

CLASS B

(B)

EZRA PRIZE

Ezra Prize?

English is a second language to the writer of this essay.

A report on the local competition held in Hong Kong has been sent to the Chairman, Imperial Studies Committee.

K. J. Attwell

K.J. Attwell,
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Good,
Rates commendation

Adeline Egan

Class 13, [REDACTED]

Sacred Heart School

Form V

Relief:

L = locust

T F = tsetse fly

M = mosquito

Essay Competition (Class B)

T. F. Good day! Mr. L. How do you do?

L. Good morning! Mr. F. I am fine, thank you.

T. F. Are you sure, my dear friend? But you don't look so well, you know? You look as if something is on your mind. What is troubling you, may I ask?

L. Well, as a matter of fact, I am a little troubled. You see, Mr. T.F., some of my relatives and I have been taking a trip in South Africa. And, as you know, wherever we passed over land, we left ruin and desolation behind us.

T. F. Well?

L. Well, when I returned home and related the little adventure to our dear friend, Mr. Mosquito, he laughed at me.

T. F. He laughed at you?

L. Yes, and besides that he insulted me, and said that I am the kind of insect that can do least

harm to men.

T. F. Oh!

L. Hey! Talking about the devil? There he comes in person. Mr. M., Mr. M.!!!

M. Who calls? Why, there ^{are} my dear friends Mr. T. F. and Mr. L. Good day, both of you.

T. F. L. (together) Good day.

M. I hope I haven't intruded upon you.

L. No, not at all. In fact, Mr. T. F. and I were just discussing about the little argument you and I had yesterday.

M. I see.

L. And I was on the point of asking him to give me his opinion.

M. I think, Mr. L., there is no use to argue about that anymore. Don't you think, Mr. T. F., mosquitoes are the kind of insect that can do most harm to men?

T. F. I don't think so.....

L. (triumphantly) you see?

T. F. (reflectively) I really can't decide which of you two are more harmful to men. But there is not the least doubt in my mind when we

approach the subject of "the most harmful kind of insects to"

M. (impatiently interrupting) What is it?

T. F. Isn't it clear to you both? Of course Tsetse flies are.

M. L. (indignantly) Oh! Mr. T. F.!!

M. (sarcastically) Indeed!!!

T. F. (unperturbed) Excuse me, Mr. M. and Mr. L., but a fact remains a fact no matter how much you care to argue over it. As you all know, I am one of the greatest of pests in Africa. I and my relatives and I are responsible for the spread of fatal diseases. And, (smiling complacently) you know how scientists dread us.

M. That is nothing compared to what I am able to do. I can easily call myself "the deadliest insect foe of man" without exaggerating. In India, last year, 5,000,000 people died of malaria and yellow fever through our work.

L. (proudly) I think I can do better than that. My relatives and I have done so well that men dread us much more than you. I might as well relate again my adventure in South Africa.

Two thousand square miles of land were covered by us. And as we moved forward, every green blade disappeared. We filled the heavens as with a black cloud. I even heard some men comparing the noise of our wings and movements of our hungry jaws to the rushing sound of a river. Sometimes, I felt quite pitiful for the farmers as we approached a field of grain or a grove of trees. For I know, a few minutes later, nothing but a mass of stubble or a forest of bare branches would remain.

M. (ironically) Is that so, Mr. L.? But, unless I am mistaken, an incident happened in 1881 which mastered completely some of your ancestors.

T. F. (interested) What was that incident?

M. Well, you see, in 1881, when an army of our dear friend here tried to scourge the island of Cyprus, the men there sought for and found a way to defend their crops.

T. F. (curiously) What did they do?

M. It wasn't hard at all. The men only erected great screens of canvas, and at the top they put smooth oilcloth. You see, Mr. T. F., young

locusts have no wings, and they cannot climb over anything smooth. Of course, they attempted at first to climb up the canvas, but on reaching the oilcloth they fell back off it, crawled along at the foot of the screen until they tumbled into deep pits, which had been dug every few yards at the side of the screens. The pits were lined with polished zinc, so that once in, the uh poor locusts could not get out. And the result was that in the first year 214 millions locusts were caught. And in the following year 56 millions.

