

nothing. We should not, at least, assume that God is unknowable until we had ascertained how other men professed to have a knowledge of Him. But how should we answer those who said they agreed that God existed and was knowable, but that they had sufficient means of becoming acquainted with Him without any further aid than that which could be obtained by the exercise of our natural powers, in the same way as they acquired other knowledge. What was an answer to this? It was very simple. The knowledge of God and man, of our relations to the Most High, and to the Eternal world, without revelation, had been most wavering and uncertain. Recall for a moment the demand of Simonides for ever a greater space of time to consider his answer to the question. Consider the greatest Intellects of the ancient world, men whose depth and range of thought were nothing short of marvellous—Plato and Aristotle. There were probably none greater in any age. Yet how uncertain are their utterances on this awful subject! We are not even certain whether they believed in a personal God or not. Then consider, if even we are satisfied of the existence of an infinite intelligence to which our own is akin, there arise further questions which we cannot answer. What is the relation of man to God? He is his creature, but in what sense is he under the government of God? How shall he order his life so as to realize his own highest good, and perhaps please his Maker and Ruler? How poor are the answers of heathenism to these questions! We do not forget the great contributions of Greek philosophy to the ethical problems of humanity. But they are incomplete, and they furnish no adequate motive to the will. There is another awful question that has never been far from the human consciousness—the question of sin, how it affects men in relation to the world and to God—whether it can be forgiven, whether it can be removed, what are its consequences? In regard to questions like these, man, by himself, is merely groping in the dark. Surely it would be a rash statement to assert that no further information on such subjects is required, that no revelation is needed! Or again, consider the question of a future life. If a man dies, shall he live again? Let us grant that this idea has been made to play a part not altogether legitimate in Christian teaching. It has sometimes been almost assumed that religion was good only or chiefly because it guaranteed a future life of happiness. Such a statement is not borne out by the teaching of Jesus Christ., Godliness is profitable, is good, is blessed always and in all conditions and circumstances. Yet on the other hand, it surely cannot be denied that the question of a future life is one of great interest and importance. And how shall we answer it? Addison's Cato declares that Plato reasons well when he argues for the immortality of the soul: and we may well rejoice that this conviction is so deeply rooted in our human nature: yet we need fuller assurance, we long for greater certainty: and in doing so, we declare our need of revelation. Whether this has been granted will be our next inquiry.

REVIEWS.

The Potter's Wheel. By Ian Maclaren (Rev. J. Watson, D.D.) \$1.25. Toronto: Revell Co., 1897.

Readers of the "Bonnie Briar Bush" will need no commendation of the Rev. Dr. John Watson, whom they may have known only under the name of Ian Maclaren. The present volume is the best of its kind that has come from the author. It consists of a number of discourses, of which the first gives the title to the volume. Among the others are Departures in Life, Broken Homes, Trials of Faith—all of them striking in their way, and some of them very helpful—none entirely unworthy of the author of the charming Scotch stories.

The Monkey that would not Kill. By Henry Drummond. Price \$1. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. Toronto: Revell Co., 1898.

This little book has a two-fold, we may say a three-fold interest to ourselves. In the first place, it is the work of an accomplished and talented man, lost all too soon to the Church and the world. In the second place, it is a collection of a series of papers published in "Wee Willie Winkie," the publication so brilliantly conducted by the Countess of Aberdeen and Lady Marjorie Gordon; and in the third place, it is a delightful story of a wonderful monkey, which went through all kinds of adventures, sometimes behaving provokingly, but in the end proving a most prudent, benevolent, and far-seeing monkey, so deserving the destiny announced in the title—which does not mean that it would not kill anyone merely, but that it could not be killed. What wonderful things it did, and how in the end the monkey enriched its master—all this will be found in this pretty book, rendered more pretty by a number of illustrations by Mr. Louis Wain.

The Beth Book: By Sarah Grand. Price \$1. London: Heinemann. Toronto: 1897.

