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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

AN ELOQUENT DISCOURSE BY THE BROOKLYN PREACHER.

A Comparison of Wisdom with the Most Precious Stone—The Value of Religion—Words of Solomon—Contrasts Brought Out by the Text.

Rubies Surpassed.

The subject of Dr. Talmage's sermon last Sunday was, "Rubies Surpassed" and the text Proverbs viii, 11, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

You have all seen the precious stone commonly called the ruby. It is of deep red color. The Bible makes much of it. It glowed in the first row of the high priest's breastplate. Under another name it stood in the wall of heaven. Jeremiah compares the ruby cheek of the Nazarene to the ruby. Ezekiel points it out in the robes of the king of Tyre. Four times does Solomon use it as a symbol by which to extol wisdom or religion, always setting its value as better than rubies.

Qualities of the Ruby.

The world does not agree as to how the precious stones were formed. The ancients thought that amber was made of drops of perspiration of the goddess Ge. The thunder stone was supposed to have dropped from a storm cloud. The emerald was said to have been made of the fire. The lapis lazuli was thought to have been born of the cry of an Indian giant. And modern mineralogists say that the precious stones were made of gases and liquids. To me the ruby seems like a spark from the anvil of the setting sun.

The home of the genuine ruby is Burmah, and sixty miles from its capital, where lives and reigns the ruler, called "Lord of the Rubies." Under a careful governmental guard are these valuable mines of ruby kept. Rarely has any foreigner visited them. When a ruby of large value was discovered, it was brought forth with elaborate ceremony. A procession was formed, and, with all banneted pomp, military guard, and princely attendants, the gem was brought to the king's palace.

Of great value is the ruby, much more so than diamond, as lapidaries and jewelers will tell you. An expert on this subject writes, "A ruby of perfect color weighing five carats is worth at the present day ten times as much as a diamond of equal weight." It was a disaster when Charles the Bold lost the ruby he was wearing at the battle of Grandson. It was a great affliction when Rudolph II, of Austria inherited a ruby from his sister, the Queen dowager. It was thought to have had much to do with the victory of Henry V., as he wore it into the battle of Agincourt.

It is the pride of the Russian court to own the largest ruby of all the world, presented by Gustavus III, to the Russian Empress, Wondrous ruby. It has electric characteristics, and there are lightnings compressed in its double six sided prism. What shall I call it? It is frozen fire! It is petrified blood! In all the world there is only one thing more valuable, and my text makes the comparison, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

But it is impossible to compare two things together unless there are some points of similarity as well as of difference. I am glad there is nothing lacking here. The ruby is more beautiful in the night and under the lamplight than by day. It is preferred for evening adornment. How the rubies glow and burn and flash as the lights lift the darkness. Catharine of Aragon had on her finger a ruby that fairly lampioned the night.

John Mandeville, the celebrated traveler of 400 years ago, said that the Emperor of China had a ruby that made the night as bright as day. The probability is that Solomon, under some of the lamps that illumined his cedar palace by night, noticed the peculiar glow of the ruby as it looked in the bit of a sword, or hung in some fold of the upholstery, or beauteous the lip of some chalice, while he was thinking at the same time of the excellency of our holy religion as chiefly seen in the night of trouble, and he cries out, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

What the World Needs.

Oh, yes, it is a good thing to have religion while the sun of prosperity rides high and everything is brilliant in fortune, in health, in worldly favor. Yet you can at such time hardly tell how much it is natural exuberance and how much of it is the grace of God. But let the sun set, and the shadows avalanche the plain, and the thick darkness of sickness or poverty or persecution or mental exhaustion fill the soul and fill the house and fill the world; then you sit down by the lamp of God's word, and under its light the consolations of the gospel come out; the peace of God which passeth all understanding appears. You never fully appreciated their power until in the deep night of trouble the Divine Lamp revealed their exquisiteness. Pearls and amethysts for the day, but rubies for the night.

All of the books of the Bible attempt in some way the assuagement of misfortune. Of the 150 psalms of David at least ninety allude to trouble. There are sighings in every wind, and tears in every brook, and pangs in every heart. It was originally proposed to call the President's residence at Washington "The Palace" or "The Executive Mansion," but after it was destroyed in the war of 1814 and rebuilt it was painted white to cover up the marks of the smoke and fire that had blackened the stone walls. Hence it was called "The White House." Most of the things now white with attractiveness were once black with disaster.

