SUNDAY'S SERMON.

ONE OF DR. T. DEWITT TALMAGE'S STERLING DISCOURSES.

Subject: "Rubies Surpassed."

TEXT: "*Wisdom is better than rubies.*"—Proverbs viii., 11.

You have all seen the precious stone commonly called the ruby. It is of deep red color. The Bible makes much of it. It glowed in the first row of the high priest's breastplate. Under another name it stood in the wall of heaven. Jeremiah compares the ruddy cheek of the Nazarites to the ruby. Ezekiel points it out in the robes of the king of Tyre. Four times does Solomon use it as a symbol by which to extol wisdom or religion, always putting its value as better than rubies.

The world does not agree as to how the precious stones were formed. The ancients thought that amber was made of drops of perspiration of the goddess Ge. The thunderstone was supposed to have dropped from a stormcloud. The emerald was said to have been made of the firefly. The lapis lazuli was thought to have been born of the cry of an Indian giant. And modern mineralogists say that the precious stones were made of gases and liquids. To me the ruby seems like a spark from the anvil of the setting sun.

The home of the genuine ruby is Burman, and sixty miles from its capital, where lives and reigns the ruler, called "Lord of the Rubies." Under a careful Governmental guard are these valuable mines of ruby kept. Rarely has any foreigner visited them. When a ruby of large value was discovered, it was brought forth with elaborate ceremony, a procession was formed, and, with all bannered pomp, military guard and princely attendants, the gem was brought to the king's palace.

Of great value is the ruby, much more so than diamond, as lapidaries and jewelers will tell you. An expert on this subject writes, "A ruby of perfect color weighing five carats is worth at the present day ten times as much as a diamond of equal weight." It was a disaster when Charles the Bold lost the ruby he was wearing at the battle of Grandson. It was a great affluence when Rudolph II of Austria inherited a ruby from his sister, the queen dowager. It was thought to have had much to do with the victory of Henry V, as he wore it into the battle of Agincourt.

Is the pride of the Russian court to own the largest ruby of the world, presented by Gustavus III to the Russian Empress. Wondrous ruby! It has electric characteristics, and there are lightnings compressed in its double six sided prisms. What shall I call it? It is frozen fire! It is petrified blood! In all the world there is only one thing more valuable, and my text makes the comparison, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

But it is impossible to compare two things together unless there are some points of similarity as well as of difference. I am glad there is nothing lacking here. The ruby is more beautiful in the night and under the lamplight than by day. It is preferred for evening adornment. How the rubies glow and burn and flash as the lights lift the darkness! Catherine of Aragon had on her finger a ruby that fairly lanterned the night.

Sir John Mandeville, the celebrated traveler of 400 years ago, said that the Emperor of China had a ruby that made the night as bright as day. The probability is that Solomon, under some of the lamps that illumined his cedar palace by night, noticed the peculiar glow of the ruby as it looked in the hilt of a sword, or hung in some fold of the upholstery, or beautified the lip of some chalice, while he was thinking at the same time of the excellency of our holy religion as chiefly seen in the night of trouble, and he cries out, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

Oh, yes, it is a good thing to have religion while the sun of prosperity rides high and everything is brilliant in fortune, in health, in worldly favor. Yet you can at such time hardly tell how much of it is natural exuberance and how much of it is the grace of God. But let the sun set, and the shadows avalanche the plain, and the darkness of sickness or poverty or persecution or mental exhaustion fill the soul and fill the house and fill the world; then you sit down by the lamp of God's word, and under its light the consolations of the gospel come out; the peace of God which passeth all understanding appears. You never fully appreciated their power until in the deep night of trouble the Divine Lamp revealed their exquisiteness. Pearls and amethysts for the day, but rubies for the night.

All of the books of the Bible attempt in some way the assuagement of misfortune. Of the 150 psalms of David at least ninety allude to trouble. There are sighings in every wind, and tears in every brook, and pangs in every heart. It was originally proposed to call the President's residence at Washington "The Palace" or "the Executive Mansion," but after it was destroyed in the war of 1814 and rebuilt in was painted white to cover up the marks of the smoke and fire that had blackened the stone walls. Hence it was called "The White House." Most of things now white with attractiveness were once black with disaster.

