

'S DO?

SUPPOSING YOU REFUSE TO MEET DIVINE BRIDEGROOM.

MARRIAGE BELLS OF HEAVEN

Write to Me at the Bride of Christ—
—Your Own Should Be—Lead On,
Saviour! Lead On!—From Now We May
Near the Wedding Chimes Ringing For
the Nuptials of Heaven.

Married according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1905, by Frederick Dyer, of Toronto, as the Dept. of Agriculture, O. M. W.

Los Angeles, Cal., Jan. 29.—From an incidental reference to an ancient Oriental marriage custom the preacher in this sermon draws lessons applicable to modern life. The text is Psalm xiv. 8, "All thy garments smell of myrrh and aloe and cassia out of the ivory palaces."

The marriage bells are chiming. The glorious robes of a kingly bridegroom and of his bride, the daughter of a queen, and the garments of her many bridesmaids are rustling. Royal jewels are flashing. The most skillful of musicians are playing. And as the "wedding march" sounds forth the marriage procession is approaching the king's throne room over boulevards of gold. The numberless inhabitants of the metropolis of the universe, with its walls of Jasper and its gates of pearl and its palaces of spotless ivory, are making the welkin ring with halleluiahs of never ending joy. The banqueting house is prepared with the wedding supper for the coming guests, for the Divine Bridegroom of my text is bringing his queenly bride to her place at his side, over which hangs the banner that his hands have placed there, the banner of love. Never on earth nor in heaven has been seen and never shall be witnessed a wedding procession like unto this. Gorgeousness infinite, wealth and power unlimited, splendor and confidence passing all understanding will there be manifested on every hand.

Earth has beheld some wonderful wedding pageants. When the present Emperor William of Germany was married to the beautiful Princess Augusta Victoria the representatives of all the civilized Governments of the earth were there. Among Berlin's guests at that time were the King and Queen of Saxony, the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria, the Crown Prince of Sweden, the present King of England, the late Duke of Aosta of Italy and scores of other notables. The young bridegroom came from Rotterdam at the head of his gigantic foot guards to meet his bride. On the day of the ceremony the domes and the spires and the public buildings were decorated. When the nuptial vows were taken the cheers of the people who crowded the streets about the Royal Palace echoed the thirty-six salutes of artillery which thundered the news to the world that Prince William and Princess Augusta Victoria were one.

When Napoleon III. in 1853 rode to the Cathedral of Notre Dame to be united in marriage with Eugenie, the most beautiful woman in Europe, the progress was one continuous ovation. Seated in the wonderful glass coach that had been built for the coronation of his illustrious uncle, the Emperor passed through long lines of his enthusiastic subjects, who rent the air with their voices. When the young Queen of England became the bride of Prince Albert in the Royal Chapel of St. James nothing that the money, the wealth and the love of a nation could do to make the wedding ceremony impressive and joyous was left undone.

Memorable in the annals of the world are such spectacles, in which all that human ingenuity could conceive has been done to render the nuptials of the rulers of nations scenes of overwhelming magnificence. But the culmination has yet to come—not here, but in that glorious realm in which the Lord of Hosts has set his throne. The marriage of the Lord will be the grandest and most glorious of all unions, when Christ takes to himself his church, which he has redeemed with his precious blood, "a glorious church, not having spot,

or wrinkle or any such thing, holy and without blemish."

Human imagination fails to conceive of a spectacle so glorious. Let us instead of dwelling on the marriage scene take but one detail of its beauty, the wonderful garments with which the Divine Bridegroom is to be robed on that glorious occasion. The psalmist mentions them in the words of my text. They are the wedding robes that have the aroma of myrrh and aloe and cassia. Let us try to describe them and to learn a few practical gospel lessons from them.

The royal robes of the Divine Bridegroom will be the most expensive of all garments. Costly was the wedding apparel of Louis XIV., which he wore when he was married to Maria Theresa of Spain; of Prince Ferdinand when he stood by the side of his bride, Isabella of Castile; of the dauphin of France who, as Prince Francis, married the beautiful Mary, Queen of Scots; of Emperor Nicholas II., who in 1894 gave his heart and hand in marriage to the beautiful Princess Alix of Hesse; of Napoleon Bonaparte when in 1810 he wedded Marie Louise in the place of the de-throned and exiled Josephine. But the robes of the Heavenly Bridegroom will surpass all these in their value. How do we know? The oriental imagery of the text signifies it. Fine and beautiful in texture, they are to be perfumed with myrrh and aloe and cassia out of the ivory palaces.

