

this fact adequately accounted for—at any rate so far as its subject matter is concerned. For although it abounds with vain conceits, childish and incredible stories, and absurd and far-fetched interpretations of Holy Scripture, mingled in glorious confusion and interspersed with not a few indecent allusions, yet it undoubtedly contains a mine of wisdom and learning and preserves the best thoughts of a succession of remarkable men eminent for their wisdom and piety.

But the light which is in it is fitful, now shining brightly and anon going out in utter darkness. It has in it no progressive teaching, no gradual revelation of knowledge. It is a mere medley, not a wise book, so much as a miscellaneous collection of wise utterances on a great variety of subjects, secular and religious. It has no climax, has no central or dominant truth, establishes no doctrine. It is like an Indian jungle, full of interminable and intricate pathways which lead to nowhere. It is utterly unlike the King's highway, the open path to Heaven, in which the wayfaring man though a fool, need not err.

May it not be that the Talmud has shared the neglect which the Jewish people themselves have experienced at the hands of the world? May it not be that the reference of the prophecy of Isaiah is to this very book? for it cannot be the inspired "wisdom" of which the prophet speaks when he says, "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." How remarkably have these words been fulfilled in the history of the Talmud! To the vast majority of Christians and even of Jews, it is "hidden," and its very memory faded.

Unlike the classic language, refined thought, sublime aspirations and poetic descriptions of inspired Scripture, which of themselves have attracted the admiration of the world, the Talmudic tongue has no charm of style, no symmetry of grammar, no elegance of thought and expression. Its language is coarse and vulgar, and its tone low. Its natural home would be the place of discourse of the people, not the Academies of the learned.

There is a Lexicon to the Talmud, entitled "Aruch," the signification of which is "set in order." It is attributed to a certain Rabbi Nathan, about whom, however, very little is known, the date at which he lived being uncertain, although tradition places him in the eleventh century as Ruler of the Synagogue at Rome.

When the late learned and devout Jew, Emmanuel Deutsch, of the British Museum, wrote his celebrated article on the Talmud, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, very great interest, not to say enthusiasm, was awakened. Many turned to the study of Hebrew with the intention of reading the Talmud for themselves, while general readers followed the eloquent writer with delight, as he unfolded to their gaze the mysterious book which revealed the mind and heart, the hopes and fears, the sins and sufferings, the goodness and nobleness of Israel for thirty generations of their troubled and chequered life. But the oracle soon became silent. The charm faded away when it was found that, notwithstanding its intrinsic merits and its historic interest, it described a life and expressed modes of thought peculiarly its own. It was found to have no message for the world, nothing in common with modern thought.

From so Cyclopean a work as the Talmud, a veritable *olla podrida* of philosophy, natural and mental, astronomy, law, medicine, and what not, it is almost impossible to make selections or quotations, as illustrations of the general character of the book. Some of the sentences and the maxims of venerable rabbis are veritable pearls and worthy of being rescued from the mass of puerilities in which they are imbedded. Thus the renowned Rabbi Hillel says, "Be not like servants serving God for hire." "In a doubtful matter abstain." "Consider three things and you will not transgress—an eye sees you, an ear hears you, and your acts are recorded." "Trust not in yourself till your death." "Judge another when thou art in his place." These and a vast number of similar aphorisms are surely words of the wise, likened by the "Preacher" to goads and nails fixed by masters of assemblies, and inasmuch as they were, as Renan says "Current coin of the Synagogue" can hardly fail of having produced a considerable moral effect upon the people at large.

The word Talmud simply means "doctrine." There are two Talmuds, one known as the Babylonian, the other as the Jerusalem. Of these, the former is held in the highest esteem, and is regarded as "The Talmud" *par excellence*. Each Talmud is divided into Mishna and Gemara, the former being the embodiment of the oral

traditions of the nation, the latter being a commentary, scholion or expansion of the former. The Mishna in both Talmuds is the same. The Gemaras differ. The Gemara of the Jerusalem Talmud was added in the second century that of the Babylonian in the fifth.

The Talmud, like the Tabernacle of old, has three veils, and to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon the hearts of Israel. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away. May the Lord hasten it in His time!—*Selected*.

It is probably owing chiefly to the Talmud that the Jews, as a nation are still outside the fold of Christ. How, then, can the book fail to attract the attention of the Christian solicited for the spiritual welfare of Israel? It is marvellous for how many hundred years this deep mine of Jewish learning was unexplored by the learned of other nations. Many learned men, indeed, from the days of Maimonides to those of the late Emmanuel Deutsch, have endeavoured to dispel the darkness of this mysterious book. But such authors as Wolf, and Bartolocci, Buxtorf, and Eisenmenger are not exactly as familiar, even among students, as household words. Not until after the dawn of the Reformation did the *literati* of Europe consider the waters of this venerable fountain of Jewish thought worth drinking. It was soon discovered, however, that they had been mistaken in neglecting the productions of the ancient Rabbis, and as the knowledge of Hebrew increased, a corresponding amount of attention was bestowed on Talmudic studies.

Our own branch of the missionary enterprise takes no mean position in this growth and development. A few years since the late Dr. Delitzsch communicated with every society devoted to Jewish missions, so as to secure such statistical information as he could command. He found that there were no less than 47 Protestant missionary societies engaged in Jewish missions, having 135 stations, 377 agents, and a total income of about £90,000; whilst as to direct results, he estimated that at least 100,000 Jesus have received Christian baptism during the present century.

W. F. M. S. Presentations.

A meeting of the W.F.M.S. was held recently in Chalmers Church Guelph. The chair was occupied by Mrs. Barclay, President of the Society. A very interesting letter was read from Mrs. Jeffrey, Secretary of clothing supplies, Toronto, respecting the supply of clothing for the Northwest Territories. Rev. Dr. Wardrop was then called upon to deliver an address, in which he reviewed the work of the society in Guelph since its organization and on behalf of the ladies of the auxiliary, presented Mrs. Jas. Watt, the much esteemed ex president, with a life membership certificate. Mrs. Watt made an earnest reply in which she expressed her thankfulness and appreciation of the honor which had been conferred on her. Mrs. Jas Ritchie was then presented with a handsome rocking chair, by the ladies, for her faithfulness and many acts of service in the past. Rev. R. J. M. Glassford replied on behalf of Mrs. Ritchie, thanking the ladies for their kindness in remembering her. After the conclusion of business about one hundred ladies enjoyed a social cup of tea, and one of the most delightful meetings of the auxiliary was brought to a close.

Rev. Dr. G. T. Dillard writes to the *Southern Presbyterian*:—"The territory which I have charge of covers Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. There are eight Sabbath School Missionaries of the Northern Presbyterian Church laboring in these States. Three in North Carolina, two in Virginia one in South Carolina, one in Georgia, and one in Florida. Of course these are colored Sabbath School Missionaries laboring for their people. The duty of these men is to organize Presbyterian Sabbath Schools and in that and all other lawful ways extend the blessed Zion with which they are associated. There are many other duties discharged by the Missionaries but the above is the most important and significant. From twelve to eighteen Sabbath Schools are organized annually by each of the Missionaries, the great majority of which are Presbyterian. In many instances these Schools grow into Presbyterian Churches—about two thirds or one half. Annually there is held a Conference composed of these Missionaries. In this Conference the successes, failures and the outlook are discussed and plans for the future suggested and thoroughly considered. These gatherings are greatly stimulating and encouraging to all the men. We have not entered Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and some other Southern States, but I think plans are maturing, looking forward to the taking of those States by our men for the Lord Jesus."