The Sioux County Journal.

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—THE—

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[ESTABLISHED 1888.]

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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

GREAT PREACHER DWELLS ON THE LEPROSY OF SIN.

Suffering Sent Into the World to Show the Way to Higher Joys—Spiritual Happiness Attained Through a Humble Spirit—Moral Lepers.

The Sick General.

Rev. Dr. Talmage chose as the subject of last Sunday's sermon through the press "The Sick General," the text selected being II. Kings, v. 1, "He was a leper."

Here we have a warrior sick, not with pleurisies or rheumatisms or consumptions, but with a disease worse than all these put together. A red mark has come out on the forehead, precursor of complete disfigurement and dissolution. I have something awful to tell you. General Naaman, the commander in chief of all the Syrian forces, has the leprosy! It is on his hands, on his face, on his feet, on his entire person. The leprosy! Get out of the way of the pestilence! If his breath strike you, you are a dead man. The commander in chief of all the forces of Syria! And yet he would be glad to exchange conditions with the boy at his stirrup or the hostler that blankets his charger. The news goes like wildfire all through the realm, and the people are sympathetic, and they cry out, "Is it possible that our great hero, who slew Ahab and around whom we came with such vociferation when he returned from victorious battle—can it be possible that our grand and glorious Naaman has the leprosy?"

Yes. Everybody has something he wishes he had not—David, an Absalom to disgrace him; Paul, a thorn to sting him; Job, carbuncles to plague him; Samson, a Delilah to shear him; Ahab, a Naboth to deny him; Haman, a Mordecai to irritate him; George Washington, childlessness to afflict him; John Wesley, a termagant wife to pester him; Leah, weak eyes; Pope, a crooked back; Byron, a club foot; John Milton, blind eyes; Charles Lamb, an insane sister; and you and you and you and you something which you never bargained for and would like to get rid of. The reason of this is that God does not want this world to be too bright. Otherwise we would always want to stay and eat these fruits and lie on these lounges and shake hands in this pleasant society.

At the Door of the Temple.

It is to push you on and to push you up toward something grander and better that God sends upon you, as he did upon General Naaman something you do not want. Seated in his Syrian mansion, all the walls glittering with the shields which he had captured in battle, the corridors crowded with admiring visitors who just wanted to see him once, music and mirth and banqueting filling all the mansion from tessellated floor to pictured ceiling, Naaman would have forgotten that there was anything better and would have been glad to stay there 10,000 years. But, oh, how the shields dim, and how the visitors fly the hall, and how the music drops dead from the string, and how the gates of the mansion slam shut with sepulchral bang, as you read the closing words of the eulogium: "He was a leper! He was a leper!"

There was one person more sympathetic with General Naaman than any other person. Naaman's wife walks the floor wringing her hands and trying to think what she can do to alleviate her husband's suffering. All remedies have failed. The surgeon general and the doctors of the royal staff have met, and they have shaken their heads, as much as to say, "No cure, no cure!" I think that the office seekers had all folded up their recommendations and gone home. Probably most of the employes of the establishment had dropped their work and were thinking of looking for some other situation. What shall now become of poor Naaman's wife? She must have sympathy somewhere. In her despair she goes to a little Hebrew captive, a servant girl in her house, to whom she tells the whole story, as sometimes, when overborne by the sorrows of the world and finding no sympathy anywhere else, you have gone out and found in the sympathy of some humble domestic—Rose or Dinah or Bridget—a help which the world could not give you.

What a scene it was! One of the grandest women in all Syria in cabinet council with a waiting maid over the declining health of the mighty general. "I know something," says the little captive maid, "I know something," as she bounds to her bare feet. "In the land from which I was stolen there is a certain prophet known by the name of Elisha, who can cure almost anything, and I shouldn't wonder if he could cure my master. Send for him right away." "Oh, hush!" you say. "If the highest medical talent in all the land cannot cure that leper, there is no need of your listening to any talk of a servant girl." But do not scoff, do not sneer. The finger of that little captive maid is pointing in the right direction.