We cannot profess to be among the thick and thin admirers of the "Heavenly Twins," although we confess, as all do, the literary ability of the writer. Mrs. Sarah Grand, the author of that popular story, gives us here another which reminds us of her previous success. This is a "Study from the Life of a Woman of Genius," who may perhaps be taken as a representative of the author. At any rate, she reminds us a good deal of the "Heavenly Twins" in her publicity and perversity. We are not quite sure how far we ought to divulge Beth's later history: but we may perhaps tell that she made an early and unsuccessful marriage, and that she deserted her husband. For the complications which followed we might, perhaps, refer our readers to the book.

The Story of Jesus Christ: An Interpretation: By Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. Price \$2. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Toronto: Revell Co., 1897.

This is a "story," hardly a history, and it has the well-known merits of the well-known author of the "Gates Ajar." As that book has sold to the extent of 80,000 copies, it may be supposed to be beyond the reach of criticism. Those at least who appreciated the earlier book will find satisfaction in this one. It has the same excellences, and the same "defects of its qualities." We give a specimen from the account of the seeking for the Infant Jesus in Jerusalem: "It was no common child whom she had lost. If it had been Jonas, or John, or Enoch, vander there in Nazareth, or even James or Andrew—but

Jesus! White with anguish, Mary tottered by her husband's side. They searched the Temple for who knows how many times. How enormous the building! How endless the courts! How confusing the gates! Oh, the wearisome glitter of gold, of gems, of marble, of steps, of platforms—the tiresome crowds of dazzling costumes, the dreary chatter, the sickening scent of the butchered lambs, the red-handed priests!" One can see that the aim and tone of the book are altogether good, and it will appeal with force to large numbers of readers.

The Etude, published by Theo. Presser, 1708 Chestnut street, Philadelphia. Subscription \$1.50.

This excellent musical monthly keeps up an even standard, and each number contains several excellent selections. Taking the November number as an average one, we specially notice "Mazurka," by Eric Meyer Helmund, Op. 40, No. 2, well written and good study. A very pretty song, by Franz Reudel, "Ah, it is so Wonderful," and "Grandmother's Song," by G. Pierne, a quaint, old-fashioned air. The book is a good one for students. All music is well printed and carefully phrased and marked, and the reading matter is always interesting. The December number is, of course, a special one.

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN.

The visit of the wise men of the East, guided by a star to Christ, has been from the very first connected with the Epiphany season. Originally Epiphany meant the birthday of Christ, but when, in process of years, the Church resolved to celebrate the nativity on the 25th of December, she did not therefore resolve to abolish the Epiphany Festival. On the contrary, she retained it, only in order that she might pay it more exclusive honour. Henceforth, the star, without losing any of its lustre, gained and grew in glory; for the Epiphany became as the word properly implies, not so much the feast of our Lord's birth, as of His manifestation to the Gentiles. The visit of the Magi is one of the most beautiful incidents in the Gospel. It has a flavour of its own, for the narrative, differing in kind from any other, is abrupt and sudden, almost as the event itself must have been; and has quite an earthly romance, as well as a heavenly mysteriousness about it. For who are these strangers from the East, and what means this unexpected homage? Of what sort again is the star which guides them to the lowly dwelling of the Infant Saviour? Two Roman historians expressly record the fact that at this very period there prevailed throughout the East a traditional belief that some one was about to go forth from Judea who should have universal dominion. It was the fullness of time, the world was big with expectation, and the arrival of the Magi was not nearly such a matter of astonishment and perplexity to the inhabitants of the city, as an ordinary reader of the Gospel might be inclined to assume. The star was a meteor light, the extraordinary handiwork of Divine love and mercy, not the ordinary product of fiery vapour and the usual fires of the air. When the God of heaven and earth (who is Himself the bright and morning star), when he was born into the world, was it much that one of the highest angels—one of those who daily dip their robes of light in the glories of the Eternal Presence—should have glided unseen before the adoring eyes of those kings and sages of the East, bearing a wondrous lamp of light in his unsullied hands, and singing, yea, shouting, in his inmost heart, for joy? When they had opened their

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