

CHILDREN'S GREAT BIBLE TEXTS

VOLUME XII



THE BOOK OF
PROVERBS

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THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

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THE RUBY.

More precious than rubies. — Prov. iii. 15.

July is — or should be — a month of warm, glowing sunshine, and the July stone is a warm, glowing gem — the ruby.

The ruby is the rarest of the precious stones, and a perfect ruby brings a price three times as great as a diamond of the same size. The ruby is made of a material called corundum, and it has two cousins, the sapphire and the Oriental topaz, which are corundum but with different colouring. Though we may not have heard the word "corundum" we all know one variety of corundum. "We often beg some from mother when we want to polish up any steel that has rusted; for emery paper is made of grains of corundum, and these grains are far-away cousins of the ruby and the sapphire.

Our finest rubies come from Upper Burma. That is the natural home of the gem. Indeed, the earliest rubies known to history came from the Burmese mines. Till 1886 these mines were worked by natives who jealously guarded their secrets. But in 1886 Burma was annexed by Britain, and

after that date the mines were taken over by a British company who pay a huge sum every year to the Indian government for the privilege of working them.

From Siam, too, come rubies, and the King of Siam styles himself " Lord of the Rubies." But the rubies of Siam are (larker and less pure in colour than those of Burma. Rubies are found also in small quantities in Ceylon, Australia, and the United States; but the same holds good of all — they are inferior to their Burmese brothers.

Rubies are of every shade of red from pale rose to deep crimson; but the most valuable are of the shade known as "pigeon's blood." The test of the colour of a ruby used to be placing it on a white paper beside a drop of fresh pigeon's blood, and that is why to-day people speak of " pigeon's blood " rubies.

The ruby has always been a royal stone and a favourite of kings. There is a great ruby among the English Crown jewels. It was given to the Black Prince in the year 1367 by Don Pedro, King of Castile, and it was worn in the helmet of Henry v. at the battle of Agincourt. It is said to be worth £100,000.

Although the ruby is so rare it has many stones which closely resemble it — such as the garnet and the spinel. Sometimes only experts are able to tell the difference. If the expert is in doubt he takes an instrument called a dichroscope and examines the stone through it. The dichroscope makes him see double. It gives him two images of the same stone. If the one image be orange-red and the other carminered, then the expert knows he is looking at a real ruby, for the garnet and the spinel do not show two colours under the dichroscope.

If you hunt up in the Bible all the texts that speak of rubies you will notice they nearly all tell you that wisdom is more precious than rubies. Now, I quite agree that wisdom is a precious thing, but there is something more precious than the wisest wisdom, more precious than gold or silver or diamonds or rubies — and yet we all can have it. What is it? Why, just love! So wherever you see " wisdom " compared to rubies I want you to change the word to " love " The ruby is a splendid stone with which to compare love. Wisdom is a cold sort of thing, and to me it seems to compare best with a green stone; but love! — why, love should be red and warm and glowing like the ruby! And besides that — if we need another reason — the ruby is supposed among precious stones to be the symbol of love.

So the ruby's message to us is "Love." Yes, but love of the right sort, love that stands the test of the dichroscope, love that divides in two. What do I mean by that? Let me tell you in a story.

A teacher was once trying to explain love to a class of tiny tots. She knew it was no use to give them an explanation out of a dictionary, so she asked instead if any of them could show her what love meant. At first they were all silent. Then one little maiden of six rose shyly from her seat, flung her arms round the teacher's neck, gave her a good hug, and said, " That's love." "Yes," said the teacher, and smiled. "That's love But love is something more. Can you show me what more love is? " The little girl thought a minute or two. Then she began to set the chairs in order, to clean the board, to tidy away the papers and books, and to sponge the slates. When she had finished and everything was in order she said, " Love is helping people too."

That little girl was right. Love is not only hugging, it is helping. It is not merely saying, it is doing. Some boys and

girls — and I'm sorry to say some grown-up people as well — seem to think that love ends with hugging and saying, " I love you heaps and heaps." That is quite a good way of showing love, and some folk don't do nearly enough of it. This world would be a happier place if there were a little more hugging and telling people that we loved them. But that is only one half of love, it is only one image of the ruby, the orange-red. It leaves out the other image, the carmine-red, and without it we cannot have real love any more than we can have a real ruby. The love that stops at words and doesn't go on to deeds is not, after all, worth much.

In Scotland they sometimes say of a person, "Oh, So-and-so is very agreeable, but he wouldn't put himself about for you! " That means he would not go out of his way or give himself any trouble to do you a kindness. Boys and girls, I want you all to put yourselves about for others. I want you to help as well as to hug, to do as well as to say, to serve — which is the better part of love.

THE GUARDED HEART.

Keep thy heart with all diligence. — Prov. iv. 23;

Once upon a time there lived in Ceylon a king called Thossakin, and he had a wonderful gift — at least so the story says. He could take out his heart whenever he liked, and put it in again. This was very useful when he was going on any dangerous expedition, because, you see, he could leave his heart safely at home, and then no one could kill him.

Now it happened that Thossakin went to war with Rama, and went out to fight against him. He wished to leave his heart at home, in a very safe place. After thinking of all