake. Another movement and it came forward, noiselessly shooting through the air just above the surface of the ground until, with a loud report, the tip end of the lash struck the precise spot where the coin lay buried, dug it from the ground, and brought it spinning back to the Esquimaux artist. Such precision and such force are certainly unknown to any other whips in the world.

Cowboys with their vaunted cracking of bull whips are small children compared to these wonderful Esquimaux. A man standing half way between the contestants could certainly have been hacked to death with the ends of their lashes, in a very few minutes. The force with which the tip of the lash struck the ground was so great that the particles of dirt which flew about inflicted painful wounds upon the faces of the spectators.

Lavender as a Weed.

A promising industry has been started in South Australia in a somewhat curious way. The Central Agricultural Bureau of South Australia was recently notified that a weed of very pronounced odor and aggressive growth had taken possession of about three acres of soil in the southern portion of the colony. The settlers in the neighborhood of the swamp where the plant had established itself were inclined to look with distinct disfavor upon the "weed," which the horses and cattle would not eat, and which spread so rapidly. It was presently found, however, that the weed was no other than the lavender plant, which though of no use as a fodder, was otherwise a most profitable crop, as two or three tons of green stuff taken from it will yield when distilled by a very simple process $500 worth of lavender oil. In addition it would give 1600 pounds of lavender water worth sixteen cents per pound, after the first distillation, and thirty-six cents per pound after further distillation. The settler who was shrewd enough to make inquiries before rooting up his unknown crop has decided on the advice of the Agricultural Bureau, not only to carefully cultivate what lavender he has, but to plant several acres more. The soil, of a light, sandy nature with clay beneath and fairly moist, is eminently suited to the growth, not only of lavender, but of all scent-producing plants, and many of the colonists are proposing to devote part of their land to such cultivation.—Courier-Journal.

They Have Large Trees There.

In the Yosemite Valley, the "Father of the Forest," a fallen tree 300 feet long, and several centuries old, has been hollowed out so that for a distance of sixty yards a man can walk upright inside it.

Women dentists have achieved a marked success in London—so marked that a scholarship has been founded for assisting women without means in the study of their profession.

KNOWLEDGE

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The "Bird of Death."

But one specimen of venomous bird is known to the student of ornithological oddities—the "Bird of Death," a feathered paradox of New Guinea. Persons bitten by the creature are seized by maddening pains, which rapidly extend to every part of the body. Loss of sight, convulsions and lockjaw are symptoms which follow in rapid succession.

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J. S. Parker, Fredonia, N. Y., says: "Shall not call on you for the $100 reward, for I believe Hall's Catarrh Cure will cure any case of catarrh. Was very bad." Write him for particulars. Sold by Druggists, 75c.

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PNU 25 '93

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