What the world most needs is the consolatory, and here it comes, our holy religion, with both hands full of anodynes and sedatives and balsams, as in Daniel's time to stop mouths leonine; as in Shadrach's time to cool blast furnaces; as in Ezekiel's time to console captivity; as in St. John's time to unroll an apocalypse over rocky desolations. Hear its soothing voice as it declares: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My loving kindness shall not depart from you." "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The most wholesome thing on earth is trouble, if met in Christian spirit. To make Paul what he was it took ship wreck, and whipping on the bare back, and penitentiary, and pursuit of wild men, and the sword of decapitation. To make David what he was it took all that Ahithophel and Saul and Absalom and Goliath and all the Philistine hosts could do against him. It took Robert Chambers's malformation of feet to make him the literary conqueror.

It was bereavement that brought William Haworth, of Wesley's time, from wickedness to an evangelism that won many thousands for heaven. The world would never have known what heroic stuff Ridley was made of had not the fires been kindled around his feet, and not liking this slow work he cried: "I cannot burn. Let the fire come to me. I cannot burn." Thank God that there are gems that unfold their best glories under the lamplight! Thank God for the ruby.

Moreover, I am sure Solomon was right in saying that religion or wisdom is better than rubies, from the fact that a thing is worth what it will fetch. Religion will fetch solid happiness, and the ruby will not. In all your observation did you ever find a person thoroughly felicitated by an incrustment of jewels? As you know more of yourself than any one else, are you happier now with worldly adornments and successes than before you won them? Does the picture that cost you hundreds or thousands of dollars on your wall bring you as much satisfaction as the engraving that at the expense of $5 was hung upon the wall when you first began to keep house?

Do all the cutlery and rare plate that glitter on your extension dining table, surrounded by flattering guests, contain more of reality than the plain ware of your first table, at which sat only two? Does a wardrobe crowded with costly attire give you more satisfaction than your first clothes closet with its four or five pegs? Did not the plain ring set on the third finger of the left hand on the day of your betrothal give more gladness than the ruby that is now enthroned on the third finger of your right hand?

If in this journey of life we have learned anything, we have learned that this world, neither with its emoluments nor gains, can satisfy the soul. Why, here come as many witnesses as I wish to call to the stand to testify that before high heaven and the world, in companionship with Jesus Christ and a good hope of heaven, they feel a joy that all the resources of their vocabulary fail to express. Sometimes it evidences itself in ejaculations of hosanna; sometimes in doxology; sometimes in tears. A converted native of India in a letter said: "How I long for my bed, not that I may sleep—I lie awake often and long—but to hold sweet communion with my God."

If so mighty is worldly joy that Julius II, hearing his armies were triumphant, expired, and if Talva, hearing that the Roman senate had decreed him an honor, expired, and if Dionysius and Sophocles, overcome of joy, expired, and if a shipwrecked purser, waiting on the coast of Guinea in want and starvation at the sight of a vessel bringing relief, fell dead from shock of delight, is it any surprise to you that the joys of pardon and heaven rolling over the soul should sometimes be almost too much for the Christian to endure and live? An aged aunt said to me: "De Witt, three times I have fainted dead away under too great Christian joy. It was in all three cases at the holy communion."

An eminent Christian man while in prayer said: "Stop, Lord; I cannot bear any more of this gladness. It is too much for mortal. Withhold! withhold!" We have heard of poor workmen or workwomen getting a letter suddenly telling them that a fortune had been left them, and how they were almost beside themselves with glee, taking the first ship to claim the estate. But, oh, what it is to wake up out of the stupor of a sinful life, and through pardoning grace find that all our earthly existence will be divinely managed for our best welfare, and that then all heaven will troll in upon the soul!

Compared with that a spring morning is stupid, and an August sunset is inane, and aurora has no pillared splendor, and a diamond has no flash, and a pearl no light, and a bery no aquamarine, and a ruby no ruddiness. My gracious Lord! My glorious God! My precious Christ! Roll over on us a few billows of that rapture. And now I ask you, as fair minded men and women, accustomed to make comparisons, is not such a joy as that worth more than anything one can have in a jeweled casket? Was not Solomon right when he said, "Wisdom is better than rubies?"

