DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

HE SCORES HYPOCRITES AND DISHONEST TRADERS.

Christ Used Keen Wit Against the Pharisees, and No Doubt People Smiled in Church Then as Now—Various Forms of Inconsistency.

At the Tabernacle.

The tendency to formalism in religion and to hypocritical pretense in society received a severe castigation from the pulpit of the Brooklyn Tabernacle. Dr. Talmage made a vigorous onslaught upon it, basing his remarks on the text, Matthew xxiii, 24, "Ye blind guides, who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."

A proverb is compact wisdom, knowledge in chunks, a library in a sentence, the electricity of many clouds discharged in one bolt, a river put through a millrace. When Christ quotes the proverb of the text He means to set forth the ludicrous behavior of those who make a great bluster about small sins and have no appreciation of great ones.

In my text a small insect and a large quadruped are brought into comparison—a gnat and a camel. You have in museum or on the desert seen the latter, a great awkward, sprawling creature, with back two stories high and a stomach having a collection of reservoirs for desert travel, an animal forbidden to the Jews as food and in many literatures entitled "the ship of the desert." The gnat spoken of in the text is in the grub form. It is born in pool or pond, after a few weeks becomes a chrysalis and then after a few days becomes the gnat as we recognize it. But the insect spoken of in the text is in its very smallest shape and it yet inhabits the water—for my text is a misprint and ought to read "strain out a gnat."

My text shows you the prince of inconsistencies. A man after long observation has formed the suspicion that in a cup of water he is about to drink there is a grub or the grandparent of a gnat. He goes and gets a sieve or a strainer. He takes the water and pours it through the sieve in the broad light. He says, "I would rather do anything almost than drink this water until this larva be extirpated." This water is brought under inquisition. The experiment is successful. The water rushes through the sieve and leaves against the side of the sieve the grub or gnat.

Then the man carefully removes the insect and drinks the water in placidity. But going out one day and hungry, he devours a "ship of the desert," the camel, which the Jews were forbidden to eat. The gastronomer has no compunctions of conscience. He suffers from no indigestions. He put the lower jaw under the camel's forefoot and his upper jaw over the hump of the camel's back, and gives one swallow and the dromedary disappears forever. He strained out a gnat, he swallowed a camel.

While Christ's audience were yet smiling at the appositeness and wit of His illustration—for smile they did in church, unless they were too stupid to understand the hyperbole—Christ practically said to them, "That is you." Punctilious about small things: reckless about affairs of great magnitude. No subject ever withered under a surgeon's knife more bitterly than did the Pharisees under Christ's scalpel of truth.

As an anatomist will take a human body to pieces and put them under a microscope for examination, so Christ finds His way to the heart of the dead Pharisee and cuts it out and puts it under the glass of inspection for all generations to examine. Those Pharisees thought that Christ would flatter them and compliment them, and how they must have writhed under the red hot words as He said, "Ye fools, ye whited sepulchers, ye blind guides which strain out a gnat and swallow a camel."

There are in our day a great many gnats strained out and a great many camels swallowed, and it is the object of this sermon to sketch a few persons who are extensively engaged in that business.

First, I remark, that all those ministers of the Gospel are photographed in the text who are very scrupulous about the conventionalities of religion, but put no particular stress upon matters of vast importance. Church services ought to be grave and solemn. There is no room for frivolity in religious convocation. But there are illustrations, and there are hyperboles like that of Christ in the text that will irradiate with smiles any intelligent audience. There are men like those bland guides of the text who advocate only those things in religious service which draw the corners of the mouth down and those which draw the corners of the mouth up, and these men will go to installations and to presbyteries and to conferences and to associations, their pockets full of fine sieves to strain out the gnats, while in their own churches all those unconverted there are fifty people sound asleep. They make their churches a great dormitory, and their somniferous sermons are a cradle, and the drawled out hymns a lullaby, while some wakeful soul in a pew with her fan keeps the flies off unconscious persons approximate. Now, I say it is worse to sleep in church than to smile in church, for the latter implies at least attention, while the former implies the indifference of the hearers and the stupidity of the speaker.

