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RARE OLD PROVERBS.

SOME QUEER GEMS AND A VERY
QUEER DEALER THEREIN.

Rev. William Scott Downey, One of New
York's Chief Eccentrics of the Long
Ago—Choice Excerpts from the Strange
Old Book He Published.

[Special Correspondence.]

NEW YORK, Nov. 8.—A diamond broker named Isaacs offered for sale, a few days ago, to a leading dealer in gems, one of the most remarkable precious stones that the world has ever seen. It was a diamond, of fine white color, weighing about four carats and handsomely cut, which had cracked into two equal parts, revealing in its center another small diamond accurately fitted into a matrix in the inclosing shell of diamond. The interior stone was a pentahedron, with facets upon it as regular and perfect as if they had been cut by a skillful lapidary. So perfectly did this little diamond fit into its matrix that it was invisible when the three parts of the combination were put together. The impossibility of putting two diamonds together in such a way as art is beyond question. It was the work of nature, but what natural law, or perversion of law, had such an amazing effect, was far beyond even the theorizing of those who inspected the stone. Mr. Isaacs wanted \$1,000 for the puzzle. It is worth scarcely anything as a merely ornamental gem, but doubtless some wealthy collector will give for it, as a curiosity, the price asked and even more, perhaps.

High figures are sometimes commanded by oddities, far out of proportion to their intrinsic worth, and a good many years ago ex-Mayor Wickham's father, who is the oldest diamond importer in New York, brought to this country and sold here for \$300 a one carat diamond. The upper part of it was a brilliantly clear white diamond, the lower part a bright yellow; and no human eye, however expert or aided by glasses and reflection, could tell where the white ended or the yellow began. Had it all been like its top, it might have been worth \$65 to \$125; had it all been like its bottom, \$50 to \$75; being what it was it was readily sold for \$300. Other diamonds are valuable for what can be seen in them; it was for what could not be seen that blunting line of color.

A curious specimen of what might be called a natural "doublet" in diamonds, i.e., those showing two colors, though not so blended as in the Wickham diamond, was sold not long since by Julius Wolfska, a diamond dealer, on account of the late Rev. William Scott Downey. It had a fine brilliant cut, and the upper six-sevenths of it showed as clear white as was ever seen in a diamond, but the little seventh at the bottom, just a point, was of an emerald green tint. Looked at from directly above that tint would not be suspected, and the many colored points of light that scintillated from its facets seemed refracted from a pure white stone, but, laid in an angle of white paper to throw reflected light into its body, and, viewed from the side, the green part was vividly conspicuous, and the line where it met the white was distinctly visible.

The Rev. William Scott Downey, mentioned in the preceding paragraph, was, by the way, one of the most eccentric and widely known men in New York, and well worthy of remembrance. He looked like an elf who had stepped out of a child's story book. Age had bowed his figure so that he walked bent, as the pictured elves do; he always wore a very long and ample coat, that looked as if the touch of the fairy queen's wand might make it suddenly fly off and reveal him in quite another guise; and his wrinkled, yellow face, deep sunken and brilliantly sparkling black eyes ambushed beneath heavy overhanging white brows; Hebraic nose that seemed to have been put on soft and run to a blot at the end before it hardened, and capacious, thin, snakily moving lips—the lower quite pendulous—all were wreathed in a complicated and permanent smile. His very abundant long hair and long beard were white as snow, to white as to suggest that he might have been an antique even among the elves, who are known to be born old. The hat he always wore was a broad, soft slouch, that appeared to have the power of cocking itself into all sorts of funny shapes. But when he sat up straight and presented his full front to have his picture taken he was quite another person, and one could see him as he was, a genial, humorous, kindhearted, good, intelligent, venerable and veritable gentleman.

Many other people are deaf, but probably very few, if any, so deaf as Downey was. If an eighty ton gun had been fired off at his back he might have felt the concussion, but would not have heard the noise. So, not hearing his own voice, he had no control over it, and it used to scamper and wabble, up and down, between falsetto and bass, in an amazing way that seriously handicapped his effective vocal spread of immortal truth.