What the world most needs is the consolatory, and here it comes, our holy religion, with both hands full of anodynes and sedatives and balsams, as in Daniel's time to stop mouths leonine; as in Shadrach's time to cool blast fur-

naces; as in Ezekiel's time to console captivity; as in St. John's time to unroll an apocalypse over rocky desolations. Hear its soothing voice as it declares: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my loving kindness shall not depart from you." "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The most wholesome thing on earth is trouble, if met in Christian spirit. To make Paul what he was it took shipwreck, and whipping on the bare back, and penitentiary, and pursuit of wild mobs, and the sword of decapitation. To make David what he was it took all that Abithophel and Saul and Absalom and Goliath and all the Philistine hosts could do against him. It took Robert Chambers' maiming of feet to make him the literary conqueror.

It was bereavement that brought William Havorth of Wesley's time from wickedness to an evangelism that won many thousands for Heaven. The world would never have known what heroic stuff tidley was made of had not the fires been kindled around his feet, and not liking their slow work he cried: "I cannot burn. Let the fire come to me. I cannot burn." Thank God there are gems that unfold their best glories under the lamplight! Thank God for the ruby!

Solomon Was Right.

Moreover, I am sure that Solomon was right in saying that religion or wisdom is better than rubies, from the fact that a thing is worth what it will fetch. Religion will fetch. Religion will fetch solid happiness, and the ruby will not. In all your observation did you ever find a person thoroughly felicitated by an investment of jewels? As you know more of yourself than any one else, are you happier now with worldly adornments and successes than before you won them? Does the picture that cost you hundreds or thousands of dollars on your wall bring you as much satisfaction as the engraving that at the expense of 85 was hung upon the wall when you first began to keep house?

Do all the cutlery and rare plate that glitter on your extension dining table, surrounded by flattering guests, contain more of real bliss than the plain ware of your first table, at which sat only two? Does a wardrobe crammed with costly attire give you more satisfaction than your first clothes closet with its four or five negs? Did not the plain ring set on the third finger of your left hand on the day of your betrothal give more gladness than the ruby that is now enthroned on the third finger of your right hand?

If in this journey of life we have learned anything, we have learned that this world neither with its emoluments nor gains can satisfy the soul.

Martyrs to Duty.

There is also something in the deep carmine of the ruby that suggests the sacrifice on which our whole system of religion depends. While the emerald suggests the meadows, and the sapphire the skies, and the opal the sea, the ruby suggests the blood of sacrifice. The most emphatic and startling of all colors hath the ruby. Solomon, the author of my text, knew all about the sacrifice of lamb and dove on the altars of the temple, and he knew the meaning of sacrificial blood, and what other precious stone could he so well use to symbolize it as the ruby? Red, intensely red, red as the blood of the greatest martyr of all time—Jesus—of the centuries! Drive the story of the crucifixion out of the Bible and the doctrine of the atonement out of our religion, and there would be nothing of Christianity left for our worship or our admiration.

Why should it be hard to adopt the Bible theory that our redemption was purchased by blood? What great bridge ever sprung its arches, what temple ever reared its independence, what mighty god was ever done without sacrifice of life? The great wonder of the world, the bridge that unites these two cities, cost the life of the first architect. Ask the shipyards of Glasgow and New York how many carpenters went down under accidents before the steamer was launched; ask the three great transcontinental railroads how many in their construction were buried under crumbling embankments or crushed under timbers or destroyed by the powder blast.

Tabulate the statistics of how many mothers have been martyrs to the cradle of sick children. Tell us how many men sacrificed nerve and muscle and brain and life in the effort to support their households. Tell me how many men in England, in France, in Germany, in Italy, in the United States, have died for their country. Vicarious suffering is as old as the world, but the most thrilling, the most startling, the most stupendous sacrifice of all time, and eternally on a bluff back of Jerusalem when one Being took upon him all the sins, the agonies, the perdition of a great multitude that no man can number between 12 o'clock of a darkened noon and 3 o'clock in the afternoon, purchasing the ransom of a ruined world.

Dive in all the seas, explore all the mines, covet all the mountains, view all the crowned jewels of all the emperors, and find me any gem that can so overwhelmingly symbolize that martyrdom as the ruby. Mark you, there are many gems that are somewhat like the ruby. So is the corneol, so is the garnet, so is the spinel, so is the bala, so the gems brought from among the gravels of Ceylon and New South Wales, but there is only one genuine ruby, and that comes from the mine of Burmah. And there is only one Christ, and He comes from Heaven. One Redeemer, one Ransom, one Son of God, only "one name given under heaven among men by which we can be saved."