Now, what gold and silver and precious stones in dress mean to the western mind myrrh and aloe and cassia in a sense mean to the oriental mind. As I would say to you, "Her dress was sparkling with jewels," the oriental, to depict sumptuousness and expensiveness of apparel, would say, "His garments were aromatic with myrrh and aloe and cassia." Myrrh was one of the treasures of the east. When the wise men came to bow at the manger, what expensive presents did they bring? Gold and frankincense and myrrh. These oriental gifts would not have been offered to a king a present of myrrh unless it had been of great value. "The aloe of Cocchia-China," wrote Dr. Faussett, "are worth their weight in gold." The value of cassia also was enormous. It was used, as Dr. McClintock informs us, as an ingredient in the costliest unguents. When the psalmist tells us that Christ's wedding garments smell of myrrh and aloe and cassia we know that he means us to understand how precious they will be.

Let us consider what makes them precious. They are the glory of our Lord. He will wear them in joy and gratitude for the sacrifices his people have made in his cause. They are going to cost all the money we give to our churches and to our reformatory institutions. We must give money for Christ's robes. He bids us give. They are going to cost all the money we send to foreign missions. "Go teach all men" is the Bible command. Not only have they cost money, but blood. They are going to cost all the blood of the martyrs which has been shed in the past. Ah, now the expense of those wedding robes is rolling up. If the dead body of a common laborer slain by an express train in New York State is worth \$5,000, how much must have been worth the martyred blood of Paul, a Peter, a Stephen, a Polycarp, a Justin Martyr, a Savonarola, a Ridley, an Elphège, a Gileys de Muler, a John Rogers, a Lawrence Sanders, a John Harper, a Breboul, a Lalliermand and of the thousands and the tens of thousands of men and women slain by sword and spear and battle-axe or burned at the stake and tortured with untold agonies in many "chambers of horrors?" God alone can know how the value of Christ's wedding garments is increasing.

But the supreme element in the cost of those wedding garments is the blood of Christ himself. It was by his own suffering and death that he won the right to wear them. Do you wonder that Isaiah when in prophetic vision he sees these wedding robes describes them by their color—the color of the bloody sacrifice? "Who is this," cried he, "that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bosrah—this that is glorious in his apparel? Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine vat?" Ah, my friends, I am glad to-day we can talk about the royal crimson and not the

royal purple of Christ's wedding garments. I am glad that even in heaven, when looking upon the Divine face of Jesus, we shall not be allowed for one moment to forget the enormous cost in money and blood of the marriage robes in which Christ will be clad as the bridegroom when he takes the church as his bride in eternal nuptials. Am I going beyond my right in declaring that Christ's wedding robes are to be the most expensive of garments?

But, drawing near to the Divine Bridegroom, I find that Christ's wedding robes have a wonderful curative quality. Their touch is like the cool hand upon the fevered brow. Oh, yes, they are more than that. Their touch gives spiritual and physical healing. It is like the healing power of Christ's earthly robe when the border of it was pressed just an instant by the forefinger of the poor woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years. No sooner did her flesh come in contact with its folds than immediately "the woman was made whole from that hour." We have read how the ancient devotees used to travel many miles to be cured of their physical pains at the tomb of St. Am de Beaupre, or at the "healing spring of Lourdes, or by the laying on of hands of St. Anthony, St. Patrick or St. Bernard, but never did tomb or fabled water or flowing garments of dead saints have such curative qualities, spiritual or physical, as will have the wedding garments of Jesus Christ.

How I know this? The symbols of the myrrh and the aloe and the cassia teach it. They were all used medicinally. "The myrrh, as is well known," writes an authority, "was celebrated for its use in medicines. The ancients prepared a wine of myrrh and also an oil of myrrh. It was found as an ingredient in many of the celebrated compound medicines." "Myrrh is especially of great use," says another author, "along with aloetic medicines and compounds of iron. The medicinal quality of aloe is defined in every dictionary, and cassia was also used as a drug by the ancients. Thus when we come in touch with Christ's wedding garments we know that they are going to heal all of our diseases and assuage all our pains and be the balm which will take away every heartache."

But have the royal robes of Christ a higher purpose than the mere prevention of pain or of heartaches? If that be all the efficacy of these wedding garments of the Divine Bridegroom, then I say let us have no pain and heartaches. There is sometimes a joy in suffering. There is sometimes a peace in pain. As Tenison writes, "It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." That wedding ring upon your hand—would you wish never to have had it placed there? It may be many years ago since the hand that put it upon your finger was laid in the grave. Would you like to blot out all the memories you have had with that ring? "Oh, no," you answer. "No, no! My joy to-day is in living in the beautiful halls of memory and in thinking over again all the happy days we spent together. I would sooner have had a dear husband on the way and have had him taken away than never to have known what the companionship of such a husband meant to a wife." If you have an incurable physical pain would you have the physician give you an opiate to deaden your sensibilities and your mind for years to come? "Oh, no," you answer, "when I would be nothing more than a dumb animal, or a log or a stone. Better my thinking mind with pain than continual unconsciousness without pain." Well, then, the wedding robes of Christ must do more for us than merely alleviate suffering, else we would want none of them. I would not wish to live a thousand years on earth if I do it I would have to endure the mere animal existence of an Australian aborigine, even though then I might not know physical or mental suffering.

