OUR THANKSGIVING.

DR. TALMAGE DISCOURSES ON THE SEASON OF INGATHERING.

The Method of Scripture in Using the Most Familiar Facts to Illustrate the Most Important Truths—The Life of the Corn an Image of the Life of Man.

BROOKLYN, Nov. 27.—Rev. Dr. Talmage today chose for his subject of discourse one eminently suited to the time following the ingathering of the harvests and to the thanksgiving season. The decorations of the Thanksgiving day still remained on the platform and the galleries, and long rows of yellow and white corn on the front and back of the platform were in accord with the sermon. The text selected was Job v. 26, "As as hock of corn cometh in in his season."

This is the time of the year for husking corn. If you have recently been in the fields of Pennsylvania or New Jersey or New York or New England, or in any of the country districts, you know that the corn is all cut. The sharp knife struck through the stalks and left them all along the fields until a man came with a bundle of straw and twisted a few of these wisps of straw into a band, and then, gathering up as much of the corn as he could compass with his arms, he bound it with this wisp of straw and then stood it in the field in what is called a shock. There are now at least two billion bushels of corn either standing in the shock or having been already husked. The farmers gather one day on one farm, and then another day on another farm, and they put on their rough husking apron, and they take the husking peg, which is a piece of iron with a leathern loop fastened to the hand, and with it unsheath the corn from the husk and toss it into the golden heap. Then the wagons come along and take it to the corncrib.

SCRIPTURE STORIES ABOUT CORN.

About corn as an important cereal or corn as a metaphor the Bible is constantly speaking. You know about the people in famine coming to buy corn of Joseph, and the foxes on fire running into the "standing corn," and about the oxen treading out the corn, and about the seven thin ears of corn that in pharoah's dream devoured the seven good ears, and the "parched corn" handed to beautiful Ruth by the harvesters of Bethlehem, and Abigail's five measures of "parched corn" with which she hoped to appease the enemies of her drunken husband, and David's description of the valleys "covered over with corn," and "the handful of corn in the earth," and "the full corn in the ear," and Christ's Sabbath morning walk through corn fields, and the disciples "plucking ears of corn," and so I am not surprised to find corn husking time referred to in my text "As a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

How vividly to all those of us who were born in the country comes the remembrance of husking time! We waited for it as for a gala day of the year. It was called a frolic. The trees having for the most part shed their foliage, the farmers waded through the fallen leaves and came through the keen morning air to the gleeful company. The frosts which had silvered everything during the night began to melt off the top of the corn shocks. While the farmers were waiting for others they stood blowing their breath through their fingers or thrashing their arms around their body to keep up warmth of circulation. Roaring mirth greeted the late farmer as he crawled over the fence. Joke and repartee and rustic salutation abounded. All ready now!

The men take hold of the shock of corn and hurl it prostrate, while the moles and mice which have secreted themselves there for warmth attempt escape. The withe of straw is unwound from the corn shock, and the stalks heavy with the wealth of grain are rolled into two bundles, between which the husker sits down. The husking peg is thrust in until it strikes the corn, and then the fingers rip off the sheathing of the ear, and there is a crack as the root of the corn is snapped off from the husk, and the grain disimprisoned is hurled up into the sunlight.

The air is so tonic, the work is so very exhilarating, the company is so blithe that some laugh, and some shout, and some sing, and some banter, and some tease a neighbor for a romantic ride along the edge of the woods in an eventide in a carriage that holds but two, and some prophesy as to the number of bushels to the field, and others go into competition as to which shall rifle the most corn shocks before sundown. After awhile the dinner horn sounds from the farmhouse, and the table is surrounded by a group of jolly and hungry men.

From all the pantries, and the cellars, and the perches of fowl on the place the richest dainties come, and there is carnival and neighborhood reunion, and a scene which fills our memory part with smiles, but more with tears, as we remember that the farm belongs now to other owners, and other hands gather in the field, and many of those who mingled in that merry husking scene have themselves been reaped "like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

THEY HAD OUR KIND OF CORN.