Ten thousand times 10,000 beautiful

imitations of that ruby, but only one ruby. Christ had no descendant. Christ had no counterpart. In the lifted up grandeur and glory and love and sympathy of his character he is the incomparable, the Infinite One! "The only wise God, our Saviour." Let all hearts, all homes, all times, all eternities, bow low before Him! Let His banner be lifted in all our souls!

Price of the Gospel.

In olden times Scotland was disturbed by freebooters and pirates. Torrid the seas and ports of these desperadoes, the hero William Wallace fitted out a merchant vessel, but filled with armed men and put out to sea. The pirates, with their flag inscribed of a death's head, thinking they would get an easy prize, bore down upon the Scottish merchantman, when the armed men of Wallace boarded the craft of the pirates and put them in chains and then sailed for port under the Scotch flag flying. And so our souls, assailed of sin and death and hell, through Christ are rescued, and the black flag of sin is torn down, and the striped flag of the cross is hoisted. Blessed be God for any sign, for any signal, for any precious stone, that brings to mind the price for such a rescue!

I like the coral, for it seems the solidified foam of breakers, and I like the Jasper, for it gathers seventeen colors into its bosom, and I like the jet, for it compresses the shadows of many midnight, and I like the chrysopease because its purity is illumined with a small heaven of stars, and I like the chrysolite for its waves of color which seem on fire. But this morning nothing so impresses me as the ruby, for it depicts, it typifies, it suggests "The blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin." Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Yes, Solomon was right when in my text he said, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

To bring out a contrast, that will illustrate my text, I put before you two last earthly scenes. The one is in a room with rubies, but no religion, and the other in a room with religion, but no rubies. You enter the first room, where an affluent and worldly man is about to quit this life. There is a ruby on the mantle, possibly among the jewels. There is a ruby in the head-dress of the womanly wife.

On the finger of the dying man there is a ruby. The presence of these rubies implies opulence of all kinds. The pictures on the walls are heirlooms or the trophies of European travel. The curtains are from foreign looms. The sofas are stuffed with ease and quietude. The rocking chairs roll backward and forward on lullabies. The pillows are exquisitely embroidered. All the appointments of the room are a peroration to a successful commercial or professional life. The man has no religion, never has had and never professed to have. There is not a Bible or one religious book in the room.

The departing man feels that his earthly career is ended, and nothing opens beyond. Where he will land, stepping out from this life is a mystery, or whether he will land at all, for it may be annihilation. He has no prayer to offer, and he does not know how to pray. No hope of meeting again in another state of existence. He is through with this life and is sure of no other. The ruby on the mantle, the ruby on the ring, the ruby on the finger of the departing one say nothing of the ransom blood which they so mightily typify. So far as giving solace or illumination to a departing spirit, they are a dead failure. Midnight of other hopelessness drops on all the scene.

Better Than Rubies.

Another room of mortal exit. Religion and no rubies. She never had money enough to buy one of these exquisite. Sometimes she stopped at a jeweler's show window and saw a row of them incriminating the velvet. She had been taught enough to appreciate these gems, but she never owned one of them. She was not giddy or unhappy because others had rubies while she had none. But she had a richer treasure, and that was the grace of God that had comforted her along the way amid bereavements and temptations and persecutions and sickness and privations and trials of all sorts. Now she is going out of life.

The room is bright, not with pictures or statues, not with upholstery, not with any of the gems of mountain or of sea, but there is a strange and vivid glow in the room. Not the light of chandelier or star or noonday sun, but something that outshines all of them. It must be the presence of super-natural. From her illumined face I think she must hear sweet voices. Yes, she does hear sweet voices—voices of departed kindred, voices apostolic and prophetic and angelic, but all of them overpowered by the voice of Christ, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom."