There is also something in the deep carmine of the ruby that suggests the sacrifice on which our whole system of religion depends. While the emerald suggests the meadows, and the sapphire the skies, and the opal the sea, the ruby suggests the blood of sacrifice. The most emphatic and startling of all colors has the ruby. Solomon, the author of my text, knew all about the sacrifice of lamb and dove on the altars of the temple, and he knew the meaning of sacrificial blood, and what other precious stone could be so well use to symbolize it as the ruby? Red, intensely red, red as the blood of the greatest martyr of all time—Jesus—of the centuries! Drive the story of the crucifixion out of the Bible and the doctrine of the atonement out of our religion, and there would be nothing of Christianity left for our worship or our admiration.

Why should it be hard to adopt the Bible theory that our redemption was purchased by blood? What great bridge ever sprung its arches, what temple ever reared its towers, what Nation ever achieved its independence, what mighty good was ever done without sacrifice of life? The great wonder of the world, the bridge that unites these two cities, cost the life of the first architect. Ask the shipyards of Glasgow and New York how many carpenters went down under accidents before the steamer was launched, ask the three great transcontinental railroads how many in their construction were buried under crumbling embankments or crushed under timbers or destroyed by the powder blast.

Tabulate the statistics of how many mothers have been martyrs to the cradle of sick children. Tell us how many men sacrificed nerve and muscle and brain and life in the effort to support their households. Tell us how many men in England, in France, in Germany, in Italy, in the United States, have died for their country. Vicarious suffering is as old as the world, but the most thrilling, the most startling, the most stupendous sacrifice of all time and eternity was on a bluff back of Jerusalem when one Being took upon Himself the sins, the agonies, the perdition of a great multitude that no man can number between 12 o'clock of a darkened noon and 3 o'clock in the afternoon, purchasing the ransom of a ruined world.

Dive in all the seas, explore all the mines, crowbar all the mountains, view all the crowned jewels of all the emperors, and find me any gem that can so overwhelmingly symbolize that martyrdom as the ruby. Mark you, there are many gems that are somewhat like the ruby. So is the cornelian, so is the garnet, so is the spinel, so is the balas, so the gems brought from among the gravels of Ceylon and New South Wales, but there is only one genuine ruby, and that comes from the mine of Burmah. And there is only one Christ, and He comes from heaven. One Redeemer, one Ransom, one Son of God, only "one name given under heaven among men by which we can be saved."

Ten thousand times 10,000 beautiful imitations of that ruby, but only one ruby. Christ had no descendant. Christ had no counterpart. In the lifted up grandeur and glory and love and sympathy of His character He is the Incomparable, the Infinite One! "The only wise God, our Saviour." Let all hearts, all homes, all times, all eternities, bow low before Him! Let His banner be lifted in all our souls!

In olden times Scotland was disturbed by freebooters and pirates. To rid the seas and ports of these desperadoes the hero William Wallace fitted out a merchant vessels, but filled it with armed men and put out to sea. The pirates, with their flag inscribed of a death's head, thinking they would get an easy prize, bore down upon the Scottish merchantman, when the armed men of Wallace boarded the craft of the pirates and put them in chains and then sailed for port under the Scotch flag flying. And to our souls, assailed of sin and death and hell, through Christ are rescued, and the black flag of sin is torn down, and the striped flag of the cross is hoisted. Blessed be God for any sign, for any signal, for any precious stone that brings to mind the price paid for such a rescue.

I like the coral, for it seems the solidified foam of breakers, and I like the jasper, for it gathers seventeen colors into its bosom, and I like the jet, for it compresses the shadows of many midnights, and I like the chrysoprase because its purple is slumbered with a small heaven of stars, and I like the chrysolite, for its waves of color seem on fire. But this morning nothing so impresses me as the ruby, for it depicts, it typifies, it suggests "The blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin." Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Yea, Solomon was right when in my text he said, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

To bring out a contrast that will illustrate my text, I put before you two last earthly scenes. The one is in a room with rubies, but no religion, and the other in a room with religion, but no rubies. You enter the first room, where an affluent and worldly man is about to quit this life. There is a ruby on the mantel, possibly among the vases. There is a ruby in the headdress of the queenly wife.