There is a difference of opinion as to whether the orientals knew anything about the corn as it stands in our fields; but recent discoveries have found out that the Hebrew knew all about Indian maize, for there have been grains of corn picked up out of ancient crypts and exhumed from hiding places where they were put down many centuries ago, and they have been planted in our time and have come up just such Indian maize as we raise in New York and Ohio. So I am right when I say that my text may refer to a shock of corn just as you and I bound it; just as you and I threw it; just as you and I husked it. There may come some practical and useful and comforting lessons to all our souls while we think of coming in at last "like a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

It is high time that the King of Terrors were thrown out of the Christian vocabulary. A vast multitude of people talk of death as though it were the disaster of disasters instead of being to a good man the blessing of blessings. It is moving out of a cold vestibule into a warm temple. It is migrating into groves of redolence and perpetual fruitage. It is a change from bleak March to roseate June. It is a change of manacles for garlands. It is the transmuting of the iron handcuffs of earthly incarceration into the diamonded wristlets of a bridal party, or, to use the suggestion of my text, it is only husking time. It is the tearing off of the rough sheath of the body that the bright and the beautiful soul may go free. Coming in "like a shock of corn cometh in in his season." Christ broke up a funeral procession at the gate of Nain by making a resurrection day for a young man and his mother, and I would that I could break up your sadnesses and halt the long funeral procession of the world's grief by some cheering and cheerful view of the last transition.

We all know that husking time was a time of frost. Frost on the fence; frost on the stubble; frost on the ground; frost on the bare branches of the trees; frost in the air; frost on the hands of the huskers. You remember we used to hide between the corn stacks so as to keep off the wind, but still you remember how shivering was the body, and how painful was the cheek, and how benumbed were the hands. But after awhile the sun was high up, and all the frosts went out of the air, and hilarities awakened the echoes, and joy from one corn shock went up, "Aha, aha!" and was answered by joy from another corn shock, "Aha, aha!"

So we all realize that the death of our friend is the nipping of many expectations, the freezing, the chilling, the frosting of many of our hopes. It is far from being a south wind. It comes out of the frigid north, and when they go away from us we stand benumbed in body, and benumbed in mind, and benumbed in soul. We stand among our dead neighbors, our dead families, and we say, "Will we ever get over it?" Yes, we will get over it amid the shoutings of heavenly reunion, and we will look back to all these distresses of bereavement only as the temporary distresses of husking time. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "Light, and but for a moment," said the apostle as he clapped his hands "light, and but for a moment." The chill of the frosts followed by the gladness that cometh in "like a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

OFF WITH THIS HUSK OF FLESH!

Of course the husking time made rough work with the ear of corn. The husking peg had to be thrust in, and the hard thumb of the husker had to come down on the swathing of the ear, and then there was a pull, and there was a ruthless tearing, and then a complete snapping off before the corn was free, and if the husk could have spoken it would have said: "Why do you lacerate me? Why do you wrench me?" Ah, my friends, that is the way God has arranged that the ear and husk shall part, and that is the way he has arranged that the body and the soul shall separate. You can afford to have your physical distresses when you know that they are only forwarding the soul's liberation.

Every rheumatic pain is only a plunge of the husking peg. Every neuralgic twinge is only a twist by the husker. There is gold in you that must come out. Some way the shackle must be broken. Some way the ship must be launched for heavenly voyage. You must let the Heavenly Husbandman husk off the mortality from the immortality. There ought to be great consolation in this for all who have chronic ailments, since the Lord is gradually and more mildly taking away from you that which hinders your soul's liberation, doing gradually for you what for many of us in robust health perhaps he will do in one fell blow at the last. At the close of every illness, at the close of every paroxysm, you ought to say, "Thank God, that is all past now; thank God. I will never have to suffer that again; thank God, I am so much nearer the hour of liberation."

You will never suffer the same pain twice. You may have a new pain in an old place, but never the same pain twice. The pain does its work, and then it dies. Just so many plunges of the crowbar to free the quarry stone for the building. Just so many strokes of the chisel to complete the statue. Just so many pangs to separate the soul from the body. You who have chronic ailments and disorders are only paying in installments that which some of us will have to pay in one payment when we pay the debt of nature. Thank God, therefore, ye who have chronic disorders, that you have so much less suffering at the last. Thank God that you will have so much less to feel in the way of pain at the hands of the Heavenly Husbandman when "the shock of corn cometh in in his season."

Perhaps now this may be an answer to a question which I asked one Sabbath morning, but did not answer, Why is it that so many really good people have so dreadfully to suffer? You often find a good man with enough pains and aches and distresses, you would think, to discipline a whole colony, while you will find a man who is perfectly useless going about with easy digestion and steady nerves and shining health, and his exit from the world is comparatively painless. How do you explain that? Well, I noticed in the husking time that the husking peg was thrust into the corn, and then there must be a stout pull before the swathing was taken off the ear and the full, round, healthy, luxuriant corn was developed, while, on the other hand, there was corn that hardly seemed worth husking.

