

MAGE IN THE WEST

SEQUENT SERMON ON "THE DECORATION OF THE SOUL"

Parable of the Prodigal Son—It Matters Not How Poor We Are If We but Wear on Our Hand the Ring of Christ's Adoption.

FORT SCOTT, Kan., March 18.—The Rev. T. De Witt Talnage, D. D., of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, preached here this evening to a crowded congregation. He took for his subject "The Decoration of the Soul," and his text was Luke xv, 22: "Put a ring on his hand." He said:

I will not rehearse the familiar story of the fast young man of the parable. You know what a splendid home he had. You know what a hard time he led. And you remember how, after that season of vagabondage and prodigality, he resolved to go and weep out his sorrows on the bosom of parental forgiveness. Well, there is great excitement one day in front of the door of the old farm house. The servants come rushing up and say: "What's the matter? What is the matter?" But before they quite arrive the old man cries out: "Put a ring on his hand." What a seeming absurdity!

What can such a wretched mendicant as this fellow that is tramping on toward the house want with a ring? Oh, he is the prodigal son. No more tending of the peds of the carob tree. No more blistered feet. Out with the rags! On with the robe! Out with the ring! Even so does God receive every one of us when we come back. There are gold rings, and pearl rings, and corneal rings, and diamond rings, but the richest ring that ever flashed on the vision is that which our Father puts upon a forgiven soul.

I know that the impression is abroad among some people that religion becometh and belittles a man; that it takes all the sparkle out of his soul; that he has to exchange a roystering independence for an ecclesiastical straight jacket. Not so. When a man becomes a Christian he does not go down, he starts upward. Religion multiplies one by 10,000. Nay, the multiplier is in infinity. It is not a blotting out—it is a polishing, it is an effulgence, it is an irradiation.

When a man comes into the kingdom of God he is not sent into a menial service, but the Lord God Almighty from the palaces of heaven calls upon the messenger angels that wait upon the throne to fly and "put a ring on his hand." In Christ a ring is the largest liberty, and brightest joy, and highest honor, and richest adornment. "Put a ring on his hand."

I remark, in the first place, that when Christ receives a soul into his love he puts upon him the ring of adoption. In my church in Philadelphia there came the representative of a benevolent society in New York. He brought with him eight or ten children of the street that he had picked up, and he was trying to find for them Christian homes; and as the little ones stood on the pulpit and sung our hearts melted within us. At the close of the services a great hearted, wealthy man came up and said: "I'll take this little bright eyed girl and I'll adopt her as one of my own children;" and he took her by the hand, lifted her into his carriage and went away.

The next day, while we were in the church gathering up garments for the poor of New York, this little child came back with a bundle under her arm, and she said: "There's my old dress; perhaps some of the poor children would like to have it," while she herself was in bright and beautiful array, and those who more immediately examined her said that she had a ring on her hand. It was a ring of adoption.

There are a great many persons who pride themselves on their ancestry, and they glory over the royal blood that pours through their arteries. In their line there was a lord or a duke or a prime minister or a king. But when the Lord, our Father, puts upon us the ring of his adoption we become the children of the ruler of all nations. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." It matters not how poor our garments may be in this world, or how scant our bread, or how mean the hut we live in, if we have that ring of Christ's adoption upon our hand we are assured of eternal defenses.

Adopt! Why, then, we are brethren and sisters to all the good of earth and heaven. We have the family name, the family dress, the family keys, the family wardrobe. The father looks after us, robes us, defends us, blesses us. We have royal blood in our veins, and there are crowns in our line. If we are his children, then princes and princesses. It is only a question of time when we get our coronet. Adopted! Then we have the family secrets. "The secret of the Lord is with them that love him." Adopted! Then we have the family inheritance, and in the day when our father shall divide the riches of heaven we shall take our share of the mansions and palaces and temples. Henceforth let us boast no more of an earthly ancestry. The insignia of eternal glory is our coat of arms. This ring of adoption puts upon us all honor and all privilege. Now we can take the words of Charles Wesley, that prince of hymn makers, and sing:

Come, let us join our friends above,
Who have obtained the prize,
And on the eagle wings of love
To joy celestial rise.

