

An Important Lesson Help for 1898.

"The Story of Jesus Christ." An interpretation. By Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Toronto: William Briggs. Price, \$2.00.

We have had more than enough of fictitious narratives designed to illustrate the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth. Many of these have taken unwarrantable, and often irreverent, liberties with the sacred narrative. This book is of an entirely different character. It is properly named by its writer, "An interpretation." It seeks by tender and reverent use of historic imagination to fill out the narrative given us in outline in Scripture. It is the result of profound study of the best literature on this subject. Above all, it is marked by spiritual insight and by poetic feeling and expression. It makes more real the sacred narrative and unfolds its inner meaning.

We may not always agree with the interpretation of the writer. The temptation of our Lord, we judge, is made too subjective in character. We prefer what we conceive to be the literal and objective narrative as given in the Gospels and repeated in Milton's "Paradise Regained." Only a woman of keenest sensibility could enter with such womanly sympathy into the contrasted experiences of the Blessed Virgin, and of the much sinning but much loving and forgiving woman who anointed the feet of our Lord in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Throughout the volume Christ's chivalric tenderness to woman is admirably set forth.

Our author portrays with much skill the growing hatred of the ruling classes of Judea towards the prophet of Nazareth. The mingling in Christ of the human and divine, and his utter loneliness and isolation, are beautifully expressed. The following paragraph on the sojourn of Jesus in the home of Bethany will illustrate the spirit and method of this book:

"He had been lovingly received into Martha's luxurious home. He had sat with Mary under the tents of green branches erected in the courts, or near the house, on festival week, and rested in the flickering of cool shadows, talking

quietly of the great thoughts with which his mind was throbbing, while the mistress of the house bustled to and fro ordering his upper room, or preparing for many guests. They became and remained his fast and affectionate friends. Every comfort that wealth and love could command their hospitality crowded upon him.

"The worn-out man, accustomed to a rude and simple lot, gratefully drew one long, sighing breath in the soft air of gentle surroundings. His exquisite delicacy of nature rested in it, like a bruised nerve long lacerated and neglected. Far beyond common woe or want as his personal emergency had gone, all human distinctions looked smaller than ever to him; and he had never rated them as of much consequence. But the educated sympathy of refinement he did not, for he could not, undervalue. He needed it too much just then. It came at the right time. Friendship, at its best and sanest, he tasted with a touching gratitude; the ripe and beautiful fruit he laid gently down when the hour came; no one heard him complain because he must relinquish it."

We heartily recommend this volume for study in comparison with the narrative of Scripture, best of all in some Harmony of the Gospels, as throwing much light upon the life of our Lord, which is the subject of study throughout Christendom of twenty millions of Sunday-school teachers and scholars in 1898. The numerous illustrations are by the foremost artists.

The New Year.

We greet the officers and teachers in our schools with earnest and loving wishes for a successful year. No one, perhaps, more fully knows their work, their joys and sorrows, their difficulties, their encouragements and discouragements, or takes a heartier interest in them, than ourselves. We are meeting them constantly and conferring with them as to their work and methods. It is one of the most encouraging signs of our time that vast numbers of our most gifted, intelligent, and fully consecrated people are devoted to the best endeavours to train our young people for Christ and to care for the lambs of the flock.

We take the earliest opportunity afforded by the season to address