On the finger of the dying man there is a ruby. The presence of these rubies implies opulence of all kinds. The pictures on the walls are heirlooms or the trophies of European travel. The curtains are from foreign looms. The rugs are from Damascus or Cairo. The sofas are stuffed with ease and quietude. The rocking chairs roll backward and forward on lullabies. The pillows are exquisitely embroidered. All the appointments of the room are a peroration to a successful commercial or professional life. But the man has no religion, never has had and never professed to have. There is not a Bible or one religious book in the room.

The departing man feels that his earthly career is ended, and nothing opens beyond. Where he will land stepping off from this life is a mystery, or whether he will land at all, for it may be annihilation. He has no prayer to offer, and he does not know how to pray. No hope of meeting again in another state of existence. He is through with this life and is sure of no other. The ruby on the mantel and the ruby on the wasted finger of the departing one say nothing of the ransoming blood which they so mightily typify. So far as giving solace or illumination to a departing spirit, they are a dead failure. Midnight of utter hopelessness drops on all the scene.

Another room of mortal exit. Religion and no rubies. She never had money enough to buy one of these exquisites. Sometimes she stopped at a jeweler's show window and saw a row of them incarnadining the velvet. She had keen taste to appreciate those gems, but she never owned one of them. She was not jealous or unhappy because others had rubies while she had none. But she had a richer treasurer, and that was the grace of God that had comforted her along the way amid bereavements and temptations and persecutions and sickness and privations and trials of all sorts. Now she is going out of life.

The room is bright, not with pictures or statues, not with upholstery, not with any of the gems of mountain or of sea, but there is a strange and vivid glow in the room. Not the light of the chandelier or star or noonday sun, but something that outshines all of them. It must be the presence of supernaturals. From her illumined face I think she must hear sweet voices. Yea, she does hear sweet voices—voices of departed kindred, voices apostolic and prophetic and evangelic, but all of them overpowered by the voice of Christ, saying, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom."

From her illumined face, I think she must hear rapturous music. Yea, she does hear rapturous music, now soft as solos, now thunderous as orchestras; now a saintly voice alone, now the hundred and forty and four thousand in concert. From her illumined face, I think she must breathe redolence. Yea, she does inhale aroma from off the gardens whose flowers never wither and from the blossoms of orchards, every tree of which bears twelve manner of fruit. From her illumined face, I think she must see a glorious sight. Yea, she sees the wall that has jasper at the base and amethyst at the top and blood red rubies between. Goodby, sweet soul! Why should you longer stay? Your work all done, your burdens all carried, your tears all wept! Forward into the light! Up into the joy! Out into the grandeurs! And after you have saluted Christ and your kindred, search out him of the palaces of Lebanon cedar and tell him that you have found to be gloriously true what thousands of years ago he asserted in this morning's text, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

In those burnished palaces of our God may we all meet. For I confess to you that my chief desire for heaven is not the radiance, or, to take the suggestion of the text, not the rubescence of the scene. My one idea of heaven is the place to meet old friends, God, our best friend, and our earthly friends already transported. Aye, to meet the millions whom I have never seen, but to whom I have administered in the gospel week by week by journalism on both sides of the sea, and throughout Christendom, and through many lands yet semibarbaric.

For the last twenty-three years every blast of injustice against me has multiplied my readers all the world over, and the present malignancy printed and uttered because our church is in financial struggle after having two great structures destroyed by fire and we compelled to build three large churches—I say the present outrageous injustice in some quarters will multiply my audience in all lands if I can keep in good humor and not fight back.

A gentleman tapped me on the shoulder summer before last on a street of Edinburgh, Scotland, and said, "I live in the Shetland Islands, North Scotland, and I read your sermons every Sabbath to an audience of neighbors, and my brother lives in Cape Town, South Africa, and he reads them every Sabbath to an audience of his neighbors." And I hear and now say to the forty millions of the earth to whose eyes these words will come, that one of my dearest anticipations is to meet them in heaven. Ah, that will be better than rubies.

