

Calmage Sermon

By Rev.
Frank De Witt Talmage, D.D.

Los Angeles, Cal., May 8.—Kindness and consideration for all of God's creatures is the preacher's theme, and he pleads that man should value the creation of the dumb creatures on no less than he should respect its rights, since divine wisdom has placed it in his care. The text is Deuteronomy xxv, 4, "Thou shall not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn."

This is the age of machinery. This is the time when man is not limited in his operations to the work of his two hands, but with his little finger can lift a lever which has the strength of a thousand hands; when, instead of his being content with seeing only such things as his eyes perceive, he calls to his aid the telescope and the microscope that multiply his power of vision a thousandfold. The old fashioned spinning wheel has been developed into the mighty Belfast linen mills. The old fashioned scythe has evolved into the swift mowing machine, which goes singing through the harvest fields. The old fashioned prairie schooner has long since given place to the tireless velocity of the lightning express, which never stops by day or by night except like a thirsty monster, to take a drink. The old fashioned messenger, who on horseback used to carry back to a king the news of a battle won, has been superseded by the telegraph wires and the electric cables, which in almost instant can put continents within speaking distance and have put the islands of the seas in communication with the mainland.

The patent offices in Washington are crowded with innumerable inventions for the saving of labor and time. In none of them, however, is the contrast between modern and ancient methods so marked as we see it when the mammoth flour mills of Minneapolis are compared with the custom referred to in the text. In that great city of the northwest not only is the grain alone instantly changed into flour by the best of modern machinery, but practically not one grain is lost. Upon the old fashioned thrashing floor everything was different. There a team of oxen would be harnessed to a collection of boards nailed together. Then these boards would be dragged over the grain and the chaff would be broken from the kernels of wheat. Then the winds would blow over the thrashing floor and separate the chaff from the wheat.

Wisdom of Moses.

Such were the thrashing floors of the ancients. Now, as Moses went in and out of the country he saw a great many of these thrashing floors. Furthermore, he saw that among their owners there were a great many mean men in those days, as there are in our own days. He saw that these mean men nearly always first showed their meanness to their beasts. They not only overworked their oxen, but they underfed them. Their meanness was most emphatically demonstrated when thrashing. Fearing lest their hard worked oxen might reach down and pick up from the thrashing floors a stray mouthful of grain to eat, these mean farmers would muzzle their beasts so that the hungry animals could see the food and yet not eat any. Now, Moses says in a practical way: "These men must be taught to be merciful to their beasts. I have made a law requiring them to obey God and be just in their dealings with their neighbors. Now I will make another law requiring them to be liberal in their provision for the animals which work for them." Then the great law-giver of the Hebrews sits down and writes these words of my text: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn."

Moses was the first great statesman that I know of who recognized the rights of dumb animals. It is a significant fact that in this early code of laws he should have given legal rights to animals as well as to men and women. It was a sound and righteous course, and I am glad to remember that we, too, have not only laws to prevent the ill usage of animals, but also in the Humane Society an organization to see that those laws are enforced. I want to show you this morning why every Christian should be in touch with that society and that its principles should be applied to all classes and all ages. There is no reason why the admonition should be limited to the farmer. The boy should be taught to be good to his pet dogs and squirrels; the drayman should be compelled to lighten the load if his horse is too weak to draw it; the hackman should be required to blanket his steed shivering in the chill blasts of winter the sportsman should be prohibited shooting the mother bird in nesting time. I would try to show that the Christ who was born amid the lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep and the neighing of the horses whinnying for their oats, is today the friend and protector of the dumb creatures as well as of our fellow men.

Cruelty Degraded.

The Humane Society of America should be accounted one of the best of societies. Its work has a deeper and a wider significance than some of us may have heretofore supposed. The evil of cruelty to animals does not end with the inflicting of pain and injustice on the dumb brutes. But as the small fibrous tumor, nestling under the fair skin, if let alone, may reach out its fatal roots toward the heart, so the

evils of cruelty against dumb animals may at last reach out for the heart of man itself. Injustice against the dumb brute inevitably paves the way for injustice against the dumb brute's master. If a boy delights to torture a dog or a cat or a mouse, there will surely come a time when that boy, grown into man, will delight in torturing his fellow beings.

A man's nature is degraded by indulging in cruelty to animals. He loses his manliness and acquires the nature of brutes. He undergoes in his lifetime the metamorphosis that the orientals believe he suffers after death. In the far east there is a popular belief held by multitudes; it is a belief in the transmigration of souls. This means, in popular interpretation, that after a man dies his soul passes into the body of a dog or a cat or a horse or a lion and so lives on through the coming ages. If he is a mean man then he becomes a mean beast like a jackal or a hyena, if a good man then his soul takes upon itself the form of a noble beast; but though in Christianized America we do not believe in the transmigration of souls we may see around us an analogous phenomenon. When a man abuses a dumb brute he is not punished by having his soul at death pass into the body of a jackal, but he takes on the character of those cruel, bestial four-legged scavengers of the desert, and he becomes one of them in his nature. Every time the old Mexican skinned a lamb alive, thinking that thereby the meat was made the sweeter, he destroyed that moral sensitiveness which enabled him to distinguish between right and wrong. Every time a boy transfixes a fly with a pin and then laughs to see it wriggle and squirm in its death agonies that boy is fitting himself to become a monster, a murderer and a destroyer of men. Nero, the Roman demon, became the inhuman monster he was by first, as a boy, learning to take pleasure in the sufferings of his nursery pets. Every man takes upon himself the heart of a savage animal when he abuses the helpless dumb brutes that God gave to him as de- pendents.

