

DR. TALMAGE ON CONCHOLOGY

BIBLE LESSONS IN SEA-SHELLS.

How the Mollusks Saved the Lives of the Israelites in the Wilderness. The Pearl of Great Price a Prize.

TEXT: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte and onycha."—Exodus xxx., 34.

You may not have noticed the shells of the Bible, although in this early part of the sacred book God calls you to consider and employ them as He called Moses to consider and employ them. The onycha of my text is a shell found on the banks of the Red Sea, and Moses and his army must have crushed many of them under foot as they crossed the bisected waters, onycha on the beach and onycha in the unfolded bed of the deep. I shall speak of this shell as a beautiful and practical revelation of God, and as true as the first chapter of Genesis and the last chapter of Revelation or everything between.

Not only is this shell, the onycha, found at the Red Sea, but in the waters of India. It not only delicately tints the eye with its convolutions of beauty, white and lustrous and serrated, but blesses the nostril with a pungent aroma. This shellfish, accustomed to feed on spikenard, is redolent with that odorous plant—redolent when alive and redolent when dead. Its shells when burned bewitch the air with fragrance.

In my text God commands Moses to mix this onycha with the perfumes of the altar in the ancient tabernacle, and I propose to mix some of its perfumes at the altar of Brooklyn Tabernacle, for, having spoken to you on the "Astronomy of the Bible; or, God Among the Stars;" the "Carology of the Bible; or, God Among the Centuries;" the "Ornithology of the Bible; or, God Among the Birds;" the "Mineralogy of the Bible; or, God Among the Amethysts;" the "Ichthyology of the Bible; or, God Among the Fishes;" I now come to speak of the "Conchology of the Bible; or, God Among the Shells."

It is a secret that you may keep for me, for I have never before told it to any one, that in all the realms of the natural world there is nothing to me so fascinating, so completely absorbing, so full of suggestiveness, as a shell. What? More entertaining than a bird, which can sing, when a shell cannot sing? Well, there you have made a great mistake. Pick up the onycha from the banks of the Red Sea or pick up a bivalve from the beach of the Atlantic Ocean and listen, and you hear a whole choir of mariners—bass, alto, soprano—in an unknown tongue, but seeming to chant, as I put them to my ear, "The sea is His and He made it;" others singing, "Fay way, O God, is in the sea;" others hymning, "He ruleth the raging of the sea."

"What," says some one else, "does the shell impress you more than the star?" In some respects, yes, because I can handle the shell and closely study the shell, while I cannot handle the star, and if I study it must study it at a distance of millions and millions of miles.

"What," says some one else, "are you more impressed by the shell than the flower?" Yes, for it has far greater varieties and far greater richness of color, as I could show you in thousands of specimens, and because the shell does not fade, as does the rose leaf, but maintains its beauty century after century, so that the onycha which the hoof of Pharaoh's horse knocked aside in the chase of the Israelites across the Red Sea may have kept its luster to this hour. Yes, they are so particolored and many colored that you might pile them up until you would have a wall with all the colors of the wall of heaven, from the jasper at the bottom to the amethyst at the top.

Oh, the shells! The petrified shells of the deep. Oh, the shells! The petrified shells of the deep. Oh, the shells! The petrified shells of the deep.

They were used as coin by some of the Nations. They were fastened in belts by others, and made in handles of wooden implements by still others. Mollusks not only of the sea, but mollusks of the land. Do you know how much they have had to do with the world's history? They saved the church of God from extinguishment.

The Israelites marched out of Egypt 2,000,000 strong, besides flocks and herds. The Bible says "the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in the clothes on their shoulders. They were thrust forth out of Egypt and could not tarry; neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals." Just think of it! Forty years in the wilderness. Infidelity triumphantly asks, How could they live forty years in the wilderness without food? You say manna fell. Oh, that was after a long while. They would have starved fifty times before the manna fell. The fact is, they were chiefly kept alive by the mollusks of the land or shelled creatures. Mr. Frooton and Mr. Sicard took the same route from Egypt toward Canaan that the Israelites took, and they give this as their testimony.

"Although the children of Israel must have consisted of about 2,000,000 souls, with baggage and innumerable flocks and herds, they were not likely to experience any inconvenience in their march. Several thousand persons might walk abreast with the greatest ease in the very narrowest part of the valley in which they first began to file off. It soon afterward expands to above three leagues in width. With respect to forage they would be at no loss. The ground is covered with tamarisk, broom, clover and saint foin, of which latter especially camels are passionately fond, besides almost every variety of odoriferous plant and herb proper for pasturage.

