

# Sunday Reading.

## HISTORY OF THE BIBLE.

The Books of the Old Testament and How They Were Written.

The clay tablets at Babylon and Assyria were deposited in the libraries, which were established in the temples of the country. The papyrus of Egypt were preserved in much the same fashion. Some of the libraries were very old, and were continually being added to as time went on. The American Expedition to Babylon has recently been excavating a library at Niffer, which was formed 3000 B. C., while there are books or tablets in it which come down to the age of the Persian Empire. The oldest Babylonian library of which we know was created by Sargon who reigned as far back as 2300 B. C. The standard Babylonian work on astronomy and astrology had been originally compiled for this king, and edition after edition of it was made down to the last days of the Babylonian monarchy. Every library was provided with a large staff of scribes, who were constantly at work copying, or, as we should say, re-editing the older literature. The copies were made with scrupulous care; we are told when there was a fracture in the original, rendering the characters illegible, and also whether the fracture was recent or not; when again the scribe was uncertain about the characters which he was to copy, he either gave all the characters he thought it might represent, or frankly confessed that he could not read it.

In Palestine also there were libraries and scribes like those of Babylon and Assyria. For the pre-Israelitish period we have the testimony of the Tel el-Amarna tablets, and such Old Testament hints as the name of the city Kanath-Sepher, or "Book-town," called Beth-Sopher, "the Scribe's house," in an Egyptian papyrus. For the age of the Jewish kingdom there is an incidental allusion in the book of Proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, copied out. It is evident the example of Babylon was followed at Jerusalem, and that there too there was a library with a body of scribes employed in re-editing the older literature of the country. In this way the ancient writings of Israel were preserved and handed down. And it is not probable that they were edited with less care than the clay books of Assyria and Babylon.

The prophetic books are full of references and quotations which indicate an acquaintance with the works of earlier authors. Thus the prophecy against Moab in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Isaiah is quoted from an older prophet, and adapted by Isaiah to the circumstances of his own time, as we learn from the correct translation of the concluding verses. This should be: "This is the word that the Lord spoke concerning Moab long ago. But now the Lord hath spoken" again by his servant Isaiah, who declares that the glory of Moab should perish within three years. Another passage in the book of Isaiah (ii. 2-4) is found also in his younger contemporary, Micah (v. 1-5). This passage must have been quoted from elsewhere by Isaiah, as it begins with the conjunction "and," and is incomplete at the end. Its sources, however, could not have been the prophecies of Micah, as this is forbidden by chronology, and it follows therefore that it must have been quoted by both from a common original.

The books of Kings and Chronicles, again, allude to various works which have now been lost. Among them were the annals of the kingdoms of Judah and Samaria, compiled year by year, as well as historical books like those of the prophets Gad and Nathan, who recorded the events of their own time. The date of the compilation of the books of Kings is remarkable. The books end abruptly with the reign of Evil-Merodach, who succeeded his father, Nebuchadnezzar, as king of Babylon. His reign lasted only two years, when it was cut short by murder. As his death is not mentioned, the books of Kings must have been finished before it took place, that is to say, in B. C. 561. The Jews at that time were exiles in Babylon, and the city and temple of Jerusalem had been destroyed. Nevertheless it is evident that the exiles still had access to their old literature; even the annals of the northern kingdom had been preserved and could be referred to by a writer who lived in Babylon.

The Assyrian monuments have explained how this could have been the case. The kings of Assyria and Babylon made war against men, not against books. The most precious spoil which could be carried off to Assyria from a captured Babylonian city was some old text which the library of Nineveh did not possess. Nebuchadnezzar, as his inscriptions show, was himself a patron of literature, and it is therefore more than probable that when he took Jerusalem he would have carefully removed the library he found there to one of the numerous libraries of his own country. The Babylonians took a good deal of interest in the nations round about them, and some of the tablets they have bequeathed to us contain the names of foreign deities, as well as lists of foreign words with their Babylonian equivalents. As for the literary works of the northern kingdom of Israel, the "men of Hezekiah," who copied out the prophecies of Solomon, must have been glad to secure as many of them as possible. The writings of the northern prophets, Amos and Hosea, must have been preserved in this way; indeed, the prophecies of Hosea contain clear evidence that they have been edited by a Jew.

