

## THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

It is only a few years ago that the Book of Daniel was one whose history the Christian believer found it very hard to defend. The unbelieving critics could not deny that the prophecies of the last six chapters described the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, and they incontinently declared that it could not possibly be any earlier than his time. They were sure the historical part of the book was also pure legend, and was proved so by its utter falseness to all the history of Babylon that had come down to us from Greek authors. Especially the story of the capture of the city by the Medes, and the death of the King Belshazzar, slain on the night of the capture, by Darius the Mede, was utterly irreconcilable with the account given by Greek writers of its capture by Cyrus the Persian, who took the King Nabonidus alive, at Borsippa. To reconcile these two stories seemed impossible.

But they were both true, and the tablets inscribed by the orders of Nabonidus and Cyrus themselves, in their own lifetimes, prove it. First there was found an inscription of Nabonidus, in which he prayed the gods to bless his son Belshazzar, of whom he spoke in a way which made it almost certain that the two were co-regents, as were Nebuchadnezzar and his father. That inscription gave the key to the mystery. Then followed within the last few years the discovery of another tablet, dated in the third year of Belshazzar, except that the name of the god Bel was replaced by his other name, Merodach. There were also discovered the histories of the campaign, from which we learned that when Cyrus came with his army, Belshazzar at first took the field, but that as the danger became more imminent, Belshazzar returned to the capital, and his father, Nabonidus, led the army. At last Nabonidus was conquered, and Cyrus's lieutenant, Gobryas, the Mede, captured the city "without fighting." The day on which the capture took place was just that day in the month sacred to Thammuz and Ishtar, in which a promiscuous and licentious feast would be most likely to be celebrated. This story explains everything, down to the reason why Daniel was offered the honor of being the "third ruler in the kingdom."

So throughout the whole historical part of Daniel difficulties vanish almost every-

where. It is shown to be impossible that a book so full of the color of the life and institutions of the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus could have been written three or four hundred years later, when the Persians, like the Babylonian Empire, had passed away, all swallowed up by the Greek conquest and civilization. It would have required a veritable archaeologist, such as never lived in the ancient days, to recover the spirit of the times, separated nearly as far from Epiphanes as we are from Chaucer, and put them in a realistic story. What might have been done then in the way of historical invention is seen in the Book of Judith, an evident romance, false and impossible in every part. Here, as everywhere, research, while it cannot be asked to substantiate the miracles, does all that is possible, in clearing away the objections of historical criticism, and proving the historical credibility of all that comes within the province of such criticism.—*Independent*.

## BACKBONE.

One is tempted to ask, "How is backbone to be formed in the rising generation of Christians if everything about the religious life is made so pleasant and easy? If sermons must be so light or so short as hardly to involve any effort of attention on the part of the hearer, and the rest of the service is to be a bright little concert? And if the other hours of the day given us spent at the gates of heaven are to be merely enlivened with 'Sunday talk?'"

We are in great danger of degenerating into molluscous Christians. Christian preachers and writers ought, I think, to be continually reminding their people of the place of *self-denial* in the Christian life. If we let down the tone of the church in this respect it may please God to give her a new chapter of the discipline of persecution, for that has been the great means usually employed for teaching her that "the cross" has to be borne in another sense than as an ornament on a lady's bosom. "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me.—*Dr G. W. Blaikie*.

Twenty-five years ago there was not one professed Christian in the Chinese province of Shantung; now there are three hundred places where Christians meet regularly on the Sabbath.