The Rev. William Scott Downey was born somewhere in the West Indies, took naturally to piety at an early age and spent the best years of his life as a missionary in India and elsewhere. There can be no question, among any who knew him, of his sincerity in all that he professed, even in his belief of the divine inspiration of the "visions" he saw from time to time, and to which, though being all his own, he could adapt interpretation charmingly. To help along the spread of universal goodness he put forth a small volume, which he entitled "Downey's Proverbs." It is rather singular, by the way, that this little book, issued early in the fifties, and sold to the extent of at least 30,000 copies, is already quite rare, and the holders of such copies as exist treasure them as valuable. Mr. Downey had some curious characteristics. He was kind and generous to the poor and humble always, but he dearly loved rich people and persons of rank. His personal acquaintance, here in New York, included nearly every rich man in the city, and the name is said to have been tried in many other places all over the world. He had a mania for giving jewels, rings, pins, brooches and other precious stones to prominent men, leading bankers, estates,

men, railroad magnates, merchants and others who could infinite better have afforded to buy than he could to give them. When he gave to poor people his benefactions took the plain form of money, in which he demonstrated his practical good sense. Upon all occasions when he bestowed gifts upon rich persons he carefully wrote down in a memorandum book just what the recipients said or did. As for instance:

"May 17.—Gave to Mr. R. F. W.—a ring, set with a diamond weighing one carat, for which I paid \$36. He said 'Humph,' put it on his finger and did not even thank me."

In another case his book records, after such details as given above, that a lady to whom he gave "a very pretty pearl brooch," said "Oh! how lovely! How can I thank you enough? You are a dear, good old man."

He was an intimate and devoted friend of Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Stewart, particularly the latter, but had for Judge Hilton all the detestation that his gentle nature was capable of. Many high dignitaries responded by autograph letters to the missives he sent them with presentation copies of his book, among whom was no less a personage than Queen Victoria, whose brief note of thanks he valued above all his other earthly possessions and was very fond of exhibiting.

When he found his hearing and voice control failing him, he gave up the amateur home missionary work in which he had employed himself since he had grown too old for foreign service, but his active disposition compelled him to have some occupation, so he went into business and perpetrated deals in curios and precious stones. For a long time he confined himself to handling such gems as were favored by mention in the Bible, jasper, beryl, chalcedony, onyx and other queer and little known stones, upon which the majority of people looked with vehement suspicion that they were only curious bits of glass.

Gradually he got to buying and selling rubies, sapphires and diamonds, but no matter what his stock might be, he seldom, if ever, sold a stone except for something less than it had cost him. From a strictly business point of view this system might have seemed somewhat defective, but it appeared to satisfy him, and he was never without several hundred dollars in his pocket, ready to buy anything that took his fancy. People used to wonder where he got all his money. His explanation to leading jeweler—Mr. J. H. Johnston, who was a very old friend—was that he had made away with two large inheritances and in his declining years was going through a third, which would be ample to last his time out. He bought a great deal of curious silverware, mostly antique pieces, all of which he gave away. Whether buying or selling or giving, the old man never lost a chance to proclaim himself "a servant of Jesus Christ," to urge what he believed to be religious truths upon all who would hear them and to admonish against the drinking of ardent spirits. Probably neither ending to this sketch of his strange personality can be effaced by quotation of some sample excerpts from his book of proverbs.

Here are some general ones:

"It is far better to die a porter in the fear of the Lord than a courtier in the fear of the devil."

"Forced love must soon become mortified."

"Punctuality strengthens confidence and secures respect."

"Riches have benefited tens and ruined thousands."

"Law without justice is a wound without a cure."

"The difference between the humble minister of Jesus and the fashionable popular preacher is this: The former studies the pasturage for his flock; the latter, the transitoriness of their wool."

"An eastern bushman once complained that he had no choice, but when he saw a man without legs he was content."

"Rum intoxicates the torpor; love the amorous; and prosperity the fool."

"As a crowded stomach retards digestion, so does prosperity retard charity."

"The harsh language of an angry man is the mere scum of his soul."

"He had made some study of women, evidently, for he wrote:

"The tongue of the slanderer is a deadly poison; and the voice of the scold gloomy."

"Rather be pierced by a dart than by the tongue of a wife."

"Would women be as silent in most things as they are in telling their age, men would be far easier, and courts of justice less troubled."

"If most married women possessed as much prudence as they do vanity we should find many husbands far happier."

"Scolding wives, like bad clocks, are seldom in order."

"A prudent woman studies the comfort of her husband and household, whereas a scold and spendthrift thinks of parties and fashions."

"Marriage is the comfort of the considerate and prudent; but the torment of the inconsiderate and self-willed."

"Whatever has been the fault of one woman may be the fault of another."

"Most fashionable ladies are no diamonds, because they are more costly than useful."

"There is thunder in the voice of the scold, but the music of 'Apollo's lute' in the language of the amiable spouse; the former wounds, but the latter heals."

"Most women act as if they were bound to wound, and not to heal."

"It is easier to make a glass tube pliable than to convince an obstinate woman she is in fault."

"To neglect a wife's pleasure is to enter a storm; but to grant her request is to remain tempest-free."

"The obedience of a wife to her husband is loyalty to a sovereign and submission to God."

"As a mushroom among roses, so is a shrew in a costly establishment."

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