A Little Child Leads Them.

And how often it is that the finger of childhood has pointed grown persons in the right direction! O, Christian soul, how long is it since you got rid of the leprosy of sin? You say, "Let me see. It must be five years now." Five years. Who was it that pointed you to the divine physician? "Oh," you say, "it was my little Amie or Fred or Charley that clambered up on my knees and looked into my face and asked me why I didn't become a Christian, and all the time stroking my cheek, so I couldn't get angry, insisted upon knowing why I didn't have family prayers." There are grandparents who have been brought to Christ by their little grandchildren. There are hundreds of Christian mothers who had their attention first called to Jesus by their little children. How did you get rid of the leprosy of sin? How did you find your way to the divine physician? "Oh," you say, "my child, my dying child, with wan and wasted finger, pointed that way. Oh, I never shall forget," you say, "that scene at the cradle and the crib that awful night! It was hard, hard, very hard, but if that little one on its dying bed had not pointed me to Christ I don't think I ever would have got rid of my leprosy." Go into the Sabbath school any Sunday and you will find hundreds of little fingers pointing in the same direction, toward Jesus Christ and toward heaven.

Years ago the astronomers calculated that there must be a world hanging at a certain point in the heavens, and a large prize was offered for some one who could discover that world. The telescopes from the great observatories were pointed in vain, but a girl at Nantucket, Mass., fashioned a telescope, and looking through it discovered that star and won the prize and the admiration of all the astronomical world that stood amazed at her genius. And so it is often the case that grown people cannot see the light, while some little child beholds the star of pardon, the star of hope, the star of consolation, the star of Bethlehem, the morning star of Jesus. "Not many mighty men, not many wise men, are called, but God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and base things and things that are not to bring to naught things that are." Oh, do not despise the prattle of little children when they are speaking about God and Christ and heaven. You see the way your child is pointing. Will you take that pointing or wait until, in the wrench of some awful bereavement, God shall lift that child to another world, and then it will beckon you upward? Will you take the pointing, or will you wait for the beckoning? Blessed be God that the little Hebrew captive pointed in the right direction. Blessed be God for the saving ministry of Christian children.

Seeking the Prophet.

No wonder the advice of this little Hebrew captive threw all Naaman's mansion and Ben-hadad's palace into excitement. Good-by, Naaman! With face scarified and ridged and inflamed by the pestilence and aided by those who supported him on either side, he staggers out of the chariot. Hold fast the fiery coursers of the royal stable while the poor sick man lifts his swollen feet and pain-struck limbs into the vehicle. Bolster him up with pillows, and let him take a lingering look at his bright apartment, for perhaps the Hebrew captive may be mistaken, and the next time Naaman comes to that place he may be a dead weight on the shoulders of those who carry him, an expired chieftain seeking sepulture amid the lamentations of an admiring nation. Good-by, Naaman! Let the charioteer drive gently over the hills of Hermon, lest he jolt the invalid. Here goes the bravest man of all his day, a captive of a horrible disease. As the ambulance winds through the streets of Damascus, the tears and prayers of all the people go after the world-renowned invalid.

How the countrymen gaped as the procession passed! They had seen Naaman go past like a whirlwind in days gone by, and stood aghast at the clank of his war equipments, but now they commiserate him. They say: "Poor man! He will never get home alive. Poor man!"

General Naaman wakes up from a restless sleep in the chariot, and he says to the charioteer, "How long before we shall reach the Prophet Elisha?" The charioteer says to a waysider, "How far is it to Elisha's house?" He says, "Two miles." "Two miles!" Then they whip up the lathered and fagged-out horses. The whole procession brightens up at the prospect of speedy arrival. They drive up to the door of the prophet. The charioteers shout "Whoa!" to the horses, and tramping hoofs and grinding wheels cease shaking the earth. Come out, Elisha, come out. You have company. The grandest company that ever came to your house has come to it now. No stir inside Elisha's house. The fact was the Lord had informed Elisha that the sick captain was coming and just how to treat him. Indeed when you are sick, and the Lord wants you to get well, he always tells the doctor how to treat you, and the reason we have so many bungling doctors is because they depend upon their own strength and instructions and not on the Lord God, and that always makes malpractice. Come out, Elisha, and attend to your business.