Justice For the Brute.

The Humane Society of America demands justice for the dumb brute because the equine laborer is always worthy of his hire. The horse has just as much right to his oats as the farm hand has to his noonday lunch, the ox to his mouthful of grain as the owner of the thrashing floor has to his loaf of bread after it is baked. The robin that sings in our cherry tree has a right to his living as well as the little child that eats at our dining table. In the great economy of nature every creature was created for a purpose, and if that creature fulfills a good purpose then you and I should try to make its life happy, as that creature is trying to make ours.

I did you ever stop to think how much you and I are indebted to all those four footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air" which Peter saw in vision let down from the heavens in a great sheet when he lodged with Simon the tanner? The horse! How many of our burdens he has carried! How many happy times we have had when being drawn by him over the country roads! In how many scenes of merrymaking has he been an essential part! And often in times of sadness he has come to our help. The birds! Yes, they, too, are worthy of their hire. They are our woodland prima donnas, our songsters and songstress that make the day, as well as the night, vocal with music. The fowls of the barnyard and the cattle of the fields—they, too, are worthy of their hire. The bone and muscle and brain of man come from their flesh. Even the humblest creatures are sometimes of great value to man.

"I saw a hideous snake this afternoon," I said last summer to a Michigan farmer. "It seemed to be all colors and I caught it in the middle of the road." "Did you kill it?" "Of course I killed it. What are snakes for but to kill?" "No, my friend," he answered. "All snakes are not to kill. The poisonous snakes are to kill, but not those that are not poisonous. The snakes we have around here, for the most part, are a great blessing to the farmers. They kill the bugs and insects which destroy the crops. Snakes are not always the enemy, but often the friend of man." Yes, my brother, we should not only leave the ox unmuzzled upon the thrashing floor, because the latter is always worthy of his hire, but the sheep and oxen and cattle and horses and birds and fishes and sometimes even the snakes, are the more set in his traces. Even the humblest creatures are sometimes of great value to man.

Treated by Kindness.

The Humane Society of America, in teaching man to be kind to the dumb brute, has a second practical mission.

It teaches that harshness and bitterness and cruelty do absolutely no good in the training and the true subjugation of an animal.

A cruel master never was able to get the best results out of a horse.

Blows and kicks and cuts only make a stubborn horse the more stubborn and the balky animal the more set in his traces.

I never learned this lesson in a more impressive way than when I passed two summers almost within a stone's throw of one of the best stock farms in this country. What magnificent animal-houses were! Racing horses were not raised there, but the best blood for marriage horses and roadsters of all sorts. Their clean limbs, their flash eyes, their high strung, nervous organization, made those animals the pride of almost every stable they entered. Yet the whip was never used upon them. They were trained almost entirely by kindness. After the colts had been allowed to run in the fields for about three years, always, however, being petted by their owners, they were ready for the harness. The first day on which the bridle was put upon them a strap was fastened on the fore hoof to teach them that they must mind. That was all. After the first two or three days the horse learned that if he plunged the strap would be applied to raise his forefoot and keep him on three legs. Having learned the lesson he ceased to plunge, and the use of the strap was discontinued. Then these colts were quietly hitched by the sides of the older horses and driven out to plow. The drivers never jerked them, but always talked kindly to them and coaxed them. And though those horses seemed to have within them all the pent-up ambition of Job's war charger, "smelling the battle from afar," yet in the hands of their kind masters they became gentle, lovable and docile.

Power of Gentleness.

An old, grumpy, dyspeptic philosopher once said, "The more I see of me the better I like dogs." That is not my idea. But the more I see of

dogs and horses and cattle the more I think they are like men. Supposing you were a horse hitched to a carriage. Supposing every time you made a mistake there was a whip like a knife ready to cut into your skin, would not your nerves be continually unstrung? Would you not always be ready to jump, to shy and to rear? Supposing you were in a stall with your head tied to a halter and the hostler wanted you to move over to the other side of the stall, and instead of placing his hand gently upon you and saying quietly,

"Now move over," he gives you savage kick in the stomach or a cuff upon the side of the head that made your ear ring and your brain dizzy with pain. What would you do? Would you bite and kick him if you got the chance? I doubt whether human nature would be as long suffering as equine nature under such provocation. But if every time that hostler came around you got a caress, or a piece of apple every time he applied the currycomb, and a kind, reassuring word every time a shrieking engine came past, I think that hostler or driver would be loved and trusted and obeyed just as my little child has, through my kindness, learned to love and trust and obey me. "The more I see of men the more I love dogs!" Oh, no; the philosopher was wrong. But the more you see of horses and dogs the more you ought to learn to treat them with the same gentleness with which you should treat your fellow man. Curses and blows and yells and growls never made a nervous horse trustful or an obstinate horse docile. Kindness will win submission in an animal, where terror and fear can never produce it.

Wanted.

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M. Peeler. 5-3-21.

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