Let all the saints terrestrial sing
With those to glory gone;
For all the servants of our King,
In heaven and earth, are one.

I have been told that when any of the members of any of the great secret societies of this country are in a distant city and are in any kind of trouble, and are set upon by enemies, they have only to give a certain signal and the members of that organization will flock around for defense. And when any man belongs to this great Christian brotherhood, if he gets in trouble, in trial, in persecution, in temptation, he has only to show this ring of Christ's adoption, and all the armed cohorts of heaven will come to his rescue.

Still further, when Christ takes a soul into his love he puts upon it a marriage ring. Now, that is not a whim of mine; "And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in

the wedding altar the bridegroom puts a ring upon the hand of the bride, signifying love and faithfulness. Trouble may come upon the household, and the carpets may go, and the pictures may go, the piano may go, everything else may go—the last thing that goes is the marriage ring, for it is considered sacred. In the burial hour it is withdrawn from the hand and kept in a casket, and sometimes the box is opened on an anniversary day, and as you look at this ring you see under its arch a long procession of precious memories. Within the golden circle of this ring there is room for a thousand sweet recollections to revolve, and you think of the great contrast between the hour when, at the close of the "Wedding March," under the flashing lights and amid the aroma of orange blossoms, you set that ring on the round finger of the plump hand, and that other hour when at the close of the exhaustive watching, when you knew that the soul had fled, you took from the hand, which gave back no responsive clasp, from that emancipated finger, the ring that she had worn so long and worn so well.

On some anniversary day you take up that ring, and you polish it until all the old luster comes back, and you can see in it the flash of eyes that long ago ceased to weep. Oh, it is not an unmeaning thing when I tell you that when Christ receives a soul into his keeping he puts on it a marriage ring. He endows you from that moment with all his wealth. You are one—Christ and the soul—one in sympathy, one in affection, one in hope.

There is no power in earth or hell to effect a divorce after Christ and the soul are united. Other kings have turned out their companions when they got weary of them, and sent them adrift from the palace gate. Alexander banished Vashti, Napoleon forsook Josephine, but Christ is the husband that is true forever. Having loved you once, he loves you to the end. Did they not try to divorce Margaret, the Scotch girl, from Jesus? They said: "You must give up your religion." She said: "I can't give up my religion." And so they took her down to the beach of the sea, and they drove in a stake at low water mark, and they fastened her to it, expecting that as the tide came up her faith would fail. The tide began to rise, and came up higher and higher, and to the girdle, and to the lip, and in the last moment, just as the wave was washing her soul into glory, she shouted the praises of Jesus.

Oh, no, you cannot separate a soul from Christ. It is an everlasting marriage. Battle and storm and darkness cannot do it. It is too much exultation for a man, who is but dust and ashes, like myself, to cry out today: "I am persuaded that neither height, nor depth, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord!" Glory be to God that when Christ and the soul are married they are bound by a chain, a golden chain—if I might say so—a chain with one link, and that one link the golden ring of God's everlasting love.

I go a step further, and tell you that when Christ receives a soul into his love he puts on him the ring of festivity. You know that it has been the custom in all ages to bestow rings on very happy occasions. There is nothing more appropriate for a birthday gift than a ring. You delight to bestow such a gift upon your children at such a time. It means joy, hilarity, festivity. Well, when this old man of the text wanted to tell how glad he was that his boy had got back, he expressed it in this way. Actually, before he ordered sandals to be put on his bare feet, before he ordered the fattest calf to be killed to appease the boy's hunger, he commanded: "Put a ring on his hand."

Oh, it is a merry time when Christ and the soul are united! Joy of forgiveness! What a splendid thing it is to feel that all is right between me and God. What a glorious thing it is to have God just take up all the sins of my life and put them in one bundle, and then fling them into the depths of the sea, never to rise again, never to be talked of again. Pollution all gone. Darkness all illuminated. God reconciled. The prodigal home. "Put a ring on his hand."

