

## The Unknown Realms of Scripture.

BY LORA S. LA MANCE.

We were a party of six, all Sunday-school teachers, all supposed scriptural experts. One of our number was a retired American Missionary Association worker, and another one had been preparing for the foreign mission field when her health failed her. The five of us accepted the invitation of the sixth, our hostess, to attend a colored revival meeting near by.

We were the only white people in the crowded church. All about us were dusky faces; all around us the mellow negro voices rang out in characteristic negro revival songs. The words were trivial, the choruses but disjointed bits of sentences, but the melody was intoxicating to the senses. Tho untuned, what voices! Untrained, without rule, yet with a strange rhythm and passionate fire that stirred one's pulses as never operatic aria could.

Our dark-skinned brethren were of the Christian religion; therefore, they were nearer to us than heathen. Nevertheless, between us and them rolled a great gulf. They were illiterate, emotional, babes in the Gospel. They had never heard of the higher criticism, had never studied Barnes or Adam Clarke, and were not afraid of De Wette or Renan. So we sat there with the patronizing air that human beings are apt to assume when thrown in contact with mortals less wise than themselves.

Brother Jonah Watkins, a white-wooled, bent-backed man of seventy, was called upon to pray. He responded, in nowise overawed by our superior presence. He prayed as tho his lips had indeed been touched by alive coal from God's own altar.

"O Lord," he prayed, "Thou knowest dis people. Here we are befo' de, down on our marrer-bones in de lowlands of sorrow. Raise us up, deah Lord, an' stan' us up upon our feet upon de mountain tops of glory. An' de sinnahs of dis congregation, deah Lord, smite 'em wid de hammah of Jeremiah!"

I heard no more. "The hammer of Jeremiah"—what was it? I had read the prophet Jeremiah through and through, with the commentaries and Bible dictionaries open at every page, but never a syllable had I caught about Jeremiah's hammer. What did this bent-backed colored man know about Jeremiah that the wise teachers of the law had overlooked? The question was broached on the homeward walk. Our party had all been struck with the expression, but not one of us six Sunday-school teachers had the remotest idea of what Jeremiah's hammer might be. The next day six men and women read their Bibles, and each of the six began at the first verse of the first chapter of Jeremiah. One by one, as we reached the twenty-ninth verse of the twenty-third chapter, we found what we were after.

"Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jeremiah's hammer was God's Word, that was able to break down the flinty resistance of the indifferent soul. Could Scripture reference have been more applicable? And the wonder of all was this low-born son of toil, spelling his texts out word by word, should have found the kernel of the meat, while others, with every help at hand, passed over it.

Then our retired missionary confessed that in one of her meetings a poor, illiterate soul had quoted the Bible's promise that God should be "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," and how shame and confusion had covered her that she could remember no such promise, and how she searched her Bible until she indeed found it, word for word as it had been given. After that confession we began to ask each other: "Are others as ignorant? Do they read the Bible with as unseeing eyes? And if so, why is it?"

One of our number who had read the sacred book through by course some fifty times during her life, now read it again from cover to cover. This time she was searching for the blind or hidden texts. Whenever she found a text or even a phrase that had an unfamiliar ring, or that she could not readily have assigned to its proper book, had not the Bible been open to the exact spot, she wrote it carefully down. The result was astonishing, yes, humiliating; for the number of these texts was not only large, but some of them this patient searcher would not have

recognized as Scripture had she read the words elsewhere.

The texts were tried on other people. Here, for instance, are a score of sample texts. How many Shakespearean scholars would fail to assign a quotation from the master doct to its proper play? How many church-members and Sunday-school teachers can write after each of these texts the name of the books in which it is found? We ask you to take pencil and paper and try it.

"The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture."

"Their faces shall sup up at the east wind."

"And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God. Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same, exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it to him."

"With the men of the common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads."

"In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine."

"The Lord hath opened his armory, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation."

"They have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar. Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall, there shall be an overflowing shower, and ye, O great hailstones shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it."

"Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them."

"Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? Or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?"

"The people that were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness."

"Woe to the bloody city. I will even make the pile for fire great. Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed."

"Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not."

"The people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary."

"Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these."

"Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them!"

"Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid?"

"And all of the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish."

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor."

"They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or ah sister! They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

"They will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them."

Here are some peculiar phrases, striking enough to fix themselves in any one's memory. Yet not one so-called Bible student in twenty can place them, and not one in ten even recognizes them as scriptural expressions:—"There is no discharge in that war." "The woman whose heart is snared and nets." "Servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants." "Money answereth all things." "A bird of the air." "Gold rings set with the beryl." "Love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave." "A Hebrew or a Hebrewess." "Old cast cloaths and old rotten rags." "The poor of the people that had nothing." "She came down wonderfully." "Chalkstones that are beaten in sunder." "The sieve of vanity." "Battles of shaking." "A wild bull in a net." "Sweet cane from a far country." "The cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother." "Prisoners of hope."

Our Bible students rarely miss or mistake any portion of the early or historical portion of the Bible. They are thoroughly grounded in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They can rarely be caught on an obscure passage in Chronicles, Ezra or Nehemiah. Job, Psalms and Proverbs are familiar ground to them. They begin to stumble in Ecclesiastes and Songs of Solomon, and make here and there a mistake in Isaiah and Daniel. It is in Jeremiah where real and surprising ignorance begins to be displayed. Lamentations, Ezekiel and the twelve minor prophets are as full of pitfalls for the average student. The New Testament the real Bible student is invariably well grounded in. The lesson is plain. As Christians we either neglect the prophetic part of the Old Testament, or else we read it perfunctorily, as a matter of duty, our eyes blind to its beauties. Ought we so to honor one portion of the Scripture above another?—*The Independent.*