Coming up from different continents, from different hemispheres, from opposite sides of the earth, to greet each other in holy love in the presence of the glorious Christ who made it possible for us to get there. Our sins all pardoned, our sorrows all banished, never to weep, never to part, never to die! I tell you that will be better than rubies. Others may have the crowns, and the thrones, and the scepters; give us our old friends back again, Christ, "the friend who sticketh closer than a brother," and all the kindred who have got up from our bereft households, and all our friends whom we have never yet seen, and you may have all the rubies, for that will be "better than rubies."

Instead of the dying kiss when they looked so pale and wan and sick, it would be the kiss of welcome on lips jubilant with song, while standing on floors paved with what exquisiteness, under ceilings hung with what glory, bounded by walls facing us with what splendor, amid gladness rolling over us with what doxology—far better, infinitely better, everlastingly better than rubies!

Mine Riot Cases.

PITTSBURG, Feb. 10.—The first case resulting from the miners' riots in the Mansfield valley resulted in acquittal. The 60 miners charged with rioting will be called for trial Monday. All will be tried together, a larger number than ever were tried together before in this county. It is expected that some will plead guilty.

TO BEAT EIFFEL TOWER

A STRUCTURE THAT WILL BE 1,150 FEET HIGH.

It Is Being Erected In a Park Near London Under the Auspices of an English Baronet.

A tower designed to attain a height 150 feet greater than that of the celebrated Eiffel Tower of Paris is in course of construction at Wembly Park, near London. The foundation of the tower has been completed and the superstructure has attained a height of sixty-two feet.

The tower is erected under the auspices of Sir Edward Watkin. The plan of the tower was the result of an advertisement three years ago in which architects were invited to send in designs in competition for substantial prizes.

The first prize was awarded to Mr. A. D. Stewart. His design was, however, subsequently modified to a considerable extent. His plan provided for eight groups of four legs each for the main supports of the tower.

It was decided that the construction would be much simpler with four groups of legs, as in the Eiffel tower, which the structure when completed will greatly resemble. The foot of each of these legs rests on a solid concrete block.

The location of the tower is on top of a slight eminence, in the highest part of Wembly Park. It is surrounded by lofty trees.

The material used in the structural work of the tower is mild steel throughout. The sixteen base pieces at the foot of each of the legs weigh ten tons each. They stand on sole plates, 9x7 feet six inches by $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; seven 12-inch by $6\frac{1}{4}$ by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch joists are riveted to the plate, and on these is another plate of the same dimensions. Joists have been let into the concrete on which the bases rest, so that, if necessary, they may be moved slightly for the purposes of adjustment, and on the bottom of the lower sole plate a $4\frac{1}{2}$ inch by $4\frac{1}{2}$ inch by $\frac{5}{8}$ inch angle has been riveted, to prevent the leg from slipping bodily forward during erection.

The extreme width of the tower, from the outside to outside of the legs, on the ground line, is 406 feet.

The material used in building the tower is brought to the site by special lines of railway, branches of which run to each of the four legs.

The heaviest pieces to be erected will be the main girders at the first floor level, 146 feet from the ground. They weigh 40 tons, are 140 feet long, and will be lifted in one piece. The diagonal ties which cross the whole structure, 76 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the ground, will not be placed in their proper positions till the main deck girders have been fixed.

They will be inverted and used as struts, their lower ends resting against 200-ton hydraulic jacks, which will only be removed when the main girders are in place.

The estimated total weight of the tower is 7,000 tons, and the contractors hope to finish it within a year.

The arrangement of the elevators for ascending the tower will be different from that of the Eiffel tower.

At Wembly Park there is not the same necessity to have the space under the tower clear as existed at Paris. The elevators will accordingly ascend a vertical elevator shaft in the centre of the space between the four legs, instead of travelling up one of the legs, as the elevators of the Eiffel tower do.

The total number of the elevators of the new tower will be four. Two will ascend only to a height of 150 feet and two will go up to a platform 900 feet above the ground.

Each elevator will be independent of the others and will be driven by a separate engine.

The girders of the elevator shaft will be utilized in strengthening and stiffening the structure, and in supporting the platforms, thus enabling lighter girders to be used.