Every day I find happy Christian people. I find some of them with no second coat, some of them in huts and tenement houses, not one earthly comfort afforded them, and yet they are as happy as happy can be. They sing "Rock of Ages" as no other people in the world sing it. They never wore any jewelry in their life but one gold ring, and that was the ring of God's undying affection. Oh, how happy religion makes us! Did it make you gloomy and sad? Did you go with your head cast down? I do not think you got religion, my brother. That is not the effect of religion. True religion is joy. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Why religion lightens all our burdens. It smooths all our way. It interprets all our sorrows. It changes the jar of earthly discord for the peal of festal bells. In front of the flaming furnace of trial it sets the forge on which scepters are hammered out. Would you not like today to come up from the swine feeding and try this religion? All the joys of heaven would come out and meet you, and God would cry from the throne: "Put a ring on his hand."

You are not happy. I see it. There is no peace, and sometimes you laugh when you feel a great deal more like crying. The world is a cheat. It first wears you down with its follies, then it kicks you out into darkness. It comes back from the massacre of a million souls to attempt the destruction of your soul today. No peace out of God, but here is the fountain that can slake the thirst. Here is the harbor where you can drop safe anchorage.

Would you not like, I ask you—not perfunctorily, but as one brother might talk to another—would you not like to have a pillow of rest to put your head on? And would you not like, when you retire at night, to feel that all is well, whether you wake up to-morrow morning at 6 o'clock, or sleep the sleep that knows no waking? Would you not like to exchange this awful uncertainty about the future for a glorious assurance of heaven? Accept of the Lord Jesus to

and dash your life out, it would not hurt you. You would rise up immediately. You would stand in the celestial streets. You would be amid the great throng that forever worship and are forever happy. If this day some sudden disease should come upon you, it would not frighten you. If you knew you were going you could give a calm farewell to your beautiful home on earth, and know that you are going right into the companionship of those who have already got beyond the toiling and the weeping.

You feel on Saturday night different from the way you feel any other night of the week. You come home from the bank, or the store, or the shop, and you say: "Well, now my week's work is done, and to-morrow is Sunday." It is a pleasant thought. There is refreshment and reconstruction in the very idea. Oh, how pleasant it will be, if, when we get through the day of our life, and we go and lie down in our bed of dust, we can realize: "Well, now the work is all done, and to-morrow is Sunday—an everlasting Sunday."

Oh, when, then, thou city of God,
Shall I thy courts ascend?
Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.

There are people in this house today who are very near the eternal world. If you are Christians, I bid you be of good cheer. Beat with your own congratulations to the bright city. Aged men, who will soon be gone, take with you our love for our kindred in the better land, and when you see them tell them that we are soon coming. Only a few more sermons to preach and hear. Only a few more heart aches. Only a few more toils. Only a few more tears. And then what an entrancing spectacle will open before us!

Beautiful heaven where all is light,
Beautiful angels clothed in white,
Beautiful strains that never tire,
Beautiful harp through all the choir;
There shall I join the chorus sweet,
Worshipping at the Saviour's feet.

I approach you now with a general invitation, not picking out here and there a man, or here and there a woman, or here and there a child, but giving you an unlimited invitation, saying, "Come, for all things are now ready." We invite you to the warm heart of Christ and the inclosure of the Christian church. I know a great many think that the church does not amount to much; that it is obsolete; that it did its work and is gone now, so far as all usefulness is concerned. It is the best place I have ever been in, except my own home.

I know there are some people who say they are Christians who seem to get along without any help from others, and who culture solitary piety. They do not want our ordinances. I do not belong to that class. I cannot get along without them. There are so many things in this world that take my attention from God, and Christ, and heaven, that I want all the helps of all the symbols and of all the Christian associations; and I want around about me a solid phalanx of men who love God and keep his commandments. Are there any here who would like to enter into that association? Then by a simple, child like faith, apply for admission into the visible church, and you will be received. No questions asked about your past history or present surroundings. Only one test—do you love Jesus?