We threw that into a place all by itself, and we called it "nubbins." Some of it was mildewed, and some of it was mice nibbled, and some of it was great promise and no fulfillment. All cobs and no corn. Nubbins! After the good corn had been driven up to the barn we came around with the corn basket and we picked up these nubbins. They were worth saving, but not worth much. So all around us there are people who amount to comparatively nothing. They develop into no kind of usefulness. They are nibbled on one side by the world, and nibbled on the other side by the devil, and mildewed all over. Great promise and no fulfillment. All cobs and no corn. Nubbins! They are worth saving. I suppose many of them will get to heaven, but they are not worthy to be mentioned in the same day with those who went through great tribulation into the kingdom of our God.

Who would not rather have the pains of this life, the misfortunes of this life—who would not rather be torn and wounded and lacerated and wrenched and husked, and at last go in amid the very best grain of the granary—than to be pronounced not worth husking at all? Nubbins! In other words, I want to say to you people who have distress of body and distress in business and distress of all sorts, the Lord has not any grudge against you. It is not derogatory; it is complimentary. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and it is proof positive that there is something valuable in you, or the Lord would not have husked you.

GOD APPROVES OF A JOYOUS SPIRIT.

You remember also that in the time of husking it was a neighborhood reunion. By the great fireplace in the winter, the fires roaring around the glorious backlogs on an old fashioned hearth, of which the modern stoves and registers are only the degenerate descendants, the farmers used to gather and spend the evening, and there would be much sociality; but it was not anything like the joy of the husking time, for then all the farmers came, and they came in the very best humor, and they came from beyond the meadow, and they came from beyond the brook, and they came from regions two and three miles around.

Good spirits reigned supreme, and there were great handshakings, and there was carnival, and there was the recital of the brightest experiences in all their lives, and there was a neighborhood reunion the memory of which makes all the nerves of my body tremble with emotion, as the strings of a harp when the fingers of the player have swept the chords. The husking time was the time of neighborhood reunion, and so heaven will be just that. There they come up! They slept in the old village churchyard. There they come up! They reclined amid the fountains, and the sculpture, and the parterres of a city cemetery. There they come up! They went down when the ship foundered off Cape Hatteras. They come up from all sides—from potter's field and out of the solid masonry of Westminster abbey! They come up! They come up! All the hindrances to their better nature husked off. All their spiritual despondencies husked off. All their hindrances to usefulness husked off. The grain, the golden grain, the God fashioned grain, visible and conspicuous.

Some of them on earth were such disagreeable Christians you could hardly stand it in their presence. Now in heaven they are so radiant you hardly know them. The fact is, all their imperfections have been husked off. They did not mean on earth to be disagreeable. They meant well enough, but they told you how sick you looked, and they told you how many hard things they had heard about you, and they told you how often they had to stand up for you in some battles until you wished almost that they had been slain in some of the battles. Good, pious, consecrated, well meaning disagreeables. Now in heaven all their offensiveness has been husked off. Each one is as happy as he can be. Every one he meets as happy as he can be. Heaven one great neighborhood reunion. All kings and queens, all songsters, all millionaires, all banqueters.

God the Father, with his children all around him. No "goodby" in all the air. No grave cut in all the hills. River of crystal rolling over bed of pearl, under arch of chrysoprase, into seas of glass mingled with fire. Stand at the gate of the granary and see the grain come in, out of the frosts into the sunshine, out of the darkness into the light, out of the tearing, and the ripping, and the twisting, and the wrenching and lacerating, and the husking time of earth into the wide open door of the King's granary "like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

HEAVEN IS A LONG THANKSGIVING.

Yes, heaven is a great sociable, with joy like the joy of the husking time. No one there feeling so big he declines to speak to some one that is not so large. Archangel willing to listen to smallest cherub. No bolting of the door of caste at one heavenly mansion to keep out the citizen of a smaller mansion. No clique in one corner whispering about a clique in another corner. David taking none of the airs of a giant killer. Joshua making no one halt until he passes because he made the sun and moon halt. Paul making no assumption over the most ordinary preacher of righteousness. Naaman, captain of the Syrian host, no more honored than the captive maid who told him where he could get a good doctor. Oh, my soul, what a country! The humblest man a king. The poorest woman a queen. The meanest house a palace. The shortest lifetime eternity. And what is more strange about it all is we may all get there. "Not I," says some one standing back under the galleries. Yes, you. "Not I," says some one who has not been in church in fifteen years before. Yes, you. "Not I," says some one who has been for fifty years filling up his life with all kinds of wickedness. Yes, you. There are monopolies on earth, monopolistic railroads and monopolistic telegraph companies, and monopolistic grain dealers, but no monopolies in religion.

