

Our Contributors.

CRIS SUGGESTIVE, OR SHALLOW, OR BOTH.

BY KNOXIAN

Once upon a time we heard a politician say on the eve of a general election, "What our party needs is a good cry." What the party really did need was a good policy and good men to work it out. Perhaps the gentleman in question knew that perfectly well, but in the absence of a good policy and high class leaders he thought a good "cry" might help the party.

Some people seem to think that a taking kind of a cry helps the Church. We doubt very much whether anything human except good organization, persistent prayer, good preaching, steady work and liberal, systematic giving helps the Church much in the end. But if we must have an occasional cry, let it be one that does not play into the hands of every scoffer in the land. The cry

BACK TO CHRIST

seems to be popular in some quarters at the present time. It is a painfully suggestive cry. One might well ask the preacher who raises it, where have you been all this time? What have you been preaching about? Did you wander from Christ? If so, you should hide your face in shame and come back humbly instead of shouting to all creation that you are coming back to Christ. A soldier who deserts his flag is not brought back with a band of music.

SPECIAL SERVICES

is a painfully suggestive term. It suggests that the people who hold them put on an occasional spurt to make up for past neglect of duty and of privilege. Undoubtedly the Bible rule is to do our best every day. The best rule for a preacher is "do your best every time." If any man does his best all the time as he is bound to do, he cannot make a special effort, for his best is always to the front. The very term special service implies that there are services which are *not* special. What kind of a service is the non-special? Is it one in which we are not under obligations to serve God in the best way we can?

The term

EVANGELISTIC SERVICES

is also painfully suggestive. There should be no services in a Presbyterian church that are not evangelistic. The word does not mean the repetition of certain invitations until they have lost their power. It means that all sermons should be saturated with the spirit of the gospel. The idea that the gospel can be preached only from certain texts is one of the shallowest that ever entered the hollowest of heads. Dr. Willis, than whom a better judge of preaching never stood on Canadian soil, used to say that a preacher who could not preach the gospel out of the Decalogue did not know his business. And the grand old principle never grew more eloquent than when he brought a sinner to Sinai and there showed him how much he needed Christ. To the man who says he is holding evangelistic services it is perfectly fair to ask this question—what kind of a service do you hold when your services are *not* evangelistic.

Far be it from us to say that occasional continuous services may not be a real good thing. The average man, if he goes to church twice on Sabbath and once a week to prayer meeting, has, so far as public worship is concerned, his mind in contact with spiritual truth only three or four hours out of every one hundred and sixty-eight. That certainly is not too long. We don't know many better things for a congregation than to have a real good man—Father Wardrope or some one of like spirit—holding cottage prayer meetings among the people all the time. A week's preaching by a man like Dr. J. K. Smith, or R. P. McKay, or many others we might name, is a real good thing. We don't know anything that men who have

heads as well as hearts would enjoy more, or profit more by than a series of rousing sermons by a strong preacher. We cannot have too much preaching—if it is preaching. Practically, however, the difficulty is that the men you want for a week are just the men you seldom can get for a day. We don't know of anything human that would do the Church more good than a revival of strong gospel preaching. In some way or another many of our people have got the idea that earnest evangelical religion is more or less associated with softness of the head. Many also have the idea that continuous meetings, or evangelistic meetings as they are called, are associated with doubtful characters—that bad practices, such as abusing absent ministers, often prevail; that unsound doctrine is often taught, that improper men whose bad standing is well known to the business community, are allowed to come to the front, and that reports wilfully exaggerated are too often given of the results. The best remedy for these and other abuses where they exist would be glorious gospel preaching by men whose standing needs no certificate. The men are in the church, but they have all plenty of work at home.

More preaching of the right kind would be a good thing in many places. But pray don't call it evangelistic or shrewd people will think your other preaching is *not* evangelistic. And don't talk too much about special services, or people who work hard at their business all the year round may think that when you are not at special services you are a loafer. Of all the loafers that infest humanity the clerical loafer is the most loathsome. As Professor Young used to say at the close of his lectures—more anon.