I take down from my library the biographies of ministers and writers of the past ages, inspired and uninspired, who have done the most to bring souls to Jesus Christ, and I find that without a single exception they concentrated their wit and their humor to Christ. Elijah used it when he advised the Baalites, as they could not make their god respond, telling them to call louder as their god might be sound asleep or gone a hunting. Job used it when he said to his self-conceited comforters, "Wisdom will die with you." Christ not only used it in the text, but when He ironically complimented the putrefied Pharisees, saying, "The whole need not a physician," and when by one word He described the cunning of Herod, saying, "Go ye, and tell that fox."

Matthew Henry's Commentaries from the first page to the last coruscated with humor as summer clouds with heat lightning. John Bunyan's writings are as full of humor as they are of saving truth, and there is not an aged man here who has ever read "Pilgrim's Progress" who does not remember that while reading it he smiled as often as he wept. Chrysostom, George Herbert, Robert South, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jeremy Taylor, Rowland Hill, Nettleton, George G. Finney and all the men of the past who greatly advanced the Kingdom of God consecrated their wit and their humor to the cause of Christ.

Religious work without any humor or wit in it is a banquet with a side of beef, and that raw, and no condiments and no dessert succeeding. People will not sit down at such a banquet. By all means remove all frivolity and all pathos and all lightness and all vulgarity—strain them out through the sieve of holy discrimination; but, on the other hand, beware of that monster which overshadows the Christian church to-day, conventionally, coming up from the Great Sahara Desert of Ecclesiasticism, having on its back a hump of sanctimonious gloom—and vehemently refuse to swallow that camel.

Oh, how particular a great many are about the infinitesimals while they are quite reckless about the magnitudes. What did Christ say? Did He not excoriate the people in His time who were so careful to wash their hands before a meal, but did not wash their hearts? It is a bad thing to have unclean hands; it is a worse thing to have an unclean heart. How many people are there in our time who are very anxious that after their death they shall be buried with their feet toward the east, and not at all anxious that during their whole life they should face in the right direction so that they shall come up in the resurrection of the just whichever way they are buried. How many there are chiefly anxious that a minister of the Gospel shall come in the line of apostolic succession, not caring so much whether he comes from Apostle Paul or Apostle Judas. They have a way of measuring a gnat until it is larger than a camel.

Again, my subject photographs all those who are abhorrent of small sins while they are reckless in regard to magnificent thefts. You will find many a merchant who, while he is so careful that he would not take a yard of cloth or a spool of cotton from the counter without paying for it, and who if a bank cashier should make a mistake and send in a roll of bills $5 too much would dispatch a messenger in hot haste to return the surplus, yet who will go into a stock company in which after awhile he gets control of the stock and then waters the stock and makes $100,000 appear like $200,000. He stole only $100,000 by the operation. Many of the men of fortune made their wealth in that way.

One of those men engazed in such unrighteous acts, that evening, the evening of the very day when he watered the stock, will find a wharf rat stealing an evening newspaper from the basement doorway, and will go out and catch the urchin by the collar and twist the collar so tightly the poor fellow cannot say that it was thirst for knowledge that led him to the dishonest act, but grip the collar tighter and tighter, saying: "I have been looking for you a long while. You stole my paper four or five times—haven't you? You miserable wretch!" And then the old stock gambler, with a voice they can hear three blocks, will cry out, "Police, police!"

That same man, the evening of the day on which he watered the stock, will kneel with his family in prayer and thank God for the prosperity of the day, then kiss his children good night with an air which seems to say, "I hope you will all grow up to be as good as your father!" Prisons for sins insectile in size, but palaces for crimes dromedarian. No mercy for sins animalcule in proportion, but great leniency for mastodon iniquity.

It is time that we learn in America that sin is not excusable in proportion as it declares large dividends and has outriders in equipage. Many a man is riding to perdition postilion ahead and lackey behind. To steal a dollar is a gnat; to steal many thousands of dollars is a camel. There is many a fruit dealer who would not consent to steal a basket of peaches from a neighbor's stall, but who would not scruple to depress the fruit market; and as long as I can remember we have heard every summer the peach crop of Maryland is a failure, and by the time the crop comes in the misrepresentation makes a difference of millions of dollars. A man who would not steal one peach basket steals 50,000 peach baskets.

