

room for three: and the repartee, "that was the miracle of it," would have been ruled out of place. Some instances of erroneous punctuation will be noticed before we pass on to consider some passages where lack of punctuation (perhaps necessary) has proved fatal to some even careful readers.

The parable of the seed growing secretly, which is peculiar to the Gospel of S. Mark, (S. Mark iv. 26) will afford an instance of what is probably a case of wrong punctuation. The parable is that the seed is committed to the ground, and when that is done the sower does no more, he leaves it alone. The business of the sower and the world at large goes on the same as ever, and the seed grows without any further effort on the man's part. If the parable be read as punctuated the meaning is much obscured—"As if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should grow up he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself." This implies an anxious care on the part of the man to find out how the seed grows; he is represented as constantly breaking his sleep, that he may go and see how the growth is advancing. Now a slight alteration in the punctuation alters this and must commend itself at once to all. "As if he . . . should sleep and rise, night and day"; that is sleep by night, and rise by day, as is his usual custom, taking no further care for the growth of the seed; the reason of his confidence being given, "for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself," automatically without man's interference.

In another passage a strange controversy has arisen about the position of a comma, upon which we will not enter more than to say that there can be but little real doubt that the true punctuation of the passage in question is as follows: "This man having offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down." The "one sacrifice for sins for ever" is that sacrifice the efficiency and application of which lasts on to the end, till all need of atonement shall have passed away. Some copies have the comma after "sins," making it "for ever sat down." The passage occurs in the Epistle for Good Friday in the Prayer Book. In modern Cambridge editions of the Prayer Book it is properly printed; in those with the Oxford imprint the error has not been corrected, and it is advisable to alter it with a pen and ink lest readers should be led astray.

It is hoped that before these papers come to an end a list of passages (if it be thought well and useful) may be given in the order of books of the Bible of mistakes to be avoided, so that now only two more instances of erroneous punctuation will be given as speci-

mens. In II Kings viii. 13 the comma after *what* is clearly a mistake and destroys the point of question and answer. Instead of "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" read the passage thus, "But what is thy servant, a dog, that he should do this great thing?" that is, "what am I, servant as I am, that I should do this?" Then Elisha answers in effect, "Dog though you are, the Lord destines you to be king."

Next, in Acts xxii. 6, the comma should be struck out after *noon* and placed after *Damascus*: "Was come nigh unto Damascus, about noon suddenly there shone from Heaven a great light:" though it was *noon* the glory of an Eastern Sun was paled before the brilliancy of the heavenly light.

We will now furnish some instances of texts where the general omission of any punctuation has caused a false meaning to be attached to the passage. Sometimes indeed the absence of stops is almost necessitated by the grammatical construction of the sentence, and in such cases a little previous care is necessary to prevent mistakes being incurred. For example, the unprepared reader will probably be perplexed by the commencement of the twenty fourth chapter of the Book of Job: "Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know Him not see His days?" Now at first there is some doubt as to whether the negation *not* belongs to *know*, or *see*. Is the meaning "Why do they, that know not God, see His days?" or "Why do not they, that know Him, see His days?" Directly the two are placed thus in contrast it is seen that the latter is the true meaning. If therefore the reader had (as we must insist on) done what he should, viz., read the lesson over beforehand, there would have been no hesitancy. Perhaps the passage might be punctuated with pen and ink as follows, and then there would be no mistake, if the reader were unprepared: "Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they, that know Him, not see His days?"

The next instance is one which perhaps will affect the clergy very much more than the laity. It is one which has this peculiarity that the printers of the Prayer Book have introduced a stop in the passage which has made almost every clergyman every Sunday make a mistake in reading. In reading the Second Commandment a pause should be made after the word *generation*; the words "unto the third and fourth generation" should be read as in a parenthesis. The comma placed after *children* in the Prayer Book has confused matters a great deal, and it seems to be due to a misprint in the Great Prayer Book of 1636 in which all the alter-