Thus I come to the climax of my subject. The royal robes of Christ give to us a positive assurance that the marriage ceremony of the Divine Bridegroom and of the church, his bride, is to be a beginning of never ending joy, not the mere end of sorrow or pain or suffering or death. Prove this, you say. I will. "Ho, Nicodemus," I cry, "whether art thou going? Friend, why is the countenance so sad? Why dost thou hug to thy side that great burden of a hundred earthly life?" At once Nicodemus, the same Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, looks up, and I see that his eyes are filled with tears and his face drawn down by a great sorrow. "I am going," says he, "with this hundred pound weight of myrrh and aloe to embalm the body of Jesus Christ, who has just been crucified. We are going to bury the Saviour's body in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. I wish his body to be preserved by these spices as long as possible." "What, Nicodemus, will these spices of myrrh and aloe preserve the body of Jesus?" "Yes," answered the ruler of the Jews, "they will, if you will examine the mummies preserved for thousands of years in the Egyptian tombs you will find that these spices were the chief causes of their preservation." Herodotus, the "father of history," nearly 500 years before Christ was crucified, records that the Egyptians always preserved the bodies of their dead with these spices. "They then all the body with powder of myrrh and aloe and cassia and other perfumes, except frankincense." Thus we find by these two statements that the wedding garments of Christ not only have a curative, but also a preservative, quality. That means, carrying the figure up to its acme of symbol, that the wedding garments of Christ will never fade or grow old.

No, they will never become yellow and worn, as are some of the bridal dresses that were worn many years ago. They will never be put aside as useless. The wedding songs that we shall sing at the marriage of the Lamb shall never have an end. The rapturous joy with which we greet our dear ones on the other side of the Jordan shall never grow mono-

tonous. The loving kiss which the Divine Bridegroom places upon the lips of his bride shall never become cold and indifferent. The myrrh and the aloe and cassia shall preserve and increase joy, even as the wedding garment of Christ shall halt and cure and kill sorrows. Oh, yes, these wedding robes of Christ are to be aromatic robes, symbolical of never ending peace. The ever increasing joy of earth shall roll and swell and continue to increase through all the coming ages. "Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!"

From whence come these airs laden with odor of the myrrh and the aloe and the cassia of Christ's wedding garments? They come from the "ivory palaces of heaven." Mark you well my answer. Not from one ivory palace, but from many. That means that when we as part of the church are to be united to Christ we are going to keep our own individualities. Had my text said, "In the ivory temple of heaven," I might have had my doubts about it, but there is no doubt here.

But though there may be many "ivory palaces" in heaven odorless with the myrrh and the aloe and the cassia, I fear that some of us who are invited to be at the wedding ceremony may not be present. It is one thing to get an invitation to the marriage ceremony; it is another to be there. Shall we at this moment say to our Divine Bridegroom: "Jesus, thou Prince, we will not love thee; we will not unite with thee; we shall not live with thee in an ivory palace of heaven, since we have not lived with thee on earth." Shall it be that all our dear ones who have gone beyond, who are waiting to listen to our nuptial vows with Christ in the ivory palace of heaven, shall have to wait for us in vain?

Supposing you refuse to meet the Divine Bridegroom at the marriage altar of heaven, what will Jesus do? What will your loved ones, your wife and mother and father and little child, who have gone beyond—what will they all do? Supposing when you were about to be married, your fiancée had refused to appear. What would you have done? "Oh," you say, "that was impossible. She loved me too much not to have met me there." Can it be, O would be bride of Christ, that you love Jesus any less than your loved ones love you?

Lead on, Saviour! Lead on! Even now we may hear the wedding chimes ringing for the nuptials in the ivory palaces of heaven.

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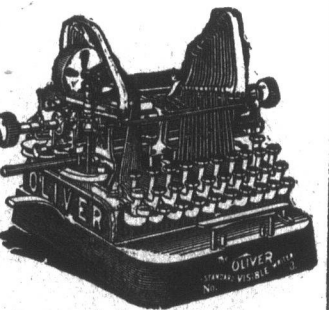
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