HISTORY, PROPHECY AND THE MONUMENTS.*

BY REV. W. G. HANNA, B.A.

Readers of the first volume of this work who have waited for the second will not be disappointed. Nor will they regret that the material has grown in the author's hands so as to require three volumes instead of two, as at first-proposed, for the information presented, is so valuable that no serious student of oriental history would wish any part omitted.

What was originally intended for a single chapter is here extended to two hundred and thirty-six pages, because it was found that the subject demanded fuller treatment. This part (Book VII) is an account of "The Inner Life and Movement," of which the events recorded in the Hebrew records are "the external expression." Marked attention is given to this aspect of Hebrew national and domestic life, because it shows "the conditions under which" the revelation of God came to the people. This affords the true historical perspective for the critical study of the Hebrew Scriptures and lays a reliable foundation for the work of reverent "Higher criticism," without which, its results would be in some measure tentative and uncertain. As the third volume is to deal with Hebrew literature, a special interest attaches to this account, as preparing the way for it.

Dr. McCurdy recognizes fully the fact that, it is the dominant moral issues in the fortunes of Israel that have given her so large a place in the thoughts of men, so he is careful to show the relation of these ethical questions to her domestic and national life.

The sociological aspect of Hebrew history is a more conspicuous feature in this work than in any other that has yet appeared on the same subject. This may be regarded as a new departure in the handling of oriental history, so far as English books are concerned. The chapters on "Elements and Character of Hebrew Society," and

* History, Prophecy, and the Monuments, or Israel and the Nations. By J. F. McCurdy, Ph.D., LL.D. Vol. II.—To the Fall of Nineveh. Cloth, large 8vo., 433 pages. Price \$3 net. London and New York: The Macmillan Company; Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.

"Society, Morals and Religion," open new fields of study, that promise rich returns.

The constitution of the Hebrew family, the different relations of its members to each other, parents, children and slaves, and the formative factors of domestic life are described at length. So we are shown the special features and social importance of the clan and the tribe at different stages of the national history.

In opposition to the notion that Moses made Israel a nation from a troop of slaves, the author holds that his work was mainly regulative and disciplinary. He presided over and directed the evolution of Hebrew society "by becoming himself a factor in the process within, not without the sphere of operation." How this was brought about is clearly pointed out.

The changing conditions of the Hebrew people are traced through the nomadic and semi-nomadic state, the time of the settlement in Canaan and the period of the monarchy. Nowhere else can a more enlightening presentation of the "inner life," as well as the outward circumstances of the people, be found than in these pages. Even careful readers will scarcely be prepared to learn the extent of social change from the period of the Judges to the time of the monarchy. These chapters furnish a new point of view for the interpretation of the historical books, a valuable aid to the exegete.

Ampler attention is given to social questions in the later periods of Hebrew history. It will be a surprise to some to learn how large a proportion of the Book of Job, the Psalms, Proverbs and Prophets concerns social questions. Here the necessary connection between social phenomena and the religion of Jehovah is properly emphasized. Such themes as "The Sociological basis of the Messianic conception," "The grounds uniting modern sociological problems with those of ancient Israel," and "The place of the Old Testament teaching in the evolution of human society," are discussed, while the suitability of the Old Testament as a guide for the solution of the problems that vex society to-day is clearly shown.

In the second half of the volume (Book VIII.) which deals with the relations of the Hebrews, Egyptians and Assyrians, the value of monumental contributions to history is fully seen.

The record of the extension of the Assyrian Empire under Sargon, through the campaigns in the west land, is largely from his own annals. It is fresh and interesting from every point of view, but especially to Bible readers because of the new conditions in which the kingdom of Judah was placed by the Assyrians. Cheyne, Sayce and others hold that Judah was invaded and devastated by Sargon after the siege of Ashdod, but Dr. McCurdy (p. 246) says "this view must be dismissed as untenable." Yet the campaign of Sargon induced a new policy in Judah in relation to Assyria, and religious innovations such as those introduced by Ahaz were the result of the overshadowing influence of Assyria.