Any summer go down into the Mercantile library, in the reading rooms, and see the newspaper reports of the crops from all parts of the country, and their phraseology is very much the same, and the same men wrote them, methodically and infamously carrying out the huge lying about the grain crop from year to year and for a score of years. After awhile there is a "corner" in the wheat market, and men who had a contempt for a petty theft will burglarize the wheat bin of a nation and commit larceny upon the American corncrib. And men will sit in churches and in reformatory institutions trying to strain out the small gnats of scoundrelism, while in their grain elevators and in their storehouses they are fattening huge camels which they expect after awhile to swallow. Society has to be entirely reconstructed on this subject. We are to find that a sin is inexcusable in proportion as it is great.

I know in our time the tendency is to charge religious frauds upon good men. They say, "Oh, what a class of frauds you have in the Church of God in this day," and when an elder of a church or a deacon or a minister of the Gospel or a superintendent of a Sabbath-school turns out a defaulter what display heads there are in many of the newspapers—great primer type; five-line pica—"Another Saint Absconded," "Clerical Scoundrelism," "Religion at a Discount," "Shame on the Churches," while there are a thousand scoundrels outside the church to where there is one inside the church, and the misbehavior of those who never see the inside of a church is so great it is enough to tempt a man to become a Christian to get out of their company.

But in all circles, religious or irreligious, the tendency is to excuse sin in proportion as it is mammoth. Even John Milton, in his "Paradise Lost," while he condemns Satan, gives such a grand description of him you have hard work to suppress your admiration. Oh, this straining out of small sins like gnats, and this gulping down great iniquities like camels.

This subject does not give the picture of one or two persons, but is a gallery in which thousands of people may see their likenesses. For instance, all those people who, while they would not rob their neighbor of a farthing, appropriate the money and the treasure of the public. A man has a house to sell, and he tells his customer it is worth $20,000. Next day the assessor comes around and the owner says it is worth $15,000. The Government of the United States took off the tax from personal income, among other reasons because so few people would tell the truth, and many a man with an income of hundreds of dollars a day made statements which seem to imply he was about to be handed over to the overseer of the poor.

Careful to pay their passage from Liverpool to New York, yet smuggling in their Saratoga trunk ten silk dresses from Paris and a half dozen watches from Geneva, Switzerland, telling the Custom House officer on the wharf, "There is nothing in that trunk but wearing apparel," and putting a $5 gold piece in his hand to punctuate the statement.

Described in the text are all those who are particular never to break the law of grammar, and who want all their language an elegant specimen of syntax, straining out all the inaccuracies of speech with a fine sieve of literary criticism, while through their conversation go slander and innuendo and profanity and falsehood larger than a whole caravan of camels, when they might better fracture every law of the language and shock their intellectual taste, and better every verb seek in vain for its nominative, and every noun for its government, and every preposition lose its way in the sentence, and adjectives and participles and pronouns get into a grand riot worthy of the Fourth Ward on election day, than to commit a moral inaccuracy. Better swallow a thousand gnats than one camel.

Such persons are also described in the text who are very much alarmed about the small faults of others and have no alarm about their own great transgressions. There are in every community and in every church watchdogs who feel called upon to keep their eyes on others and growl. They are full of suspicions. They wonder if that man is not dishonest, if that man if not unclean, if there is not something wrong about the other man. They are always the first to hear of anything wrong. Vultures are always the first to smell carrion. They are self appointed detectives. I lay this down as a rule without any exception—that those people who have the most faults themselves are most merciless in their watching of others. From scalp of head to sole of foot they are full of jealousies and hypercriticisms.

They spend their life in hunting for muskrats and mud turtles instead of hunting for Rocky Mountain eagles; always for something mean instead of something grand. They look at their neighbors' imperfections through a microscope, and look at their own imperfections through a telescope upside down. Twenty faults of their own do not hurt them half so much as one fault of somebody else. Their neighbors' imperfections are like gnats, and they strain them out; their own imperfections are like camels, and they swallow them.

