

THE BOOK OF "EXODUS."

[A Paper read by Mr. H. L. Putnam before the St. George's Church, Y.M.A., Montreal.]

It is surely a profitable study for us, "the heirs of all the ages, in the foremost files of time," living in what we deem this golden age of human progress and human greatness, this nineteenth century, (with a capital N), of what we call the Christian era and whence we take the calm complacent gaze down the centuries to show ourselves how far we have come and how far behind, and below "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep." It is surely profitable, I say, to call to mind even for modesty's sake, the earthly grandeur, power, wisdom, and knowledge of that marvelous people, whose symbol is the pyramid, whose history stretches back so far into the dim past, and beside whose very ruins we pigmy giants of today stand aghast. What a mouldy grave-sound the name of Egypt has to us! How insignificant seems the tiny span of human life, when confronted with the abyss of time that marks its history. What a symbol of earthly greatness and earthly nothingness. We hardly know whether to sigh or smile at the mockery which time has made of all this human energy and genius.

We boast of our arts and sciences as though they had been born with us; while this old people in the morning of the world seem literally to have forgotten more than we can ever know. We boast of our public works and the marvels of modern engineering science, and yet it takes our best efforts to set up in our squares a few of the monoliths that lie buried in Egyptian sands, and we gaze with awe and wonder at the stupendous ruins of a civilization almost incredible.

We speak of the restless activity and wonderful combinations of modern commerce, and we forget that there has ebbed and flowed on those old shores a wealth of commerce in proportion infinitely greater than ours.

Surely as we ponder these things we must see that the elements of earthly greatness "are of such stuff as dreams are made of."

What ages have come and gone since this was a people! What things that are counted mighty have been done! What discoveries that thrilled the world have been made! What songs have been sung! What words have been spoken! And yet outside the simple words of Jesus the Christ the world is no nearer home and rest to-day than when the Hebrews toiled, and sweated, and groaned and died, beside their hateful task.

In this short paper we will not wait to talk about the disputed chronology of the book of Exodus. It does not seem to have been a profitable study for the learned doctors who have wasted so much time and labor upon it. In view of the retrospect we have just taken, life seems all too short to waste in figuring up how the children of Israel could have grown to the amazing numbers recorded, during the time of their sojourn in Egypt. What interests me more in a brief review of this wonderful book is the spiritual truth it has for us, "on whom the ends of the world have come." If there is no message straight to my soul and yours from this book of Exodus, I don't know that I feel any particular interest in the emancipation from slavery and the wandering in the desert of a rude rough ignorant people whose chief characteristics seem to have been stupidity and an inveterate tendency towards idolatry.

The picture I see in this book is spiritual life in its marvelous reality, surrounded, threatened, pursued and driven into the wilderness by the unreal realities of this mortal life.

No doubt these brickfields and those taskmasters were terribly real to the needy Hebrew in the land of Goshen, who felt that he ought to be a free man, and that he was a child of

God; but the reality to you and me to-day is that we are in danger of losing our spiritual birth-right toiling in the brickfields of a material existence.

No doubt the sound of Pharaoh's chariots, and the lapping of the waves of the red sea were terrible realities to the poor hunted Hebrews, as they stood hemmed in by their enemies. But the reality for you and me to-day is that we hear behind us the tramp of the world, the flesh and the devil, and unless we can see the way of God's escape, we feel that we shall perish.

What a panorama of life this book is, and on how grand a canvas! The contest of material, worldly power with spiritual life. A people in the world and yet not of the world. We might write as a heading for this book these words, written so long after, "The things that are seen are temporal, and the things that are unseen are eternal." And so closely woven into the web of spiritual truth are the teachings of this book, that we easily lose the sense of time that elapsed between the writing of this and the New Testament. As the mysterious Nile flows once ever to the sea, and is replenished from the sea; its stream the same and yet always different—so flows the tide of what we call life. Changeless, except for the accidents of time and place. To us to-day comes the same call that came to Moses:

"When he lay in the night by his flock,

"On the starlit Arabian waste;

Happy they who

"Can rise and obey

"The beck of the spirit like him.

In one sense to each of us personally there is only one man in all the universe.

(To be Continued)

IS CHRISTIANITY A FAILURE?