All who want to be saved may be saved "without money and without price." Salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ for all the people. Of course use common sense in this matter. You cannot expect to get to Charleston by taking the ship for Portland, and you cannot get to heaven by going in an opposite direction. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Through that one gate of pardon and peace all the race may go in.

"But," says some one, "do you really think I would be at home in that supernal society if I should reach it?" I think you would. I know you would. I remember that in the husking time there was great equality of feeling among the neighbors. There at one corn shock a farmer would be at work who owned two hundred acres of ground. The man whom he was talking with at the next corn shock owned but thirty acres of ground, and perhaps all that covered by a mortgage.

That evening, at the close of the husking day, one man drove home a roan span so frisky, so full of life they got their feet over the traces. The other man walked home. Great difference in education, great difference in worldly means, but I noticed at the husking time they all seemed to enjoy each other's society. They did not ask any man how much property he owned or what his education had been. They all seemed to be happy together in those good times. And so it will be in heaven. Our Father will gather his children around him, and the neighbors will come in, and the past will be rehearsed, and some one will tell of victory, and we will all celebrate it, and some one will tell of great struggle, and we will all praise the grace that fetched him out of it, and some one will say: "Here is my old father that I put away with heartbreak. Just look at him! He is as young as any of us!"

And some one will say: "Here is my darling child that I buried in Greenwood, and all the after years of my life were shadowed with desolation. Just look at her! She doesn't seem as if she had been sick a minute!" Great sociality. Great neighborhood kindness. Go in and dine. What though John Milton sit down on one side and John Howard sit down on the other side? No embarrassment. What though Charlotte Elizabeth sit down on one side and Hannah More sit down on the other side? No embarrassment. A monarch yourself, why be embarrassed among monarchs? A songster yourself, why be embarrassed among glorified songsters? Go in and dine.

THE LAST GREAT INGATHERING.

All the shocks of corn coming in in their season. Oh, yes, in their season. Not one of you having died too soon, or having died too late, or having died at haphazard. Planted at just the right time. Plowed at just the right time. Cut down at just the right time. Husked at just the right time. Garnered at just the right time. Coming in in your season. Oh, I wish that the two billion bushels of corn now in the fields or on their way to the seaboard might be a type of the grand yield of honor and glory and immortality when all the shocks come in.

I do not know how you are constituted, but I am so constituted that there is nothing that so awakens reminiscences in me as the odors of a corn field when I cross it at this time of year after the corn has been cut and it stands in shocks. And so I have thought it might be practically useful for us today to cross the corn field, and I have thought perhaps there might be some reminiscence roused in our soul that might be salutary and might be saving. In Sweden a prima donna, while her house in the city was being repaired, took a house in the country for temporary residence, and she brought out her great array of jewels to show a friend who wished to see them.

One night, after displaying these jewels and leaving them on the table, and all her friends had gone, and the servants had gone—one summer night—she sat thinking and looking into a mirror just in front of her chair when she saw in that mirror the face of a robber looking in at the window behind her and gazing at those jewels. She was in great fright, but sat still, and hardly knowing why she did so she began to sing an old nursery song, her fears making the pathos of the song more telling. Suddenly she noticed, while looking at the mirror, that the robber's face had gone from the window, and it did not come back.

A few days after the prima donna received a letter from the robber saying, "I heard that the jewels were to be out that night, and I came to take them at whatever hazard, but when I heard you sing that nursery song with which my mother so often sang me to sleep I could not stand it, and I fled, and I have resolved upon a new and honest life."

Oh, my friends, there are jewels in peril richer than those which lay upon that table that night. They are the jewels of that immortal soul. Would God that some song rolling up out of the deserted nursery of your childhood, or some song rolling up out of the corn fields, the song of the huskers twenty or forty years ago, might turn all our feet out of the paths of sin into the paths of righteousness. Would God that those memories wafted in on odor or song might start us this moment with swift feet toward that blessed place where so many of our loved ones have already preceded us "as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

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