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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

HE PREACHES ON THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL.

New Lights on a Familiar Story—The Richest Ring Ever Flashed on the Vision Is That Which Our Father Puts on a Forgiven Soul.

A Ring on His Hand.

In his sermon Sunday Rev. Dr. Talmage took for his subject the return of the prodigal son. The text chosen was Luke xv, 22, "Put a ring on his hand." I will not rehearse the familiar story of the fast young man of the parable. You know what a splendid home he left. You know what a hard time he had. 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 farmhouse. The servants come rushing up and say: "What's the matter? They're here!" "What's the matter?" 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 home want with a ring? Oh, he is the prodigal son. No more tending of the swine trough! No more longing for the pods of the carob tree! No more blistered feet! Off with the rags! On with the robe! Off with the ring! Even so does God receive every one of us when we come back. There are gold rings, and pearl rings, and emerald 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 bequeans and beherits a man; that it takes all the sparkle out of his soul; that he has to exchange a rolistering independence for an ecclesiastical straitjacket. Not so. When a man becomes a Christian, he does not go down; he starts upward. Religion multiplies 1 by 10,000. Nay, the multiplier is in infinity. It is not a blotting out; it is a polishing, it is an abrasiveness, it is an efflorescence, it is an irradiation. When a man comes into the kingdom of God, he is not sent into a mental service, but the Lord God Almighty from the palace of heaven calls upon the messenger angels that wait upon the throne to fly and "put a ring on his hand." In Christ are the largest liberty, and brightest joy, and highest honor, and richest adornment. "Put a ring on his hand."

A Ring of Adoption.

I remark, in the first place, that when Christ receives a soul into his love he puts upon him the ring of adoption. While in my church in Philadelphia there came the representative of the Howard mission of 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 sang 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 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 defences.

Adopted! Why, then, we are brothers 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, when we defend 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 fear 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-writers, 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 defence. 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.

A Marriage Ring.

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—Hoshea ii, 19, "I will betroth thee unto me forever—yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies." At 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, the pictures may go, the piano may go—everything else may go. The last thing that goes is that 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 that ring you see under its arch a long procession of precious memories. Within the golden circle of that 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 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 enlaced finger, the ring that she had worn so long and so well.

There is no power on earth or hell to effect a divorce from 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. Ahasuerus banished Vashti, Napoleon forsok 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 fall. 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 exaltation for a man, who is but dust and ashes like myself, to cry out this moment, "I am persuaded that neither height nor depth nor principality 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.

A Ring of Festivity.

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 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 my God and myself. 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 illumined; 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 butts and tennent hosen, 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 wear 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 a 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 this hour 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!"

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-day and all is well. If on your way home some peril should cross the street 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 night 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 tolling 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 office and you say, "Well, now my week's work is done, and to-morrow is Sunday." It is a pleasant thought. There are refreshments and reconstruction in the very idea. Oh, how pleasant it will be, when we get through the day of 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, thou city of my God, Shall I thy courts ascend, Where congregations ne'er break up And Sabbaths have no end?" There are people in this house to-day who are very near the eternal world. If you are Christians, I bid you be of good cheer. Bear with you our 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; only a few more hearts to cheer; only a few more tears; only a few more spectacles will open before us.

"Beautiful heaven, where all is light; Beautiful angels, clothed in white; Beautiful harps that never tire, Beautiful harps that join all the choir; There shall I join the chorus sweet, Worshipping at the Savior's feet." And so 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 happiest place I have ever been in, except my own home.

The One Test.

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 any 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, childlike 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.

Some of you have been thinking on this subject year after year. You have found out that this world is a poor portion. 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 all 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 his hand."

Why He Wasn't Interested.

James Payn relates a curious coincidence: "A young engineer was describing to the occupants of a railway carriage a late experience on an engine: 'We were making up time between two stations, and going at a great rate, when we suddenly sighted an old gentleman walking quietly in front of us along the line. We screamed and whistled, but he was very deaf, and we could not attract his attention. An old lady, horrified by the situation, and hoping there was some way out of it, here exclaimed: 'But you didn't hurt him?' 'We were down upon him, ma'am, like one o'clock! Hurt him, indeed! Did you ever hear such a question, sir? addressing a young man in deep mourning, who had maintained a melancholy silence. 'I have heard the story before,' he replied, in explanation of his want of interest; 'it was my father.'"