"The whole sides of the valley through which the children of Israel marched are still tufted with brushwood, which doubtless afforded food for their beasts, together with many drier sorts for lighting fire, on which the Israelites could with the greatest ease take the dough they brought with them on small iron plates, which form a constant appendage to the baggage of an oriental traveler. Lastly, the herbage underneath these trees and shrubs is completely covered with snails of a prodigious size and of the best sort, and, however uninviting such a repast ought appear to us, they are here esteemed a great delicacy. They are so plentiful in this valley that it may be literally said that it is difficult to take one step without treading on them."

So the shelled creatures saved the host of Israelites on the march to the promised land, and the attack of infidelity at this point is defeated by the facts, as infidelity is always defeated by facts, since it is founded on ignorance. In writing and printing our interrogation point has at the bottom a mark like a period and over it a flourish like the swing of a teamster's whip, and we put this interrogation point at the end of a question, but in the Spanish language the interrogation point is twice used for each question. At the beginning of the question the interrogation point is presented upside down, and at the close of the question right side up. When infidelity puts a question about the Scriptures, as it always indicates ignorance, the question ought to be printed with two interrogation points, one at the beginning and one at the close, but both upside down.

Thank God for the wealth of mollusks all up and down the earth, whether feeding the Israelites on their way to the land flowing with milk and honey, or, as we are better acquainted with the mollusks, when flung to the beach of lake or sea. There are three great families of them. If I should ask you to name three of the great royal families of the earth, perhaps you would respond, the house of Stewart, the house of Hapsburg, the house of Bourbon, but the three royal families of mollusks are the univalve, or shell in one part, the bivalve, or shell of two parts, and multivalve, or shell in many parts, and I see God in their every hinge, in their every tooth, in their every cartilage, in their every ligament, in their every spiral ridge, and in their every

color, prism on prism, and their a-lactation of thin shells for still ponds and thick coating for boisterous seas. They all dash upon me the thought of the providential care of God.

What is the use of all this architecture of the shell, and why is it pictured from the outside lip clear down into its labyrinth of construction? Why the infinity of skill and radiance in a shell? What is the use of the color and exquisite curve of a thing so insignificant as a shellfish? Why, when the conchologist by dredge or rake fetches the crustaceous specimens from the shore, does he find at his feet whole alhambras and coliseums and parthenons and crystal palaces of beauty in miniature, and these bring to light only an infinitesimal part of the opulence in the great subaqueous world. Linnæus counted 2500 species of shells, but conchology had then only begun its achievements.

While exploring the bed of the Atlantic Ocean in preparation for laying the cable shelled animals were brought up from depths of 1000 fathoms. When lifting the telegraph wire from the Mediterranean and Red Seas, shelled creatures were brought up from depths of 2300 fathoms. The English admiralty, exploring in behalf of science, found mollusks at a depth of 2435 fathoms, or 14,210 feet deep. What a realm awful for vastness!

As the shell is only the house and the wardrobe of insignificant animals of the deep, why all that wonder and beauty of construction, God's care for them is the only reason. And if God provide so munificently for them, will He not see that you have wardrobe and shelter? Wardrobe and shelter for a periwinkle! Shall there not be wardrobe and shelter for a man? Would God give a coat of mail for the defense of a nautilus and leave you no defense against the storm? Does He build a stone house for a creature that lasts a season and leave without home a soul that takes hold on centuries and eons?

Hugh Miller found "the Footprints of the Creator in the old red sandstone," and I hear the harmonies of God in the tinkle of the sea shells when the tides come in. The same Christ who drew a lesson of providential care from the fact that God clothes with grass the field instructs me to draw the same lesson from the shell.

In almost every man's life, however well born and prosperous for years, and in almost every woman's life, there comes a very dark time, at least once. A conjunction of circumstances will threaten bankruptcy and homelessness and starvation. It may be that this war will meet the ear or will meet the eye of those who are in such a state of foreboding. Come, then, and see how God gives an ivory palace to a water animal that you could cover with a ten-cent piece and clothes in armor against all attack a coral no bigger than a snowflake. I do not think that God will take better care of a bivalve than of one of His own children.

I rake to your feet with this gospel rake the most thorough evidences of God's care for His creatures. I pile around you great mounds of shells that they may teach you a most comforting theology. Oh, ye of little faith, walk among these arbors of coraline and look at these bouquets of shell, fit to be handed a queen on her coronation day, and see these fallen rainbows of color, and examine these lilies in stone, these primroses in stone, these heliotropes in stone, these cowslips in stone, these geraniums in stone, these japonicas in stone.

