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THE  
PEARL MERCHANT.

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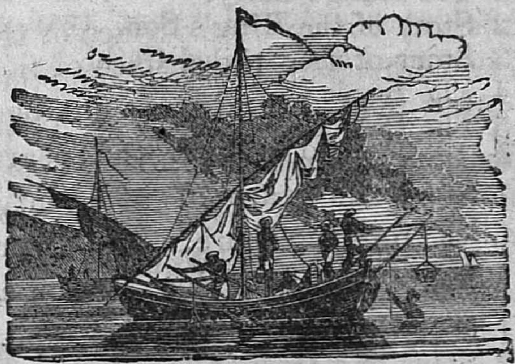
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## THE PEARL MERCHANT.



A pearl is a very beautiful jewel. It is generally round in form, and its colour is a soft pure white. Pearls are found in shells, called pearl oysters. One of the chief pearl fisheries is near

the coast of Ceylon. The pearl oysters are found about twelve fathoms below the surface of the water. Boats, containing a number of divers, go out to the pearl banks, which are about twenty miles from the shore. The diver is let down with his foot on a large stone, fastened to a rope, for the purpose of keeping him at the bottom of the sea. He remains below as long as he can, all the while gathering oysters, which he puts in a bag tied to a rope. When the diver can stay no longer, he loosens himself from the stone, and comes up. After breathing for a little, he goes

down again in search of more oysters. The boats take the oysters to the shore, where the pearls are carefully collected. Let me now tell you a story about a pearl merchant.

It was a beautiful evening, when a caravan—a long row of camels and their riders—was seen near a town on the shores of the Red Sea. The people were glad at the sight; for this town was a noted place for the buying and selling of pearls; and those who were on the camels had come to buy.

There was a great stir in the place. Every one who had pearls

to sell took them to the market-place. There they sat down on the ground, spread mats before them, and laid out their pearls.

The buyers soon arrived at this town by the side of the Red Sea, and then the business began. They went round to each seller, and looked closely at his pearls. If they liked any they saw they bought them. But there was among the merchants a man who was slow to make any purchase. When they asked him what he would buy, he said that he was in search of the most valuable pearl that could be bought. He did not want com-

mon pearls. There were plenty of them which found ready buyers ; but he sought the best that could be had for money.

After a careful search he came to a dealer who was sitting among the others. Taking up one of his pearls to look at it, his face became bright ; he clasped his hands with joy. He had found what he was seeking. "What is the price of this pearl?" he said to the owner.

"This pearl," said the man, "is beyond all price. Nothing but esteem for you could induce me to part with it. You shall have it for one hundred talents

of silver. This was indeed a great price, equal to about three lakhs of rupees.

The merchant had not such a large sum, but he had all his wealth with him, which consisted of camels, rich dresses, and different kinds of jewels. He offered them for sale, and soon disposed of them. Then he counted his money, and found that he had got the exact sum that was wanted; but it was all he had in the world. He was, however, resolved to buy the valuable pearl, and quickly went to the seller, and laid the money before him.

“It is a pearl of great price,”



said the seller ; “ but you will never find such another. It is worth much more than you now give for it.”

“ Yes,” said the buyer, “ I am quite content with my bargain ; I am sure I shall never repent of it.” After he had once more looked at it with great delight, he secured the prize.

All the people in the market shook their heads, and said, “ The man is mad ! Who ever heard of any one giving all that he has got in the world to buy a single pearl !”

The caravan soon started on the homeward journey. The mer-

chant had to travel on foot all the way, and had only poor fare to eat ; but he did not regret his purchase, as he knew in the end it would be found that he had made a wise choice.

At length the caravan reached the chief city, where the king lived, and the merchants again looked at their purchases. Many were sadly disappointed. Some discovered that the pearls which they had carried all the way from the market crumbled to pieces. Others found that their pearls had changed their colour and lost their purity, and were of little worth.

But the merchant who had sold every thing to buy his pearl found it of the most esteemed colour, and that it was of almost priceless value. It was shown to the king of the land, who so much admired it that he bought it at a much greater price than was first given for it, and had it put in his crown. It was now seen who had done best in the market, and the merchant became the richest man of the city where he lived. The people used to say, "That is the man who made such a wise choice, and bought the pearl of great price."

This story is a parable. We are all seeking for a pearl, and

that pearl is happiness. Some seek it in worldly riches, but these crumble into dust. Others seek for happiness in sinful and vain pleasures, of which they soon get weary. Their pearls lose their lustre. What seemed so bright and fair becomes tarnished, and fails to give any delight to the owner.

There is, however, a pearl of unspeakable value which all are invited to seek, and in which none can be disappointed. This is a full and free salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

God created man holy, but he soon sinned, and all his descend-

ants have been born with his sinful nature. As we could not save ourselves, God, in His great love, sent His only Son into this world to die in our stead. Becoming incarnate, He lived here for 33 years, teaching men, working out for them a perfect righteousness, and atoning for their sins by dying on the cross. On the third day He rose from the dead, and after a time went up to heaven, where He is now exalted as a Saviour, ready to hear all who call upon Him.

If we believe in Christ, if we take refuge in Him, we shall receive this pearl of great price, the salvation of our souls. Our

sins will be blotted out for the sake of Jesus Christ, and by His Holy Spirit He will gradually adorn us with all the beauty of holiness. So long as we are in this sinful world, we shall have to struggle against evil desires and temptations, but at last the work will be complete, and we shall stand all-glorious before the presence of the great King of heaven.

The merchant *bought* the pearl; but we cannot buy salvation. It is a free gift, and is offered to us, "without money and without price." If we look in faith to Jesus Christ, and seek in humble prayer, the prize shall be ours.

Still, in one respect, we must sell all that we have. We must give up every thing that is sinful. We must also be in earnest. As men dive for the pearl with labour, patience and self-denial, so we must seek for salvation.

This "pearl of great price" *will last for ever*, which cannot be said of the costliest earthly good. Many a dying man would eagerly give all the pearls in the world if he had them for a continuance of life; but those who take Jesus for their portion, find in Him riches that never fail, never grow dim, and never lessen in worth.

And this "pearl of great price" is of infinite value because it is a treasure *which can be taken into another world*. This cannot be said of any earthly treasure. "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." The richest man who is not "rich toward God," becomes poor the instant he dies. Choose this good part, and it shall not be taken away from you. Where is the robber who can deprive you of this pearl? We can take this with us into eternity, and then free from all that dims it now, it will burn and shine for ever.



Try to find this precious pearl. It will be worth more to you than all the gold and silver—and all the gems and jewels in the world. Seek it without delay ; seek it now.



## MORNING PRAYER.

O Lord, I thank thee for taking care of me the past night. Forgive all my sins for the sake of Jesus Christ, and may thy Holy Spirit create in me a clean heart. Watch over me this day, and keep me from all sin. Make all men know thee and love thee. Hear my prayer for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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## EVENING PRAYER.

O Lord, look down on me this night. Forgive for Christ's sake, whatever I have done wrong, and may thy Holy Spirit make me holy. Bless my friends, and have mercy upon all men. Take care of me this night; and when I die, let my soul go to be with thee for ever. I ask all in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