A large building is to be built in the centre of the space between the legs from which the elevators will start.

An enclosed platform will be erected at a height of 150 feet, which may be utilized as a museum.

At a height of 500 feet a second enclosed platform will be placed and at 900 feet a third.

From the last a flight of steps will enable those who wish to climb up to the highest platform, 1,100 feet above the ground.

A Case of Hog.

The Secretary of the Treasury has made a decision that a pig is a hog for all customs purposes. Hogs are dutiable at $1.50 a head, but pigs are not classified at all. The question arose over the recent importation at San Diego, Cal., of two sows with eighteen small pigs. Inasmuch as the pigs were worth only about $1.25 apiece, it was thought that it would be hardly fair to assess duty at the rate of $1.50 a head. The matter was referred to the Treasury Department, with the result as already stated. The action of the Secretary is based on previous rulings that ponies and colts are properly classified for duty as horses and calves as cattle.—[Washington Star.

For generations it has been the custom to mix the batter for buckwheat cakes with yeast or emptyings, retaining a portion of the batter left over from one morning to raise the cakes for the following day.

If kept too warm, or not used promptly, this batter becomes excessively sour and objectionable. Buckwheat cakes raised by this means are more often sour or heavy than light and sweet. If eaten daily they distress the stomach and cause skin eruptions and itching.

Instead of the old-fashioned way we have been making buckwheat cakes this winter with Royal Baking Powder, mixing the batter fresh daily, and find the result wonderfully satisfactory. They are uniformly light and sweet, more palatable and wholesome, and can be eaten continuously without the slightest digestive inconvenience. Besides they are mixed and baked in a moment, requiring no time to rise. Following is the receipt used:

Two cups of pure buckwheat flour (not "prepared" or mixed), one cup of wheat flour, two tablespoons of Royal Baking Powder and one-half teaspoonful of salt, all sifted well together. Mix with milk into a thin batter and bake at once on a hot griddle. Once properly tested from this receipt, no other buckwheat will find its way to your table.—Domestic Cookery.

Great Carrying Power of Bees.

An interesting note about the weight of bees appears in an American journal devoted to agriculture, writes Dr. Andrew Wilson. It seems that an ordinary bee, not carrying any load of pollen, weighs the one-five-thousandths part of a pound. Five thousand bees thus make a pound weight. When, however, the bee is carrying his load of pollen or honey, as he returns from foraging amid the flowers, his weight is increased nearly three times. He carries thus about twice his own weight, a result not surprising to those who have studied the muscular powers and ways of insects at large. When bees are loaded it requires only 1,800 of them to make up the pound. Details are also given regarding the number of bees which may exist in a hive. From four to five pounds weight of bees are found in an ordinary colony. This means in figures of population 20,000 to 25,000 individuals. A big swarm, it is said, will often double this estimate. Talking of bees, if any of my readers wish to indulge in a very curious and fascinating bit of zoological study, they should read the story of what is called "parthenogenesis" in bees and other insects, such as the aphides or green flies of the roses and other plants. For such eggs of the queen bee as are fertilized when laid turn out workers (or neuters) or queens, while those which are not fertilized at all develop into males or drones. This is very singular, because fertilization of an egg or seed is regarded ordinarily as necessary for its due development.

Rothschild requires of his cook a different kind of soup for every day in the year.

GOOD QUALITIES

Possessed by Hood's Sarsaparilla are almost beyond mention. Best of all, it purifies the blood, thus strengthening the nerves, it regulates the digestive organs, invigorates the kidneys and liver, tones and builds up the entire system. Cures Scrofula, Dyspepsia, Catarrh, Rheumatism, Salt Rheum, etc.

W. J. Baker

Kidney Troubles

And severe pains in my back resulted from a cold contracted in the war. I received only temporary relief from medicines. After the grip I was physically run down. Hood's Sarsaparilla has done wonders for me. I consider

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Hood's Sarsaparilla a God-sent blessing to the suffering." WM. J. BAKER, N. Pembroke, Mass.

Hood's Pills cure all liver ills, constipation, biliousness, jaundice, indigestion. 25 cents.