Baptism does not amount to anything, say a great many people, but the Lord Jesus declared: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," putting baptism and faith side by side. And an apostle declares: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." I do not stickle for any particular mode of baptism, but I put great emphasis on the fact that you ought to be baptized. Yet no more emphasis than the Lord Jesus Christ, the great head of the church puts upon it.

The world is going to, after a while, lose a great many of its votaries. There are to be revivals of religion that will shake the earth. We give you warning. There is a great host coming in to stand under the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you be among them? Will you be among the gathered sheaves?

Some of you have been thinking on this subject year after year. You have found out that this world is a poor nation. You want to be Christians. You have come almost into the kingdom of God; but there you stop, forgetful of the fact that to be almost saved is not to be saved at all. Oh, my brother, after having come so near to the door of mercy, if you turn back, you will never come at all. After you have heard of the goodness of God, if you turn away and die, it will not be because you did not have a good offer.

God's spirit will not always strive
With hardened, self-destroying man;
Ye who persist his love to grieve,
May never hear his voice again.

May God Almighty this hour move upon your soul and bring you back from the husks of the wilderness to the father's house, and set you at the banquet and "put a ring on your hand."

The Prince Consort's Resting Place. The old Whippam church, which, in the early days, was an abbey, was remodeled in the most elegant and expensive manner by the queen, out of her own funds, in 1861, and is now one of the most beautiful houses of worship in the world. All the people of the parish attend here, as well as the queen's household, but the latter have their own private entrance, and are separated from the common herd by an artistic screen. The royal pew, on the south side of the chancel, is a square affair, very handsomely upholstered, and contains a monumental tablet to the memory of the late prince consort, with this inscription:

"To the beloved memory of Francis Albert Charles Augustus Emanuel, prince consort, who departed this life Dec. 14, 1861, in his 43d year. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Revelations ii, 10. This monument is placed in this church, which was erected under his direction, by his broken hearted and degoted widow, Queen Victoria, 1864."—Philadelphia Times.

Width of the Amazon. The River Amazon at its narrowest part is nearly a mile wide during the period of high water, with an average depth of 235 feet, running with a velocity of nearly five miles an hour, and discharging 245,875 cubic yards of water per second, or eight times the quantity

EDITED BY THE SCISSORS.

The only true refuge from doubt is the light of simpler truth.

Every man on the Kansas City police force is a church member.

Phosphates in almost unlimited quantities have been found in Florida.

Frenchmen are beginning to talk about the forbidding of children in circus and theatres.

Copies of the "National Anthems of All Nations" are to be provided for all England's regimental bands.

Baltimore boasts of having a wealthy society young man who can bake bread and cook a delicious meal.

The number of patents issued in this country during 1887 for electrical devices of various kinds was 1,248.

All Europe seems impressed with the belief that peace can best be maintained by having everything put on a war footing.

The revenues of the Church of England have declined enormously. The living of Rochdale, that used to be worth \$50,000 or \$60,000, is now worth only \$20,000.

Three physicians have left Paris for Australia, taking with them germs of chicken cholera. The Australians are about to adopt Pasteur's plan of destroying their rabbits, in the face of very strong opposition.

Millions of jack rabbits migrated from Oregon to Idaho during the cold spell in the far northwest. They crossed the frozen waters of the Snake river, and presented a wonderful spectacle to the people who saw them.

The Bank of New York has a check yellowed by fire which was drawn by Aaron Burr Aug. 14, 1784, and also another check drawn by Talleyrand and Gulian Verplanck. It is now nearly 104 years since the bank was established.

There are 18 different missions in the Mexican republic, 11 different denominations, 123 foreign workers, 12,135 communicants, adherents about 30,000; there have been 59 martyrs; there are 88 ordained native preachers and 65 unordained.