Puffed Up with Pride.

General Naaman and his retinue waited and waited. The fact was Naaman had two diseases—pride and leprosy. The one was as hard to get rid of as the other. Elisha sits quietly in his house and does not go out. After awhile, when he thinks he has humbled this proud man, he says to a servant, "Go out and tell General Naaman to bathe seven times in the river Jordan out yonder five miles, and he will get entirely well." The message comes out. "What!"says the Commander-in-chief of the Syrian forces, his eye kindling with an animation which it had not shown for weeks and his swollen foot stamping on the bottom of the chariot regardless of pain. "What Isn't he coming out to see me? Why, I thought certainly he would come and utter some cabalistic words over me or make some enigmatical passes over my wounds. Why, I don't think he knows who I am. Isn't he coming out? Why, when the Shunamite woman came to him, he rushed out and cried: 'Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with thy child?' And he will treat a poor unknown woman like that and let me, a titled personage, sit here in my chariot and wait and wait? I won't endure it any longer. Charioteer, drive on! Wash in the Jordan! Ha! ha! The slimy Jordan, the muddy Jordan, the monotonous Jordan! I wouldn't be seen washing in such a river as that. Why, we watered our horses in a better river than that on our way here—the beautiful river, the jasper-paved river of Pharpar. Besides we have in our country another Damascene river, Abana, with foliage bank and torrent ever swift and clear, under the flickering shadows of sycamore and oleander. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"

I suppose Naaman felt very much as Americans would feel if, by way of medical prescription, some one should tell us to go and wash in the Danube or the Rhine. We would answer,"Are not the Connecticut and the Hudson just as good?" Or as an Englishman would feel if he were told, by way of medical prescription, he must go and wash in the Mississippi or the St. Lawrence. He would cry out, "Are not the Thames and the Shannon just as well?" The fact was that haughty Naaman needed to learn what every Englishman and every American needs to learn—that when God tells you to do a thing you must go and do it, whether you understand the reason or not. Take the prescription, whether you like it or not. One thing is certain. Unless haughty Naaman does as Elisha commands him he will die of his awful sickness. And unless you do as Christ commands you you will be seized upon by an everlasting wasting away. Obey and live; disobey and die. Thrilling, overarching, undergirding, stupendous alternative!

Elisha Angers Naaman.

Well, General Naaman could not stand the test. The charioteer gives a jerk to the right line until the bit snaps in the horse's mouth, and the whir of the wheels and the flying of the dust show the indignation of the great commander. "He turned and went away in a rage." So people now often get mad at religion. They vituperate against ministers, against churches, against Christian people. One would think from their irate behavior that God had been studying how to annoy and exasperate and demolish them. What has he been doing? Only trying to cure their death-dealing leprosy. That is all. Yet they whip up their horses, they dig in the spurs, and they go away in a rage.