But lest any might think they escape the scrutiny of the text, I have to tell you that we all come under the divine satire when we make the questions of time more prominent than the questions of eternity. Come now, let us all go into the confessional. Are not all tempted to make the question, Where shall I live now? greater than the question, Where shall I live forever? How shall I get more dollars here? greater than the question, How shall I lay up treasures in Heaven? the question, How shall I pay my debts to man? greater than the question, How shall I meet my obligations to God? the question, how shall I gain the world? greater than the question, What if I lose my soul? the question, Why did God let sin come into the world? greater than the question, how shall I get it extirpated from my nature? the question, What shall I do with the twenty or forty or seventy years of my mortular existence? greater that the question, What shall I do with the millions of cycles of my post-terrestrial existence? Time, how small it is! Eternity, how vast it is! The former more insignificant in compairison with the latter than a gnat is insignificant when compared with a camel. We dodge the text. We said, "That doesn't mean me," and with a ruinous benevolence we are giving the whole sermon away.

But let us all surrender to the charge. What an ado about things here. What poor preparation for a great eternity. As though a minnow were larger than a behemoth, as though a swallow took wider circuit than an albatross, as though a nettle were taller than a Lebanon cedar, as though a gnat were greater than a camel, as though a minute were longer than a century, as though time were higher, deeper, broader than eternity. So the text which flashed with lightning of wit as Christ uttered it, is followed by the crashing thunders of awful catastrophe to those who make the question of time greater than the questions of the future, the oncoming, overshadowing future. O Eternity! Eternity! Eternity!

The First Telegraph.

In May, 1844, it was announced in Congress that, on the opening of the Democratic National Convention at Baltimore, the new telegraph lines would be ready for business. The Washington terminus was in one of the rooms of the Capitol. When the day announced arrived a few of the members of Congress assembled in that room, I among the number. After waiting a considerable time, amid expressions of hope or doubt from the friends or critics of the inventor, all talk was suddenly checked by the clicking of the machine. An impressive silence of several minutes followed: The machine worked! Finally the operator read with considerable solemnity the first message received: "What hath God wrought?" All were awestricken for a moment. It has always been a pleasant memory that I was present. Silence was followed by expressions of admiration. Then a few gentlemen boldly denounced the message as a trick. Some warm words were spoken. But in the course of an hour the proceedings from the National Convention began to arrive. The unbelievers continued to doubt. No decision could be reached until the morning papers were received. It is needless to say that the telegraphic messages were fully substantiated. This wonderful scene continued each day during the session of the convention at Baltimore, closing with the nomination of James K. Polk. This result was so unexpected as to carry conviction. Then there were only forty miles of telegraph; to-day there are over 800,000 miles in operation. I saw the beginning—it was only thirty-nine years ago. —*Philadelphia Times.*

AMERICAN children are conspicuous in London, the Rev. Robert Laird Collier says, for their pronounced manners and adult dress. English boys of 16 usually wear Eton jackets and broad collars, in juvenile contrast to the man's clothes of a Yankee youth. Collier finds that nearly all of the English women "of the upper classes" have clear, beautiful complexions, and the girls are always simply attired, without jewelry.

WILL SAVE THE SEALS.

PRESIDENT HARRISON'S RE-JOINDER POINTED.

Lord Salisbury Is Given to Understand That the Rights of the United States Will Be Enforced—Summary of the Message.

Trifling Must Cease.

In a message to the Senate transmitting the recent correspondence with Lord Salisbury in regard to the Bering Sea matter, President Harrison intimates that he is in favor of protecting the seal fisheries against poachers at all hazards, regardless of the wishes of Great Britain. He has concluded that the British government is not desirous of cooperating with the United States as against the Canadian poachers, and that further efforts to secure an agreement of the sort which would be reasonably fair to this country are useless. A firm purpose to stand by the President was shown in the brief debate in the executive session of the Senate over the correspondence and the message accompanying it from the White House.