Our pessimists just now seem exceedingly active in their desire to expose the worthlessness of everything. One day we find them labouring hard to prove that marriage is a failure; on another they are denouncing the institutions under which they live and flourish; on another it is our educational policy that is at fault; and now, we are told, they are anxious to prove the failure of Christianity. It is difficult to see in what way society would gain if they succeeded in their endeavour; nor do we understand what they propose to substitute for the religion which they so complacently assume to be 'played out.' There appears to be no form of belief to which these otherwise critics do not take exception; and if they intend that every man shall be a law to himself and his own creed-maker, they open up a vista of moral and social disorganization which we cannot contemplate without a shudder.

Is Christianity a failure? The question is not a new one; it has been asked repeatedly since the days of St. Paul, and repeatedly answered. It is now revived, we believe, in connection with the recent terrible outrages in Whitechapel; for whenever there is a recrudescence of crime—an outbreak of exceptional and appalling vice—the unbeliever immediately comes forward triumphantly with the assumption that because it has not been prevented by Christianity, therefore Christianity is a failure. It would be as wise to argue that because God's blessed sunshine does not prevent the awful calamity of a volcanic eruption, therefore the sunshine is a failure! At the worst, it can prove nothing more than that our systems or methods of teaching Christianity are at fault. It cannot be pretended, even by the most unscrupulous and malignant reviler of Christ's religion, that it offers a premium for the commission of crime, that it condones or encourages vice, that it deals easily with the sinner, or forbears to condemn his sin and to formulate a tremendous punishment for it. We may assume, therefore, *a priori*, that so far as Christianity is

concerned, it would exercise at least a deterrent influence on the offender if he could be brought under its influence; and that the only failure lies in the inability of Christian effort to cultivate the whole of the vast field that is waiting for the plough and the hand of the sower.

The Christian, we need hardly say, knows in his heart of hearts that Christianity is *not* a failure. He knows its dealings with his own soul; and he knows that to all believers it brings strength, hope, consolation, and patience. But to the agnostic it may be as well to point out that *he himself* is a living demonstration of its success; that his professed anxiety for the improvement of the social condition of the masses and the prevention of crime is a tribute to the influence of Christianity. Probably in no period of the world's history was society so utterly corrupt as in the palmy days of Imperial Rome. The Latin poets and historians allude to horrors which surpass even the Whitechapel atrocities. They indicate the existence of a gulf between the patrician and the pauper wider and deeper than perhaps has ever since existed. And, at the same time, they show that no effort was made to bridge over this gulf; that its existence was accepted as an ordinary evil; and that though vice might be punished when it endangered the Imperial government, society regarded it, on the whole, with tranquil indifference. The poor perished in their poverty and the sinner in his sin, and none extended a helping hand.

That all this is changed, that thousands of zealous and unselfish workers are toiling to improve the position of the poor, and to let the light of heaven into the world's dark places—to what is it due but to Christianity? If the ethical standard of the present age be so much higher than that of Rome or Greece, or medieval Europe, it is because the teaching of Christ has borne abundant fruit in the generations, and elevated the tone of human thought and feeling. To talk of Christianity as a failure is to be blind, therefore, to the facts around us, to the lessons of history, to the conclusions of experience. Modern philanthropy—every hospital, every almshouse, every agency that aims at the relief or extinction of pauperism or the alleviation of suffering and distress—is a testimony to the expansion of Christian principle. The truth is, that Christianity is in the air, like the breath of flowers or the glory of the sun; and all humanity is the better for it—yes, even those who deny its Divine origin, and complacently assume that it is 'a failure.'

We are glancing here at but one aspect of the question. It is, however, an interesting aspect, on which a good deal might be said. To our readers the question can cause no anxiety or unrest; they solved the problem in their souls with great bliss and peace long ago, but as it is frequently put forward in the public journals, for the sake of the young and thoughtless we shall do well to be prepared to answer it fully from every point of view, knowing, as we do, that the fuller the investigation the more complete will be the reply.—*W. H. D. A.—in Church Bells.*

THE Ven. Charles F. Doucet, Archdeacon of Surrey, in the diocese of Jamaica, has been elected Assistant Bishop by the Synod of that Diocese. He will be consecrated in England.

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