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The most entertaining and instructive game of the century. It delightfully teaches American geography, while it is to young and old a most fascinating as well as [illegible] any member of [illegible] postage prepaid. [illegible] Trade C[illegible]

DYNAMITE IN LETTERS.

QUEER THINGS FOUND IN UNCLE SAM'S MAILS.

Fluids, Pistols, Rattlesnakes, Alligators Among the Articles Forwarded—Dead Letter Museum in Washington.

If people will send explosives through the mails, as, for example, the infernal machine received at the Gangee, Mich., post-office the other day, the Government knows of no way to prevent it. Of course, if they are shipped in unsealed packages, they can be examined and destroyed.

Postmasters not infrequently come across queer-looking parcels. Perchance the torn wrapper of a suspected bundle reveals a cylindrical box covered with tin-foil, inside of which a ticking sound is audible. The sender, if known, is notified that he may have the article returned to him if he likes by express. Otherwise it is put where it can do no harm.

One day not long ago, a box frankly labelled "Dynamite," reached the Dead Letter Office. A messenger was ordered to open it gently, and outdoors. The package proved, as had been imagined, a "sell."

Of articles suspected to be explosive many are fluids. They are promptly disposed of, even innocent liquids being "unmailable" under the law. The postmaster, after destroying the contents of a parcel, forwards the wrapper to Washington, where it is placed on file for record. Thus, if inquired about, the fate of the inclosure can be determined.

However, no amount of suspicion would warrant a postoffice official in breaking the seal of a package on which letter rates are paid. It is absolutely sacred. Accordingly, the proper way to send explosives by mail is at full postage. Uncle Sam cannot prevent that, though every year large quantities of firecrackers and torpedoes shipped as fourth-class matter are seized, as well as numberless boxes of cartridges, percussion caps, etc.

A six-barreled revolver at full cock with every chamber loaded, once came into the Dead-Letter Office. It was addressed to a lady in Springfield, Ill., who could not be found. The dead-letter clerks are not astonished at anything. They have got beyond that.

In the packages they have found such things as rattlesnakes, centipedes, tarantulas, Gila monsters and alligators from Florida, all alive and squirming. They classify with composure such inclosures as petrified frogs, stuffed gophers, Toltec idols, gold nuggets, spirit photographs, skulls, Indian scalps and human ears.

A common occurrence is a bundle of old letters tied with a ribbon, usually containing a finger-ring and a last note saying: "I return herewith your letters; all is over between us." This excites no sentimental feeling on the part of the hardened postal employee. Rather will he pause for a second to tickle the horned toad found in the next parcel.

Once upon a time a girl sent by mail to a friend a peculiar moss-agate ring as a Christmas present. The gift never reached its destination. Three years later, while visiting at another city, she stayed at a boarding house. On the opposite side of the table at dinner she saw a man who wore his necktie through a ring. It was the missing moss-agate.

She asked him where he got it, and he explained that he had bought it at a Dead-Letter Office sale in Washington. In some manner it had found its way into Uncle Sam's waste basket, and had been put up at auction among the 40,000 articles which thus accumulate at the Post-Office Department annually.

This flotsam and jetsam of the mails is kept in a little museum by the department at Washington. Among them are several sets of false teeth. Not long ago an old man after gazing for some time at a set of teeth, became much excited. A vigorous discussion arose between himself and wife, she nudging him and trying to restrain him from speaking. But he would not listen to her, and finally broke out with:

"They are my teeth: I would know them anywhere." He explained that one of the sets of teeth had belonged to him, but had been lost in the mail. That he was not mistaken he presently proved by putting them into his mouth, which they fitted perfectly. Having given a receipt for them, he walked away with them in triumph.

Thousands of articles are found every year in the mails without wrappers. Not very long ago a heavy gold watch was thus discovered in a post-box. Possibly it was dropped in by a pickpocket anxious to get rid of spoils that would betray him.

An auction sale of accumulated dead packages is held annually by the department. The one which took place last month netted nearly $4,000. This was probably more than twice what all the goods disposed of were worth. "Cheap jewelry" figures largely in the stock offered.

Most numerous among the articles disposed of at the post-office auction are handkerchiefs. Next come [illegible]