After the return from the exile there were no longer any difficulties in the transmission of the sacred books. The life

age of Greece had already begun, and the Western world was beginning to learn from the Eastern how to write and read, to establish libraries and preserve books. The Jewish community had become a sort of theocracy under the government of the high priest, and its members were interested in handing down intact the Scriptures which they had received. Before long the Hebrew books were translated into Greek for the benefit of the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt, and the Old Testament was thus transmitted through two separate channels, the Hebrew text of Palestine and the Greek text of the Septuagint. Papyrus made way for the parchment scroll, and eventually in the sixth century of our era the Massorites commenced their work of counting every letter of the sacred volume, and by means of the vowel points and accents, of stereotyping its traditional pronunciation. Meanwhile the Canon of the New Testament had been formed, and the books of which it was composed added to those of the Hebrew Bible. Under the successors of Alexander the Great book-sellers had multiplied in the great cities of the civilized world, and large bodies of trained slaves were employed to copy the books that were in demand. It was no longer difficult to obtain a copy of a book, provided the purchaser was willing to pay its price. The preservation and multiplication of the Scriptures had become almost as easy as it is in our own time.

## THOUGHTS FOR SUNDAY.

Helpful Words Spoken by Some of the Men and Women of the Time.

"Perhaps you have a great mind, perhaps you have an eloquent tongue; it may be you have a large purse, and can glorify God and bless mankind with that; but perhaps you have nothing in the world but a kind sweet smile. Then let that fall upon some poor life that has no smiles upon it. Remember that dewdrops glistening in the sun are just as beautiful as a rainbow."—Charles H. Parkhurst.

"I am thankful for the pulpit and for the chance to stand in it. What a great and gracious thing for a man it is to be always occupied with the noblest themes, to have it for his special mission to help his fellows in this sinful and dark world to tell of the radiant Christ. To do this in the least worthy is worth the intensest prayers and pains of any man."—Wayland Hoyt.

"God is teaching us that mysteriously, but very really, we are members one of another. Our interests are common interests, and to fight is not only wrong, but stupid. Capital and labor are respectively senior and junior members of the same firm, and until they recognize this the firm cannot possibly prosper."—Evangelist.

"It is as true today as ever that the Kingdom of God does not come with observation. The enrolment of a large membership is not an unquestionable proof of large spiritual forcefulness in a church. The attracting of large congregations is not always a sure sign of spiritual power in the preacher."—Herald and Presbyterian.

"We cannot lay our hand on the diseased and heal them. . . . but we can cause men to feel that God is thinking of them. . . . It men can be induced to believe in the love of their fellow-men, they are well on the road to belief in the love of God."—Marcus Dods.

"Buried alive! I did not so describe the bright, busy, intensely absorbing life my old schoolmate had led, and as for fame, had she not earned something better and more rewarding—the consciousness that she had done her duty in that place where God had put her."—Margaret E. Sangster.

"Faith is trust. To believe in Christ is to trust in Him. There is nothing more simple in the world than the childlike Christian, trusting in his loving Savior. There is nothing mysterious about it. It is the child trusting his mother, the client trusting his lawyer, the patient trusting his physician."—The Midland.

A Message From God.  
"Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. . . . Watch. . . . lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping, and what I say unto you I say unto all, watch." Mark 13: 31-37.

