

"Living epistles, known and read of all men," is the pithy phrase which describes, as in a single strong picture, what the child of God should be to his own generation. Whenever one who is earnestly striving after a deeper intimacy with Christ, a more entire consecration of body, soul and spirit to that service which is perfect freedom, becomes aware that he or she is antagonizing friends rather than winning them, is growing irritable in the family and, therefore, showing a wrong example to childhood, it is time to see whether the piety has not, needlessly, a seamy side.

An autobiography, recently published, shows in what appears to be an almost unconscious revelation the effect on a boy of an unhappy religious ideal on the part of his elders. One of these, an aunt, concerning whose entire singleness of aim and devoted piety there cannot be a doubt, so misunderstood the sensitive little fellow, and so constantly snubbed him, that after the interval of a lifetime, in his deliberate judgment, the man grown old sets down his recollections thus:

"The hours after five o'clock in my much-longed-for, eagerly-counted holidays were now absolute purgatory. Once landed at the rectory (where with his mother the boy daily dined) I was generally left in a dark room till dinner at seven o'clock, for candles were never allowed in the winter in the room where I was left alone. After dinner I was never permitted to amuse myself or to do anything, except occasionally to net. If I spoke, Aunt Esther would say with a satirical smile, 'As if you ever could say anything worth hearing, as if it was ever possible that anyone could want to hear what you have to say.' If I took up a book I was told instantly to put it down again; it was 'disrespect to my uncle.' If I murmured, Aunt Esther, whose temper was absolutely unexcitable, quelled it by her icy rigidity. Thus, gradually, I grew into the habit of absolute silence at the rectory, a habit which it took me years to break through and I often still suffer from the want of self-confidence engendered by reproaches and taunts which never ceased. For a day, for a week, for a year, they would have been nothing, but for always, with no escape but my own death, or that of my tormentor!"

Such a presentation of childish misery, acute and long enduring, caused by the mistaken and repressive discipline of a good woman, leads to serious thought. In our day juvenile training is less rigorous than formerly, discipline, indeed, is very much relaxed, the pendulum having swung in the other direction, but there may be among the women who read this paper some who need to be reminded not to let their good be evil spoken of, not to provoke children, or others dependent on their words for home sunshine, to wrath or to sorrow by displaying religion which has a seamy side.

If there is the seamy side, why not wear it within, ourselves bearing the fret and friction of our short temper, our folly, our errors, our regretted impulses, but never inflicting the results of these on the household or on our companions in society. Enter into thy closet and shut thy door, is a good rule for the Christian; there, in the secret of the Master's presence, confessing, repenting, gaining courage and strength to press on, with a light on the face and love in the speech and gentleness in every act.

GOSPEL LIGHT IN ITALY.

The Rev. John R. McDougall, of Florence, Italy, says: "At last, the Italians seem awake to their deplorable need of gospel light and truth, and are asking these at our hands, far beyond our power of supply, though we are doing our very utmost to send teachers of the Book to mountain and plain, borough and hamlet. After so many disappointments these forty years as to such a general movement, it has made my old heart young again, and rebuked any lurking fear that Italy had sinned away its day of grace, to know that during 1896 no fewer than 923 persons were brought into closest fellowship with the evangelical church of Italy, of whom 302 entered into full communion, while the other 621 are being instructed in the catechumen classes." This is encouraging news, and should call forth aid in the work that would prove inspiring to the workers.

LOOKS INTO BOOKS.

THE STORY OF JESUS CHRIST." By Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. Cloth, profusely illustrated, price \$2.00 Boston, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

The author in this work has approached a very difficult subject and yet one which she was eminently qualified to undertake, and which on perusal gives evidence of deep study and careful thought. The plan and object of the book cannot better be described than by the following quotations from the preface.

"This book is not theology or criticism, nor is it biography. It is neither history, controversy, nor a sermon. It makes none of the claims, it assumes none of the pretensions of any of these. It is not a study of Jewish life or Oriental customs. It is not a hand-book of Palestinian travel, nor a map of Galilean and Judean geography. It is not a creed; it speaks for no sect, it pleads for no doctrine.

"It is a narrative, and will be received as such by those who understand the laws of narrative expression. Beautiful romances have been written upon the subject which these pages venture to approach; but this is not fiction. The great historical facts that revealed the Founder of Christianity to us have been carefully considered. No important departure from the outlines of His only authorized biography has beguiled the pen which has here sought to portray the Great Story with loving docility. . . . The writer of this narrative is not unaware of the differences among New Testament critics when she chooses between them such aspects of many events or conditions as seem to her best for the purposes of this book. The life of Christ was lived to inspire, not to confuse. Little things are restless; the great repose. Scholars are tenacious of detail, for they hold the accuracy in their keeping. But Christian scholars are generous in feeling, for they hold the treasures of their faith in trust. They may contend about the unimportant. On the essential they will agree. . . . Modern interrogation has raised many queries with which no student of this theme can be unfamiliar, but on which it is not the mind of this book to dwell.

"It is the fashion of our times to trouble one's self about the supernatural; as if (for ought we know to the contrary) the supernatural might not be the most natural of all things! It is the intellectual mode, and Christian scholarship has not altogether escaped it, apologetically to investigate what are called miracles.

"There is not, there never was, there never may be, a miracle as strange as the life of Jesus the Christ. He was the miracle. Explain Him. There will be no difficulty with any lesser wonder."

THE NEW TESTAMENT. With two hundred illustrations of Bible Scenes and Sites, chiefly from Photographs by Bonfils, Thevoz, Mason, Good and others. New York, Thomas Nelson and Sons. Toronto, The Copp, Clark Co., Limited.

No better prize book could be had, and teachers, pastors, and parents will be glad to find something which aside from its intrinsic worth as a volume, is also a pretty souvenir, or memorial of study. The help to young readers of the sacred story, which good and trustworthy illustrations afford, should not be forgotten by those who prize the book solely for its divine content. The eye reaching the substance of things to be seen, discloses to the heart often the very essence of the spiritual and unseen. By whatever ways the truth finds a child most surely, it is best to try them. The illustrated Testament is a happy effort in this direction.

WHAT A YOUNG MAN OUGHT TO KNOW. By Sylvanus Stall, D.D. Vir Publishing Co., Hale Building, Phila. Price, \$1.00.

This is the second volume in a manly, but pure and invaluable series of books adapted to boys and men of various ages. In these pages the author in a plain, practical and most satisfactory manner answers the mysterious problems which perplex the mind of every young man. Dr. Stall's books on these delicate but important personal questions differ from anything ever before attempted in English. The information, suited to persons of different ages, is in separate volumes. The author thoroughly understands of what he writes and to whom he writes. The chapters on "Evils to be shunned and consequences to be dreaded" disclose the dire consequences which attend vice in a manner nowhere else found and in language so intelligible to the ordinary reader. The wide dissemination of such information as this book contains will save multitudes of men from paths of vice and ruin.

POEMS. Collected by Edmund Clarence Stedman. Cloth. Price \$1.50. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

This charming collection of poems appear now for the first time in book form, and will doubtless meet with ready sale as a holiday gift. There is no truer poet in America than Mr. Stedman. We have many writers of verse, many rhymesters with true poetic feeling, and no end of magazine poets, but Stedman belongs to none