From her illumined face, I think she must hear rapturous music. Yes, she does hear rapturous music, now soft as solos, no thunderous as orchestras; now faintly voice alone, now the hundred and forty and over thousand in concert. From her illumined face, I think she must breathe redolence. Yes, she does inhale the aroma from a field of gardens whose flowers never wither and from the blossoms of orchards, every tree of which bears twelve manner of fruit. From her illumined face, I think she must see a glorious sight. Yes, she sees the wall that has Jasper at the base and amethyst at the top and blood red rubies between. Goodby, sweet soul! Why should you longer stay? Your work all done, your burdens all carried, your tears all wept! Forward into the light! Up into the joy! Out into the grandeur! And after you have saluted Christ and your kindred, search out the palaces of Lebanon cedar and tell him that you have found him to be gloriously true what thousands of years ago he asserted in this morning's text, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

In those burnished palaces of our

God may we all meet. For I confess to you that my chief desire for Heaven is not the radiance, or, to take the suggestion of the text, not the rulescence of the scene. My one idea of Heaven is the place to meet old friends, God, our best friend, and our earthly friends already transported. Aye, to meet the millions whom I have never seen, but to whom I have administered in the gospel week by week through journalism on both sides of the sea, and throughout Christendom, and through many lands yet semibarbaric.

A Mighty Audience.

For the last twenty-three years every blast of injustice against me has multiplied my readers all the world over, and the present malignancy printed and uttered because our church is in financial struggle after having two great structures destroyed by fire and were compelled to build three large churches—I say the present outrageous injustice in some quarters will multiply my audience in all lands if I can keep in good humor and not fight back.

A gentleman tapped me on the shoulder summer before last on a street of Edinburgh, Scotland, and said, "I live in the Zetland Islands, North of Scotland, and I read your sermons every Sabbath to an audience of neighbors, and my brother lives in Cape Town, South Africa, and he reads them every Sabbath to an audience of his neighbors." And I hear because of this, who made it possible for us to get these words of the earth to whose eyes these words come, that one of my dearest anticipations is to meet them in Heaven. Ah, that will be better than rubies.

Coming up from different continents, from different hemispheres, from opposite sides of the earth, to greet each other in holy love in the presence of the glorious Christ who made it possible for us to get these words of the earth, our sorrows all banished, never to weep, never to part, never to die! I tell you that will be better than rubies. Others may have the crowns, and the thrones, and the scepters; give us our own friends back again, Christ, the friend who sticketh closer than a brother, and all the kindred who have gone up from our bereft households, and all our friends whom we have never yet seen, and you may have all the rubies, for that will be "better than rubies."

Instead of the dying kiss when they looked pale and wan and sick, it will be the kiss of welcome on lips joyful with song, while standing on roofs paved with what existences, under ceilings hung with what glory, and led by what faces, as with what splendour amid gladness, rolling over with what doxology—far better, infinitely better, everlastingly better than rubies!

It Was a Nice Souvenir.

A wedding which occurred a short time ago in Cincinnati, or at one of her beautiful suburbs, was the making of a good story. The groom was a nice young fellow of good habits, ambitious, etc., but poor. Financially the bride was in the same boat. Such a match created much gossip, but no one had any special interest beyond the two directly concerned. A gentleman who knew them both wished to make them a trifling present. He was limited in purse also, but a jeweler helped him out.

"Why not give them a souvenir spoon?" said the jeweler. "We have lots of pretty designs. Some with Shakespearean mottoes are very suitable."

"All right," said the purchaser, "put one up in a nice little box for me."

It was done and the gentlemen sent the present, conscious of a pleasant duty well done. Now the funny part of it was in the quotation. When the bride was looking over the presents, and they were numerous, though not extravagant in cost, she examined the spoon.

"Why, Harry," she exclaimed, "what an odd present from Mr. C. It's a Shakespearean souvenir spoon, with the quotation 'What fools these mortals be.' I don't think that's very nice, do you?"

"No," said Harry, "but as he has been married twenty years maybe he knows more about it than we do."

The giver of the gift gave the jeweler fits for his ill-advised selection. But he said "It's all right anyhow. The jeweler hits the nail on the head, if he did hit it in the dark—Cincinnati Tribune.

Embarrassing.

Mark Twain tells thus the story of his first great London banquet, at which, by the way, there were eight or nine hundred guests. He admits that not having been used to that kind of dinner, he felt somewhat lonesome.

The Lord Mayor, or somebody, read out a list of the chief guests before we began to eat. When he came to prominent names, the other guests would applaud.

I found the man next me rather a good talker. Just as we got up an interesting subject, there was a tremendous clapping of hands. I had hardly ever heard such applause before. I straightened up and set to clapping with the rest, and I noticed a good many people round about me fixing their attention on me, and some of them laughing in a friendly and encouraging way. I moved about in my chair, and clapped louder than ever.

"Who is it?" I asked the gentleman on my right.

"Samuel Clemens, better known in England as Mark Twain," he replied.

I stopped clapping. The life seemed to go out of me. I never was in such a fix in all my days.

--THE--

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