So, after all, it seems that this health excursion of General Naaman is to be a dead failure. That little Hebrew captive might as well have not told him of the prophet, and this long journey might as well not have been taken. Poor, sick, dying Naaman! Are you going away in high dudgeon and worse than when you came? As his chariot halts a moment his servants clamber up in it and coax him to do as Elisha said. They say: "It's easy. If the prophet had told you to walk for a mile on sharp spikes in order to get rid of this awful disease, you would have done it. It is easy. Come, my lord, just get down and wash in the Jordan. You take a bath every day, anyhow, and in this climate it is so hot that it will do you good. Do it on our account, and for the sake of the army you command, and for the sake of the nation that admires you. Come, my lord, just try this Jordanic bath." "Well," he says, "to please you I will do as you say." The retinue drive to the brink of the Jordan. The horses paw and neigh to get into the stream themselves and cool their hot flanks. General Naaman, assisted by his attendants, gets down out of his chariot and painfully comes to the brink of the river and steps in until the water comes to the ankle and goes on deeper until the water comes to the girdle, and now, standing so far down in the stream, just a little inclination of the head will thoroughly immerse him. He bows once into the flood and comes up and shakes the water out of nostril and eye, and his attendants look at him and say, "Why, General, how much better you do look!" And he bows a second time into the flood and comes up, and the wild stare is gone out of his eye. He bows the third time into the flood and comes up, and the shriveled flesh has got smooth again. He bows the fourth time into the flood and comes up, and the hair that had fallen out is restored in thick locks again all over the brow. He bows the fifth time into the flood and comes up, and the hoarseness has gone out of his throat. He bows the sixth time and comes up, and all the soreness and the anguish has gone out of the limbs. "Why," he says, "I am almost well, but I will make a complete cure," and he bows the seventh time into the flood, and he comes up, and not so much as a fester, or a scale, or an eruption as big as the head of a pin is to be seen on him.

He steps out on the bank and says, "Is it possible?" And the attendants look and say, "Is it possible?" And as, with the health of an athlete, he bounds back into the chariot and drives on there goes up from all his attendants a wild "Huzza! Huzza!" Of course they go back to pay and thank the man of God for his counsel so fraught with wisdom. When they left the prophet's house they went off mad. They have come back glad. People always think better of a minister after they are converted than they do before conversion.

Humility Necessary.

Now, my hearers, you know that this General Naaman did two things in order to get well. The first was, he got out of his chariot. He might have stayed there, with his swollen feet on the stuffed ottoman, seated on that embroidered cushion, until his last gasp, he would have never have got any relief.He had to get out of his chariot, and you have got to get down out of the chariot of your pride if you ever become a Christian. You cannot drive up to the cross with a coach and four and be saved among all the spangles. You seem to think that the Lord is going to be complimented by your coming. Oh, no, you poor, miserable, scaly, leprous sinner, get down out of that! We all come in the same haughty way. We expect to ride into the kingdom of God. Never, until we get down on our knees, will we find mercy. The Lord has unhorsed us, unchDarioted us. Get down out of your pride. Get down out of your self-righteousness and your hypercriticism. We have all got to do that. That is the journey we have to make on our knees. It is our infernal pride that keeps us from getting rid of the leprosy of sin. Dear Lord, what have we to be proud of? Proud of our scales? Proud of our uncleanness? Proud of this killing infection? Bring us down at thy feet, weeping, praying, penitent, believing suppliants.

> For sinners, Lord, thou cam'st to bleed,
> And I'm a sinner vile indeed.
> Lord, I believe thy grace is free,
> Oh, magnify that grace in me.

But he had not only to get down out of his chariot. He had to wash. "Oh," you say, "I am very careful with my ablutions. Every day I plunge into a bright and beautiful bath." Ah, my hearer, there is a flood brighter than any that pours from these hills. It is the flood that breaks from the granite of the eternal hills. It is the flood of pardon and peace and life and heaven. That flood started in the tears of Christ and the sweat of Gethsemane and rolled on, accumulating flood until all earth and heaven could bathe in it. Zechariah called it the "fountain open for sin and uncleanness." William Cowper called it the "fountain filled with blood." Your fathers and mothers washed all their sins and sorrows away in that fountain. Oh, my hearers, do you not feel like wading into it? Wade down now into this glorious flood, deeper, deeper, deeper. Plunge once, twice, thrice, four times, five times, six times, seven times. It will take as much as that to cure your soul. Oh, wash, wash, wash and be clean!