Wise!—That's a shocking bad hat you're wearing, James. James—Yes! but I put it on to rummy my wife of the enormity of her last milliner's bill.

THE LATEST TYPE OF

DOWAGER NOW PLANNED FOR BY SWELL DRESSMAKERS.

According to Examples that Seem to Set the Pace She Is to Be Very Fat, Frighfully Homely, and to Dress Principally in Hideousness.

Gotham Fashion Gossip.

VEN the poster craze, which is now making itself felt in women's dress, does not bring more of ugliness than does the American dowager, who is, considered from a fashion's standpoint, an equally new development. To be a dowager in correct form, according to the

few examples that are asserting themselves and setting the pace, is to be very fat, frighfully homely, and to dress with a magnificent regard for all that is hideous. No longer able to attract by charm of any kind, this new type of dowager triumphantly fixes the affrighted attention and with a victorious assault on all your senses of beauty, blasts your recollection with an unending image of her. This person has long been a pillar of British society, but she is only just beginning to appear here, and only this season has she been planned for by swell dressmakers.

She has a lot of wraps, and is usually done up in elegant furs. These furs extend in long tabs in front, and the tabs take a tologban down the front like



A HOUSE GOWN OF STATELINESS.

that on the back, only it is not so long and is a little more abrupt. She always seems to be in a frighful temper, and if she really is a fish of any size in the social pond, her hostess will be in perfect anguish unless everything seems to suit her, while the best-looking man in the room will drop the prettiest girl in the place at the summons of the dowager's fan.

If you haven't seen this new type, all this will seem strange to you, but there is no exaggeration in it as applied to the individual. It really looks as if well-to-do women of advanced years and receded charms had planned to surrender absolutely, and to be as ugly as they can be. Or it may be that the dressmakers, who were always most sinfully neglected of these women, have chosen the easiest way out of it and gone in for elaborate ugliness, giving up striving to disguise defects. But no matter how stylish the dowager may become, no sensible woman will consent to take after her. In loose house dresses particularly there is no excuse for it, for in such gowns the middle-aged and pudgy woman can compete with youth with considerable success, and in other sorts of dresses she should bully her dressmaker into doing the best possible for her. An exceptionally handsome house dress that will serve her well is shown in these first two sketches. It is of silver-gray velvet



SIMPLY MADE OF RICH STUFFS.

opening over a vest of straw-colored silk. The front is gathered to a square, lace-covered yoke, which is in one with a collar that will suggest a neck where one is not. White satin lace the loose

velvet fronts, a rich drapery of lace depends from either shoulder, and narrow strips of sable show on collar, yoke and wrists. One of the chief advantages urged for these women is that they are enabled to dress as richly and spend as much money on their wardrobes as they could possibly wish to, but there is richness enough here and beauty, too. That any woman may dress herself so as to make herself less beautiful is strange doctrine.

A house dress that is hardly less elegant is next shown, but the absence of lace or other elaborate adornment from its make-up leaves the violet velvet of its fitted back and loose sides, and the white silk figured with faint gold flowers of its front breadth, to assert their richness through their simplicity, as it



DAINTINES THAT COMES OF FLOWERED STUFF.

were, which they do with entire success. The bloused front droops over a narrow ribbon belt, velvet gives the sailor collar and is trimmed with gold galleon, two gold buttons holding the gold cord strap, and the figured silk gives the bishop sleeves.

Figured silks and flowered satins are found in many of the prettiest house dresses, and for many reasons are to be preferred to velvets. A dress in white pompadour satin figured with pink roses appears in the fourth picture, and is eloquent of what can be accomplished with such stuff. It is made princess, and has a front panel of pink satin covered with accordion pleated white mousseline de soie, which fastens on the left side. In the skirt the pompadour edges next to the panel show cascades of chiffon. The full sleeves end in long chiffon ruffles, and a chiffon fichu is draped about the shoulders. The stock collar with its bow in back, and the belt, are of rose pink satin ribbon. A change of front is practically a necessity with such a dress, and it is an excellent idea to have them quite different, one from the other. One of lace would prove particularly handsome for this dress.