T. F. (amazed) Gee whiz!

M. (smiling superiorly) Yes, 270 millions all together.

L. (sullenly) And so what, Mr. Blood-sucker?

M. Oh, but there is no reason to get angry, Mr. L., none at all.

L. Do not be mistaken, Mr. M., I am not angry at all. I was only wondering whether you still remember Major Donald Ross, who discovered that malaria is carried by a mosquito called anopheles, and Major Walter C. Reed, who found out that the bite of a mosquito called stegomyia, brings

the dreaded yellow fever.....

T. F. But what is the use to find the cause of death with no remedy?

L. Just so, Mr. T. F., just so. And so many doctors set to work to find the remedy.

T. F. And did they find it?

L. Of course, it was so easy. The scientists found that in ~~those~~ countries where drainage is bad, and the pools dirty, more deaths due to malaria and yellow fever are to be found. For instance, in India, about a hundred years ago, there was very little attempt at proper drainage. Stagnant pools lay about in the streets, rubbish collected in the villages, dirty old boxes lay about with water in them, cisterns were uncovered. There were a thousand places in which mosquitoes could be reared. And, as we know, the full grown insects lay their eggs either in water, or in damp, decaying vegetation, or behind the bark of fallen trees. For the little blood-suckers thrive best in damp, dirty conditions.

T. F. Well?

L. So the scientists tried to improve these conditions.

and the prevalence of malaria and yellow fever had been greatly reduced in India as well as in all parts of the world as a result of the discovery of the life-history of the mosquito. Thus, stagnant ponds were filled in, and the drainage system greatly improved. Also, the pouring of oil on to the surface of any water which may afford a home for the developing larvae or pupae became a common practise! For the low surface tension of oil makes it impossible for the larvae to attach themselves, so that respiration cannot take place and the insects die of suffocation. Nowadays, comparatively few people suffer from malaria or yellow fever. But before, they used to die in millions every year.

T.F. Both speeches were equally good. Now you can see, Mr. L. and Mr. M., that since locusts and mosquitoes are so easily conquered, flies remain the hero of the day.

L. (impulsively) Don't be so sure, Mr. T. F.

M. (mockingly) Mr. L., is there anything wrong with

T. F. my ears?

T. F. (calmly) Will you let me have my say first, gentlemen, before you start to give your opinions?
..... (pause). I belong to the species of tsetse fly ^{which} is called *glossina morsitans*. All the flies in this species carry in their bite the disease called nagana by the natives of Africa, which is fatal to domestic animals, and another species, the *glossina palpalis*, (our first cousins), spreads suffering and death among men by bringing to them the disease which is known as sleeping sickness.

M. (flatly) That's not very interesting, Mr. T. F.

T. F. To you, perhaps it is not. But to me it is. Well, when men are attacked by sleeping sickness, they are overcome by a desire to sleep, all their energy and will-power go from them, and they die. No cure has been found for the disease, and hundreds of thousands of people died from it. The populations of villages and whole districts fell victims to it, and some of the native races were wiped out completely.

M. (spitefully) How s hocking!!!

- L. Though no cure has been found for the disease, but it has been learned that the tsetse carries the parasites, which cause sleeping sickness, from one person to another.
- M. Yes, and it has been found also that tsetse flies lay their eggs in bushes on the banks of lakes and rivers, and that the larvae live only in damp shady places. Thus now, in Africa (which is the only place where tsetse flies are found) all bushes are cut back thirty yards from the banks, so that the sunlight may kill the larvae. And now, in Africa, sleeping sickness is almost completely stamped out.
- L. So, undoubtedly, Mr. T. F., you are not the insect that can do most harm to men.
- T. F. (maliciously) And who is, I pray?
- M. I am.
- L. I think I am.
- T. F. And I have no doubt that I am.

(1500 words)