I suppose that was a great time at Damascus when General Naaman got back. The charioteers did not have to drive slowly any longer, lest they jolt the invalid, but as the horses dashed through the streets of Damascus I think the people rushed out to hail back their chieftain. Naaman's wife hardly recognized her husband. He was so wonderfully changed she had to look at him two or three times before she made out that it was her restored husband. And the little captive maid, she rushed out, clapping her hands and shouting: "Did he cure you? Did he cure you?" Then music woke up the palace, and the tapestry of the windows was drawn away, that the multitude outside might mingle with the princely mirth inside, and the feet went up and down in the dance, and all the streets of Damascus that night echoed and re-echoed with the news: "Naaman's cured! Naaman's cured!" But a gladder time than that it would be if your soul should get cured of its leprosy. The swiftest white horses hitched to the king's chariot would rush the news into the eternal city. Our loved ones before the throne would welcome the glad tidings. Your children on earth, with more emotion than the little Hebrew captive, would notice the change in your look and the change in your manner, and would put their arms around your neck and say: "Mother, I guess you must have become a Christian. Father, I think you have got rid of the leprosy." O Lord God of Elisha, have mercy on us!

Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe.

The wardrobe of Queen Elizabeth must have been about the most varied and extensive ever recorded in royal annals, to judge from a list of her wearing apparel recently gathered from the state papers. When the maiden Queen was 68, and might therefore have been supposed to have outlived some of her youthful vanity, she possessed 99 complete official costumes, 102 French gowns, 100 robes with trains and 67 without, 126 antique dresses, 136 bodices, 1.5 tunics, not to mention such trifles as 96 mantles, 85 dresses, and 2? fans. With all these dresses, however, it is curious to note that Queen Bess only owned nine pairs of shoes. When she died in 1603 3,000 articles of apparel were found in her wardrobe duly catalogued.

Neglected Women Deserve Neglect.

It is her own fault if a woman is unloved and neglected. This is a harsh statement to make, but is a fact. Mortal man is a weakling who can no more resist kindness than a rose can resist the sun. It is weak, helpless woman's duty to make herself attractive and pretty in the very teeth of defeat, and to make herself agreeable to every one in the very face of discouragement. Call it hypocrisy, tact, finesse, or by any other term, but she must turn in the edges, and make allies instead of antagonists of the people about her. Spotless neatness, becoming feminine attire, truth, kindness, cheerfulness, love and the loyalty that restrains her from speaking ill of her neighbors will make any woman lovely, even though she lacks beauty.

Why the Dog Turns Round.

Have you ever thought why it is that a dog turns around and around when he jumps up on his cushion or starts to settle himself anywhere for a nap? Now you are reminded you can recall that you have seen a dog do it many times, can't you? This habit is about all that is left to our tame little doggies of the days long ago, when they were a race of wild animals and lived in the woods. Their beds then were matted grass and leaves, and it was to trample enough grass and properly arrange the leaves that the dog always trod around a narrow circle before he would lie down. The dog of to-day keeps up the same old habit, although there is no longer any need for it. and, of course, the animal has no notion why he does it.

The Way to Walk.

Try and be quiet when you walk, says a physical culturalist; d.n.t wabble, don't beat the air, don't shuffle the shoulders; don t fancy yourself a whirligig. Keep to a narrow base when walking, and not by any "breadth" or sidewise movement interfere with other pedestrians. How tired all those people look! Their faces are haggard and drawn; their backs ache; their nerves are unstrung, and their brains are muddled. All this is the result of mal-poise and waste of nerve force through misdirected locomotive action. Walking on scientific principles with unimpeded hip and leg action, and otherwise a conservation of energy, is a joy alike to the walker and the on-looker.

Natural Gas.

The banner natural gas year for the United States was 1888, when its product reached the value of $22,00.,000. Last year the product was worth less than $15,000,000.

THAT handy illustration for rhetorical discourse, the germination of wheat buried with a mummy thirty centuries or so ago, is unfortunately a flight of imagination beyond the dream of Munchausen. At a recent meeting of the Royal Botanic Society of England, the secretary said that fifteen years was as long as he had undoubted evidence of a seed retaining its power of germination. Sir B. W. Richardson said that he had planted many seeds found with mummies, but none of them had ever developed.

TO PREVENT lamp chimneys from cracking put them into a kettle of cold water, gradually heat it till it boils, and then let it as gradually cool.