Miss Demurra can be depended on to get herself up in many extremely at-



COPTING MANLINESS OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

tractive ways, but here's a new trick for her in this last picture, a device that will be difficult to equal for quaintness. This simple blouse waist is finished at the neck with a plain collar band, and attached to this is a collar of white stiffened mull, much like the standing collars worn by men sixty years ago. The cravat of those times is too severe for women to copy, so a bow is put at the front, its ribbon going around the neck. A plain ribbon forms the belt, the material of the whole being brown silk.

Of the simple house dresses that lend an air of domesticity to their wearers, aprons are an important factor, and these are now plain, the day of the dainty buffed apron being gone. Such aprons are now on the bargain counters, which means that they are no longer fitted to the latest wrinkle. The right apron looks delightfully domestic. It is so stiff that it crinkles, and has a wide hem and wide strings that tie in a big, crisp knot, so stiff that it is a regular challenge. Its bib is another challenge, enough to make a man feel that somebody ought to hug its wearer just to take a little of the starch out of that bib. Such an apron backs up all the stories any woman can tell about biscuits and pie crust, even without the corroboration of the things she has cooked.



A New Clothes-Horse.

The two illustrations represent in folded and open position, a light and strongly-made clothes horse or rack, designed to occupy in either position the least space necessary for a thoroughly practical article. Within the central post slides a rod conveniently adjustable at the desired height, and carrying on its upper end a series of pivotally connected umbrella-like clothes-supporting arms, each arm being separately adjustable to an outwardly extended position.



PIVOTALLY CONNECTED TO THE CENTRAL POST ARE ALSO FOLDING FRAMES WITH HORIZONTAL BARS, FORMING A CLOTHES HORSE OR RACK AT EACH SIDE FOR SUPPORTING LARGE PIECES OF CLOTHING.

Each side frame is independent of the other, so that either one or both of them may be used at a time or both of them may be hooked



FOLDED.

up and held in a raised position, using only the umbrella-like clothes-supporting arms at the top, and leaving a clear space all around to the floor, these features rendering the device very advantageously adjustable where it is desirable to economize space and where large pieces have also to be handled.

Geraniums in Winter.

A correspondent of Success With Flowers describes her management of geraniums for winter bloomers, says the Independent. It is a little late for practice this fall, but is worth remembering: You cannot expect to have the same plant bloom both in summer and winter therefore, starve and neglect the geraniums in pots; let them get rootbound in summer; pinch off every bud; in September report in five-inch pots, using rich mold, with good drainage. Sprinkle and wet once a week with a tablespoonful of ammonia in a gallon of water; set the plant in the sun, and keep moderate that in the room, and there will be blossoms in profusion. The writer had thirteen varieties, every one in blossom since November 10th, none without two trusses, and most of them with four or five trusses of lovely bloom. The red, scarlet, pink, silver-blue and white, in varied shades, make a window exhibition that passers-by stop to admire.

Deviled Eggs.

Boil the eggs for twenty minutes, shell and cut in halves. Take out the yolk, and mix to a paste with mustard, pepper, salt and vinegar to taste, using only enough melted butter to make the paste smooth and of a proper consistency. Press back into the egg halves; chill before serving on lettuce leaves. If the lunch-basket has to be packed some time before using, the eggs keep more moist if the halves are put together after being filled and daintily wrapped in paraffine paper.

Hints.

Clean plaster of paris ornaments with wet starch. Brush off when dry. The torn pages of a book may be nicely mended with white tissue paper. Clear, black coffee diluted with water and containing a little ammonia will clean and restore black clothes. Raisins can be easily seeded if put in hot water and allowed to stand fifteen minutes before beginning to seed. A few drops of benzoin placed on cotton and put in or around a tooth that is pining will almost instantly stop the pain.