The Better Hypnotism.  
There has been much talk of late of an alleged power said to be possessed by certain strong-minded men over the weaker-minded, by which they are supposed to be able to throw these weaker ones into a state of semiconsciousness, and while in that state to be able to make them obey their will and do their commands in every detail. It may be that this new "hypnotism" is but the old "memorism" spelled with a new name. And just as the old memorism puzzled and amused the curious for a little while, and then passed away, so this new hypnotism will in all probability soon pass from the thoughts and talk of men. Charlatans may for a time make fame and fortune by their mystic performances, but hypnotism will never take its place among the great forces of the world. The weakest and shallowest minds will soon grow weary of being waded off to sleep, to become the property of some professional Svegali. And yet there is no form of egotistical error that does not seem at least to have at the very heart of it some central core of truth. There are some men so mighty as leaders that they seem to command the most absolute and unquestioning obedience of their followers. In war such men as Wellington, or Napoleon, or Grant, only had to draw the sword and lead the way and thousands followed, even though death stared them fully in the face. In politics Cavour and Gambetta, Gladstone and Bismarck have had just such a following. Some men wield a mighty influence. How important it is that

our leaders should be of the highest order that there influence may be the best and the most salutary. But for all common men the same lesson waits for the learning. We all have more or less influence. It may be much more than we think. Looks, words, silence, action, all tell with more or less of power, especially on the young. This sacred gift should all be consecrated to the highest ends, to help upward and onward our fellow men.

## IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Gives Reasons for Her Belief in It.

A sweet old lady, the wife and mother of missionaries, a saint of the elder fashion, lay devoutly dying.

"I thought," she said, "I heard the angels sing."

"But I am not sure," she added, with a wise smile; "I shan't be sure it is the angels unless they sing a little louder."

I am asked to answer in a thousand words a question on which the scholars and the sufferers of two thousand years have expended the heights and the depths of human thought and anguish: "What are the reasons for belief in personal immortality?"

It would be easier to give them in a volume than a column, and one may try to compress the eternal into newspaper type with a sense of inadequacy too evident for waste of words.

The greatest difficulty with our views of immortality I take to be their lack of definiteness. Most of us believe something, we are not sure just what and are quite sure we do not know why. Few of us, for fewer, I think, than we suppose—honestly consider the pillows of our deathbeds, he last fight for breath, the last reaching out for the clasp of a dear hand, and the last melting of consciousness into mist and mystery as the end of ourselves.

Yet how many of us could intelligently and intelligibly give the precise reasons why we expect anything better? Something is lacking to our usual means of expressing the greatest article of faith in the category of human beliefs. We are "not sure it is the angels." We wait for them to "sing a little louder."

There are always at least two grounds for accepting any valuable belief—because we wish to or because we have to. Each is important in its own way, but to ordinary men and women, too busy and careworn to concern themselves with philosophy or theology, yet shrewdly afraid of being deluded by superstition, it seems to me that the best reason for believing in the immortality of the soul will always remain the oldest, the simplest, the most wholesome and the most human, the shortest and the easiest to understand—in a word, the inevitable reason—those that we cannot escape. It seems to me that they might be expressed, not philosophically but practically, somewhat in the following manner (let it be said just here that I assume belief in personal Deity as not the point now at issue, but as conceded to this discussion):

So far as we have means of knowing, all created things exist for a reason and to an end.

This world must have been made for a good reason or a bad one.

Despite numerous apparent arguments to the contrary, the general belief of the wisest and better portions of mankind has concluded in the conviction that God is good.

Unless we have clearer light on the subject than we now command, it is wise to respect this general conviction, and to make it the basis of whatever views we may have upon the gravest questions raised by the phenomena of life.

If God is a being both intelligent and good, he is not likely to make an enormous mistake or to commit a cruel crime.

If this life be the end of experience to the inhabitants of this world, its creation would be a mistake, or would constitute such a crime.

I do not think that any thoughtful or devoted seeker after truth need hesitate at this proposition, or indeed need go very far beyond it, unless he choose.

No trained and delicate eye can escape the terrible disproportion between misery and happiness in this world, the enormous proportion of moral evil in it—in short, the overpowering presence of the forces known by the old-fashioned words sin and suffering.

If there is no sequel to this drama of woes, why not frankly say that we are the victims of an awful conspiracy of power with opportunity against helplessness, of which it is inconceivable that any but a malevolent or irresponsible Deity could be capable?