O ye who have your telescopes ready looking out on clear nights, trying to see what is transpiring in Mars, Jupiter and Mercury, know that within a few hours' walk or ride of where you now are there are whole worlds that you might explore, but of which you are unconscious, and among the most beautiful and suggestive of these worlds is the conchological world. Take this lesson of a providential care. How does that old hymn go?

We may, like ships, by tempests be tossed
On perilous deeps, but cannot be lost.
Though Satan enrages the wind and the tide,
The promise assures us the Lord will provide.

Do you get this pointed lesson from the shelled creatures in their construction?

That God helps the man to help himself. This house of stone in which they live is not dropped on them and is not built around them. The material for it exudes from their own bodies and is absorbed with a colored fluid from the pores of their own necks. It is a most interesting thing to see these crustaceous animals fashion their own homes out of carbonate of lime and membrane.

And all of this is a mighty lesson to those who are waiting for others to build their fortunes when they ought to go to work and, like the mollusks, build their own fortunes out of their own brain, out of their own sweat, out of their own industries. Not a mollusk on all the beaches of all the seas would have a house of shell if it had not itself built one. Do not wait for others to shelter you or prosper you. All the crustaceous creatures of the earth from every flake of their covering and from every ridge of their tiny castles on Atlantic and Pacific and Mediterranean coasts say, "Help yourself," while God helps you to help yourself.

Those people who are waiting for their father or rich uncle to die and leave them a fortune are as silly as a mollusk would be to wait for some other mollusk to drop on it a shell equipment. It would kill the mollusk as in most cases it destroys a man. Not one person out of a hundred ever was strong enough to stand a large estate by inheritance dropped on him in a chunk. Have great expectations from only two persons—God and yourself. Let the onycha of my text become your precursor.

But the more I examine the shells the more I am impressed that God is a God of emotion. Many scoff at emotion and seem to think that God is a God of cold geometry and iron laws and eternal apathy and untroubled stoicism. No! No! The shells with overpowering emphasis deny it. While law and order reign in the universe, you have but to see the lavishness of color on the crustacea, all shades of crimson from faintest blush to blood of battlefield, all shades of green, all shades of all colors from deepest black to whitest light just called out on the shells with no more order than a mother premeditates or calculates how many kisses and hugs she shall give her babe waking up in the morning sunlight.

Yes, my God is an emotional God, and He says, "We must have colors and let the sun paint all of them on the scroll of that shell, and we must have music, and here is a corollary for the robin, and a psalm for man, and a doxology for the seraphim, and a resurrection call for the archangel." Ave, He saunders Himself a God of sublime emotion when He flung Himself on this world in the personalty of Christ to save it, without regard to the tears it would take, or the blood it would exhaust, or the agonies it would crush out.

When I see the Louvres and the Luxembourgs and the Vaticans of Divine painting strewn along the 8000 miles of coast, and I hear in a forest on a summer morning musical academies and Handel societies of full orchestras, I say God is a God of emotion, and if He observes mathematics it is mathematics set to music, and His figures are written not in white chalk on blackboards, but written by a flinger of sunlight on walls of jasmine and trumpet creeper.

In my study of the conchology of the Bible this onycha of the text also impresses me with the fact that religion is perfumed. What else could God have meant when He said to Moses, "Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte and onycha?" Moses took that shell of the onycha, put it over the fire, and as it crumbled into ashes it exhaled an odor that hung in every certain and filled the ancient tabernacle, and its sweet smoke escaped from the sacred precincts and saturated the outside air.

Perfume! That is what religion is. But instead of that some make it a malodor. They serve God in a rough and acerb way. They box their child's ears because he does not properly keep Sunday instead of making Sunday so attractive the child could not help but keep it. They make him learn by heart a difficult chapter in the book of Exodus, with all the hard names, because he has been naughty. How many disagreeable good people there are! No one doubts their piety, and they will reach heaven, but they

will have to get fixed up before they there or they will make trouble by out to us: "Keep off that grass!" do you mean by flucking that "Show your ticket!"

Oh, how many Christian people obey my text and take into their lives and their behavior and their consciences and presbyteries and general assemblies conferences more onycha! I have times gone in a very gala of spirit in presence of some disagreeable Christian and in five minutes felt wretched, some other time I have gone depressed the company of suave and genial souls in a few moments I felt exhilarated. Was the difference? It was the difference that they burned on their centers. They burned onycha; the other burned ass.

In this conchological study of the also notice that the mollusks or shellfish furnish the purple that you see darkening so many Scriptures. The purple stuff in the ancient tabernacle, the purple girdle of the priests, the mantle of Roman Emperors, the Dives in purple and fine linen—purple robes which in mockery was upon Christ—were colored by the purple shells on the shores of the Mediterranean. It was discovered by a shepherd dog having stained his mouth by one of the shells, and the purple aroused admiration.