The character of Lord Salisbury's communication was so remarkable as to cause universal expressions of surprise and indignation. Lord Salisbury objects to the renewal of the modus vivendi on the ground of the length of time likely to be taken in presenting the case to the arbitrators and in their deliberations after the case is before them. The British premier says, in substance, that if the modus vivendi is renewed this year an appeal will doubtless be made by the United States for its renewal again next year and the year after, and possibly the year after that. Lord Salisbury does not consider this the proper way of dealing with the question. He cites the case of some negotiations now going on between Portugal and Great Britain as an illustration of the delays incidental to arbitration of international disputes, and intimates that the negotiations over Bering sea may last for three or four years.

He also reiterates the old English argument that pelagic sealing is not destructive to seal life, and substantially intimates to President Harrison that it is a matter of indifference to the British Government what action is taken by this country. The plan he suggests by which the President may protect the interests of the United States during the long period of the negotiations is regarded alike in the Cabinet and in the Senate as an indication of his disposition to treat the subject with little regard for American rights and little inclination to assist in a satisfactory solution. He suggests that the Government of the United States may take a bond of the Canadian sealers to indemnify the United States for the seals taken in case the arbitration goes against the Canadian claims, and that the United States shall give a bond at the same time to indemnify the sealers for any loss they may suffer by American interference in case the arbitration goes against this country. Lord Salisbury does condescend to work out the details by which this remarkable treaty between the United States and a lot of irresponsible peachers shall be carried out, but courteously leaves that for the consideration of the President. The mere reading of this remarkable communication in the last Cabinet meeting was enough to determine the Cabinet to stand by the President in the most decided measures he might feel called upon to take.

The news quickly went round that a message from the President on the Bering Sea difficulty had arrived, and it was not long before the Senate went into executive session to receive it. The reading of Lord Salisbury's letter was listened to with great surprise, which greatly whetted the appetites of Senators for the President's response. The response was generally commended as firm and to the point. The President renewed his former declaration that a modus vivendi seemed to him the natural and only proper manner of dealing with the question, pending the action of impartial arbitrators. He did not discuss at great length the effect of pelagic sealing, for he considered its destructive character sufficiently established by the reports of experts and the facts already laid before the British Government.

The President declares Lord Salisbury's suggestion about exchanging bonds with the poachers to be impracticable and undignified, and altogether beyond serious consideration by the Government of the United States. The President leaves a loophole still open for Lord Salisbury to accept the renewal of the modus vivendi, but declares that if the modus vivendi be not renewed this year he will not hold himself responsible for any consequences that may follow.

This is an almost literal quotation from the message prepared by the President, and is intended to convey in the language of diplomacy that our Government will endure no further trifling in the matter, and that, if the British Government refuses a reasonable arrangement for the protection of the seals, the United States will enforce her extreme rights with her full navy.

The usual motion followed the reading of the papers in the Senate to refer them to the Committee on Foreign Affairs. There was some running debate on this motion which disclosed a general feeling of indignation against Lord Salisbury and a willingness to sustain the President. One of the Democratic Senators wanted the correspondence made public, but Senator Sherman objected, and succeeded in defeating the motion to make the letters public, but their importance and the gravity of the situation they disclosed were soon known to those interested and were a lively subject of discussion about the hotels at night. Senator Sherman is in favor of ratifying the treaty now pending and then following with whatever action may be necessary to enforce the laws against the poachers, and protect the seals within the recognized jurisdiction of the United States, even if the entire navy be required for the purpose.

Senator Teller and some of the other Western members, notably those from the Pacific coast, are not disposed to notice the pending treaty any further, but favor immediate steps to arrest poaching, regardless of any feelings Great Britain may have on the subject after this action.

THE families of the non-naturalized Italians lynched in the New Orleans affair are to bring suit against the city for damages. If they win their suit it will be in order for the relatives of the murdered Hennessy to bring suit against them.—Baltimore American.

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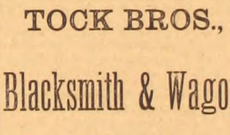

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