Life is an unfinished story. We stand in the thick and dark of the plot. Its Author is bound by the moral laws of His own being to carry on the tale to a just and intelligible ending. He is under eternal obligations to eternal creation and reason to justify His own scheme of creation; and it is more than presumable (since He is not a monster or a maniac) that He intends to do so.

If the Creator has made a planet full of suffering never to be relieved, of mourners never to be comforted, of love never to be satisfied, of grief never to be assuaged, innocent hope never to be exercised, aspiration never to be realized, evil never to be conquered, and doors of evil never to be either punished or purified—if, in a word, this whole scheme of things is a freak of a malevolent fancy of the accident of a blind force, then we are face to face with difficulties as much greater than the difficulty involved in the doctrine of immortality as madness is sadder than sanity, and despair blacker than blessedness.

There are many valuable reasons for a belief in everlasting life upon which this is not the place to enlarge. I suggest that the best of them is that we have not yet found any better way of accounting for the mystery of creation.

When we do, it may be time to drain from the veins of humanity the old and vigorous blood of eternal hope. Until then, why not give it all the volume and

nutrition that we can? We do as much for the circulation of the body. Is the heartbeat of the soul a minor matter.

## The Child Character.

The first character of right childhood is that it is modest. A well bred child does not think it can teach its parents, or that it knows every thing. It may think that its father and mother know every thing—perhaps that all grown-up people know every thing; very certainly it is sure that it does not. And it is always asking questions and wanting to know more. A second character of right childhood is to be faithful. Perceiving that its father knows best what is good for it, a noble child trusts him wholly gives him its hand, and will walk blindfolded with him if he bids it. A third character of right childhood is to be loving and generous. Give a little love to a child and you get a great deal back. It loves every thing near it when it is a right kind of a child; would always give the best it has away if you need it; does not lay plans for getting everything in the house for itself, and delights in helping people—you cannot please it so much as by giving it a chance of being useful in ever so little a way. And because of all these characters it is cheerful. Putting its trust in its father, it is careful for nothing; being full of love to every creature, it is always happy, whether in its play or its duty. So, then you have the child's character in these four things—humility, faith, charity, and cheerfulness.—Ruskin.

## Learning and Doing.

"We learn to do by doing." This is one of the accepted maxims of the modern educationist. But it is not merely the doing with hands or head that makes the whole duty of him who is seeking an education or the building of character. We must learn to love by loving. We must act toward, and do for, the unlovely one such things as we would do for those whom we account as lovely. Thinking love's thoughts, speaking love's words, doing love's deeds, is to make the unlovely lovable and to learn to love by loving.

## How To Be Miserable.

Think about yourself—about what you want, what you like, what respect people ought to pay you, what people think of you, and then to you nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch; you will make misery for yourself out of everything; you will be as wretched as you choose on earth, or in heaven either. In heaven either I say, for that proud, greedy, selfish, self-seeking spirit would never get into hell. It did turn heaven into hell for the self-devil himself. It was by pride, by seeking his own glory, that he fell from heaven to hell.—Kingsley.

## Sinful Nature Defined.

Sinful nature is one thing and a sinful nature is another; and we see no evidence in Scripture that the latter is ever eradicated completely while we are in the body. If we could see ourselves with God's eye, we could doubtless discover sinfulness lying beneath our most joyful moment of unassuming conduct, and the stain of our old and fallen nature so discolored our whiter actions as to convince us that we are not faultless in His presence.—Dr. Gordon.

## What Words Can Do.

The effect of our words for good or for evil, for encouragement or discouragement, cannot be over-estimated. "Lord, keep Thou the door of our lips." Says a writer: "No man has a prosperity so high or firm but two or three words can dishearten it. There is no calamity which words will not begin to redress."—Presbyterian Journal.