Costly purple! Six pounds of the liquor extracted from the shellfish used to prepare one pound of wool. It was also used on the pages of books, and prayer books appeared in purple which may still be found in some of the national libraries of Europe. Plutarch of the purple which he put his beauty years. But after awhile the purple became easier to get, and that which had sign of imperial authority when worn by an emperor, jealous of this appropriation, made a law that any one wearing purple should be put to death.

Then, as if to punish the world for outrage of exclusiveness, God oblit the color from the earth, as much as "If I cannot have it, none shall have it." But though God has deprived the shellfish which afforded this there are shells enough left to make and worshipful. Oh, the entrancing hues and shapes still left all up and do beaches of all the continents! These cre of the sea have waist roofs of enamel celain! They dwell under what pabul as the sky and flow as a sun mysterious as an aurora! And am right in leading you for a few m through this mighty realm of God lected by human eye and human foot.

It is said that the harp and lute vented from the fact that in Egypt t overflowed its banks, and when the retreated tortoises were left by the on all the muds, and these tortoise and soon nothing was left but the car and gristle of these creatures, which end under the heat into musical that when touched by the wind or man vibrated, making sweet sounds, the world took the hint and fashion harp, and am I not right in trying to music out of the shells and lifting the harp, from which to thum the p praises of the Lord and the pathetic of human conscience?

But I find the climax of this concho the Bible in the pearl, which has this tion above all other gems—that it is no human hand to bring out its be Job speaks of it, and its shimmer is in Q sermon, and the Bible, which opens u onycha of my text, closes with the Of such value is this crustaceous pro do not wonder that for the exclusiv of fishing for it on the shores of Ca man paid to the English Government 000 for one season.

So exquisite is the pearl I do not v that Piny thought it was made out drop of dew, the creature rising to t face to take it and the chemistry of the liquid into a solid. You the Bible makes so much

part in its minutiae. If you know much it costs to get it. Boats with sail cut from the island of Ceylon divers to each boat. Thirteen guide and manage the boat.

into the dangerous depths, sharks that whirl around them, pinn divers, while 60,000 people anxiously on. After three or four minutes a from the air the diver ascends, nne-strangulate and blood rushing fro and nostrils, and flinging his pearly tr on the sand falls into unconsciousness.

Oh, it is an awful exposure and str peril to fish for pearls, and yet they and is it not a wonder that to get that the Bible calls the pearl of great price, more than all other pearls put tog there should be so little anxiety, so struggle, so little enthusiasm? Would that we were all as wise as the merchant Christ commended, "who, when he found one pearl of great price, wen sold all that he had and bought it."

But what thrill me with suggestiv is the material out of which all pear made. They are fashioned from the w of the shellfish. The excretion from wound is fixed and hardened and en into a pearl. The ruptured vessels o water animals fashioned the gem that adorns finger or earring, or sword b king's crown.

So out of the wounds of earth will the pearls of heaven. Out of the wou bereavement the pearl of solace. Out wound of loss the pearl of gain. Out a deep wound of the grave the pearl of reaction joy. Out of the wounds Saviour's life and a Saviour's death the radiant, the everlasting pearl of he ly gladness.

"And the 12 gates were 12 pearls." the consolation, as ye who have been whether hurt in body, or hurt in min hurt in soul. Get your troubles sanct if you suffer with Christ on earth, you reign with Him in glory. The tears of are the crystals of heaven. "Every se gate was of one pearl."

Gave Maria a Lesson.

Evidently there is no Servant of Protective Union in London, or if is the young woman mentioned, b did not belong to it. Think of something happening to one of our own lofty servant girls! A German merc in London has a servant who at first very forgetful. This fault was especially annoying at meal times, when some essential was sure to be lacking from the table. One day the family were seated at the table, and the bell was rung usual. The girl hurried to the dining room.

"Maria," said Herr B—, "just and fetch the big step ladder down the attic and bring it here."

Maria who had been disturbed at dinner, gave a grunt of dissatisfaction but ran up three flights of stairs to the ladder. In about five minutes returned to the room, panting with exertion.

"Now," said Herr B— "put it the other end of the room and climb the top."

Maria did as she was told, and when she was at the top Herr B— qu observed.

"Maria, you have now a better than we have; just look around and see if you can see any salt on the table. My wife and I could not find it."

This settled the business. Maria never forgotten the lesson.—Eps Herald.

A tax on street organ grinders is proposed by two London vestries.