Large space is given to the reign of Sennacherib. His career of invasion in the west land is described from his own annals. Here we have a good illustration of how the monuments supplement the sacred record. 2 Kings xviii. 13 tells us that Sennacherib came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. But from the monuments we learn that this was nothing short of the devastation of the kingdom outside of Jerusalem, north and northwest of the capital. Forty six walled cities with many smaller towns were taken by assault, and the number of prisoners deported to Assyria was seven times greater than those made captive after the surrender of Samaria. This was the heaviest blow Judah had suffered up to that time.

When we reflect on the great value of Assyrian literature, we cannot but regret with the author the ruthless destruction of the large Babylonian libraries at the sack of that city by Sennacherib.

But the day of reprisals for Babylonian

was near at hand, and the Assyrian empire harassed by Kimmerians, Cyges, Elamites and Scythians, fell at last before a combined attack of Medes and Babylonians, and strange to say, the means taken for the destruction of the city proved most efficacious for the preservation of the libraries. From these the records come to supplement and corroborate the testimony of the prophets of God who foretold the doom of this empire.

The stages in the dissolution of the Assyrian Empire are like the successive acts of a great tragedy, and the reading of these pages reminds one of the fall and decline of the Roman Empire.

The notes appended to this volume have the same scholarly quality as those in the first volume, and should be read with the text.

On some points there will be a difference of opinion, e.g., the late date of the sociological Psalms, the place of the destruction of Sennacherib's army, the supposed Isalanic authorship of Ps. xlvi. and the interpretation of some of the prophecies of Isaiah; but these are minor matters and do not mar the substantial value of the volume which must be regarded as one of the most noteworthy contributions to the knowledge of our day.

For popular use, this work needs a series of coloured maps and an analysis of the text on the edge of the page. The paper and presswork are of the highest quality; nothing better could be desired.

Uxbridge, Ont.

ST. JOHN'S FRENCH PRESBY- TERIAN CHURCH, MONTREAL.

MR. EDITOR,—About the beginning of October I was asked by our Board of French Evangelization to leave my missionary work in Montreal, pressing and interesting as it was, to go across the Atlantic to Great Britain and Ireland, to collect funds for the building of our new French Presbyterian church in Montreal. I did my utmost to prevent this break in so important a mission church as St. John's, where the opportunities of soul-saving are so great. It seemed to me wrong to abandon my pulpit and missionary field to walk for weeks and months the streets of London, Glasgow and other cities in quest of the paltry sum of \$5,000, which the trustees of St. John's Church require to pay their contractors. Never in the history of Quebec have the opportunities been so numerous and so grand for soul-saving by the proclamation of the simple gospel of salvation through the blood of Christ, than at the present day. A work of disintegration has set in among the French Canadians, fraught with most hopeful results, not only to individual souls, but for the whole country; and at the strategic point of time the missionary worker is taken away. He must leave one of the most important citadels of truth and cross the ocean to secure the arms and ammunition which the Christians of Canada have not yet furnished. I cannot believe that if the Christian people of Canada had known the facts they would have allowed us to be taken away from the work of preaching the gospel of salvation to perishing souls, to make of us financial agents. Our missionary force is small enough, and the peril to lost souls and to the country is too great, to allow of such a waste of time and energy.

I leave London to-morrow for Glasgow. If the responses to our appeals in Scotland and Ireland are not greater than they have been here, it will be months before we can return to our much beloved work.

Christians of Canada, will you remain deaf to the appeals of missionary hearts that are yearning for the needy souls they have left behind them? I cannot believe it. You will send to Rev. T. J. Taylor, Secretary of the Board of French Evangelization, Y.M.C.A., Montreal, the \$5,000 we need, that we may be called back speedily to the field of labor from which we have been taken.

CALVIN E. AMARON,
Pastor of St. John's Church, Montreal,
London, England, Nov. 12th, 1896.