## To Cure Indigestion.

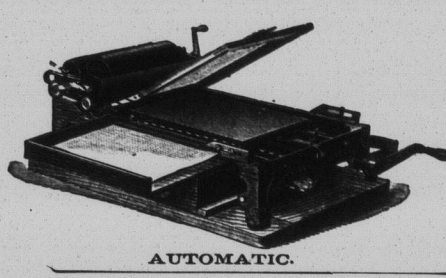
Who can describe the sufferings of the victim of chronic indigestion. Words are powerless. One thought fills the mind of the sufferer day and night. How shall I be cured? Unable to sleep, no pleasure in eating, the almost constant torture of pains in the stomach, like a burden. To such a sufferer Hawker's nerve and stomach tonic comes as a priceless blessing. This great remedy will cure the most obstinate cases of chronic indigestion. Its wonderful power as a stomach tonic and aid to digestion is without parallel. It does the work thoroughly and effects a complete cure. It is also a blood and flesh builder, and nerve and brain invigorator. Its use restores health and strength. It is sold by all druggists and dealers at 50 cts per bottle or six bottles for \$2.50 and is manufactured only by the Hawker Medicine Co. (Ld) St. John N. B. and New York City.

## Sophisticating of Sweet Oil.

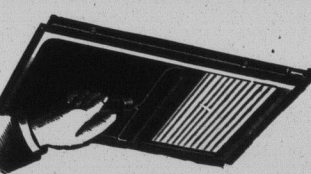
After the olive oil has been roughly but honestly made, it is carried across the yard to another room, the walls of which are lined with huge red terra cotta vessels kept carefully closed. Into one of these the oil is poured and left to settle, dross being heaped well up around the vessel to maintain a high temperature within. When the oil is finally poured off it is of a lovely golden color, as clear and transparent as water. But it is not destined to reach the public in this arduous state. Scarcely has it left the hands of the peasants before it is manipulated and adulterated to such an extent that even in Florence pure olive oil is almost unobtainable. Cotton oil, coals oil, etc., are mixed with it, rendering it absolutely hurtful to the consumer. The Italian government has offered prizes for the discovery of a method of exposing the adulteration. At present no more certain way has been found than that of Professor Bechi, a well-known Italian chemist. He treats the oil in question with nitrate of silver, and judges of adulteration by the resulting coloration.—Good Words.

If You Wish to be  
.....HAPPY  
...KEEP YOUR EYE...  
On This Space.

Modern  
Business  
Methods



Modern  
Business  
Facilities.



EDISON MIMEOGRAPH

The invention of MR. THOMAS A. EDISON, is an exponent of the best class of modern business facilities. It is a reproducing device of great capacity, simple construction and easy manipulation. It is arranged for reproducing either or both typewriting and handwriting. It will give 1500 copies of a typewritten letter or circular, all perfect. It will give 3000 copies of an autographic letter or circular, all fac-similes. It will do as much with a drawing, diagram or tabulated statement. The very name it bears is evidence that the Edison Mimeograph is first-class in design, manufacture and results. It occupies a prominent place in the offices of over 150,000 users to-day. Success is a great recommendation. Send for catalogue and samples of work to

Ira Cornwall, - Gen'l Agent,

Board of Trade Building, Canterbury St., St. John, N. B.

PROGRESS

ADS

PAY.

A Pure White Soap.

Made from vegetable oils it possesses all the qualities of the finest white Castile Soap.

The Best Soap for Toilet & Bath Purposes, it leaves the skin soft smooth and healthy.

Sea Foam

It Floats.

5 CTS. (TOILET SIZE) A CAKE.

ST. JOHN SOAP WORKS, ST. JOHN, N. B.

ASK YOUR DEALER FOR IMPERIAL SHADES.

MENZIE, TURNER & Co.,

Shade Manufacturers, to the Trade, Toronto.

Cheapest, Strongest, Best.

Sold by all reliable dealers.

KNIVES FORKS AND SPOONS

1847 ROGERS BROS.

ARE

GENUINE AND GUARANTEED

BY THE

MERIDEN BRITANNIA CO.

THE

LARGEST

SILVER PLATE MANUFACTURERS

IN THE WORLD.