The autographs belonging to the collection of the late Benj. Perley Poore have been sold at auction, and netted about \$6,500. The highest price paid for any one autograph was \$90, for a letter written by Edgar Allan Poe upon the subject of "The Raven."

The barb wire industry is in a fair way of being overcome. According to The Iron Age there are forty-four manufacturers in this country who own 2,101 machines. It is estimated that in 200 working days, running single turns, they will make 300,000 tons of barb wire, while the consumption ranges from 130,000 to 150,000 tons a year.

Some of the society men of Paris are advocating the adoption of a more suitable style of evening dress. The costume proposed consists of buckle shoes, silk stockings, knee breeches, velvet coat (curtailed), lace ruffles, etc. The promoters are anxious to avoid the dress which causes, sometimes, mistaking resemblance between guest and waiter.

When the mercury was 22 degs. below zero at Virginia City, Nev., a big black dog walked to the mouth of the Utah shaft of the Comstock mines and jumped down. Some asserted that he had committed suicide. It is more likely that he felt the hot air rushing up from below and wanted more of it. He fell 250 feet, and hadn't a whole bone left.

Curious Mirage in Maine. A curious mirage has been seen at Gray, Me.: "The thermometer stood at about 20 degs. below, the sun was obscured by a light cloud, a slight misty haze pervaded the lowlands, but the sky was otherwise almost cloudless. Suddenly along the horizon, from north to east, the whole outline underwent a change as if by magic. Huge pines, never seen before, stood out against the sky for a radius of ten miles. Further to the left appeared trees with the tops slightly flattened and joined together, looking like massive columns supporting a colossal bridge, the top appearing perfectly straight and even; in the center a ridge of land, covered with beautiful elms and maples, was visible, and a hill several miles beyond the natural horizon, with a strip of timber on it, and a perspective beyond as far as the eye could reach."—Brooklyn Eagle.

Two Portraits of Poe. Only two original portraits of Edgar Allan Poe are to be found in this city. That one of them which hangs in the gallery of the Historical society is an oil painting, and represents him as he looked in his better days, before the knell of "Nevermore" had entered his brain. The other portrait, which is in water colors and of small size, belongs to a gentleman who last week set it on an easel amid a group of Poe's admirers. It represents him in his later years, near the end of his life, when both body and mind were nearly wrecked. He is seated on a chair, over the back of which his right arm is thrown, and his listless attitude and vacuous expression are melancholy reminders of the fall of the magical poet. One of the party who saw the oil portrait, and who had known Poe at that period of his life, was startled by its realism. It was the work of a Philadelphia artist named Smith.—New York Sun.

A New Insurance Idea. A new commercial idea consists of a combination of insurance with the ordinary commercial agency. A canvass of the wholesale dry goods trade in New York city was made nearly a year ago, and the encouragement obtained was sufficient not only to warrant the projectors of the enterprise to go ahead, but also to start upon a second concern of the same kind. Their plan is to insure the payment of debts by retail merchants throughout the country to New York wholesalers, jobbers and manufacturers from whom they buy goods. This seems at first like a wildly reckless undertaking. Nevertheless, the two companies have been sufficiently capitalized to begin operations on a considerable scale.—Public Opinion.

If, in some counties, murderers cannot be hanged, perhaps they

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Political, Commercial and Social Transactions

of this year and would keep pace with the times should

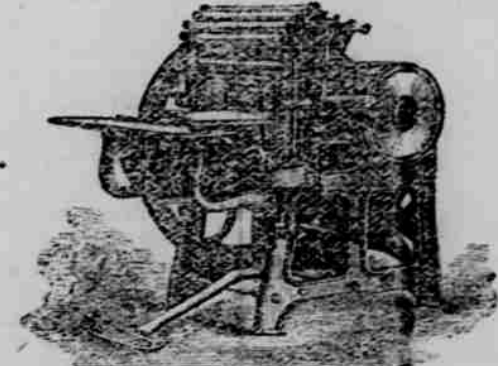
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