

THE ROSETTA STONE.

It is often taken for granted that everybody knows all about the Rosetta Stone. Well, perhaps the grown folks do, but I am writing for the boys and girls, who, I feel sure, are not ashamed to ask the meaning of what they do not understand. Nobody knows everything; nor is there any disgrace in not knowing what one has had no opportunity of learning; but there is both sin and shame in remaining ignorant in order to appear wise. Now, let me tell you in what the great value of the Rosetta Stone consists, so that you may the better understand its use. The art of writing was very early known to the Egyptians, and they had books before most other nations. This is proved by the writing implements found on monuments that are supposed to have existed before Moses was born. Clement of Alexandria, who lived about seventeen centuries ago, states that in his day there were still extant forty-two sacred books of the Egyptians. They were all written in the old Egyptian characters that we call hieroglyphics, and most of them have been lost, while the manner of reading those strange characters had been entirely forgotten, so that the fragments that remained seemed of little value.

So it was, also, in regard to the inscriptions on the monuments and tombs and coffins—nobody could read them, or tell anything of their history; not even whether the hieroglyphics were mere symbols; they were a real written language applied to the things of every-day life. Scholars all over Europe had been puzzling over the problem for two or three years, trying to find out some way of reading those wonderful hieroglyphics; but for a long time with very little success. At length a Frenchman, named Quatremere, found out that the Coptic was the language of the ancient Egyptians, but the books that have come down to our times are mostly written in the Greek characters, with the addition of seven others from the demotic, or common language of the country. This was, however, one step toward learning how to decipher the mysterious writing on the tombs and monuments; and the famous expedition of Napoleon to Egypt furnished a second. The savants, or learned men, who accompanied his army, brought home exact copies of many inscriptions from Egyptian monuments; and, after that, the country was thrown open to the investigation of the learned, and the various museums of Europe began to be enriched with the spoil taken from the banks of the Nile. Then, with new zeal and hope, scholars applied themselves to the task of deciphering these strange, mystifying symbols. But alas! the key was still wanting. If they had only an authentic translation of just one ancient Egyptian inscription into any language known to modern scholars, they might, by analogy, have continued to work out the others. And this is precisely what the Rosetta Stone came forth from its grave to furnish.

In August, 1789, Mons. Bouchard, a French officer of artillery, in digging the foundation of a redoubt at Rosetta, which stands at the mouth of the western branch of the Nile, found the Rosetta Stone. It is inscribed with various characters, which proved to be in three different languages—that is, the one legend is inscribed three times, once in the old hieroglyphics, again in demotic characters, and the third time in Greek.

This stone, which is now held as a priceless treasure in the British Museum, is of a kind known by the learned as black compact basalt. It is four feet long by three feet broad, with one corner broken off, so that no one of the inscriptions was entire, although the larger part of all remained. Scholars saw at once its importance as a probable key to the reading of hieroglyphics; and the Antiquarian Society caused the inscriptions to be engraved and copies generally circulated among the learned men of Europe. Their attention was, of course, first turned to the Greek, which was found to be a recognition of the royal honours conferred on Ptolemy Epiphanes by the Egyptian priesthood assembled at Memphis; and the concluding sentence directed that the decree should be engraven on a tablet of hard stone, in three ways—in the hieroglyphics, in demotic, or ordinary characters of the country, and in Greek. So with this key, coupled with an untold amount of study, the inscriptions on those old tombs and monuments have become intelligible, and we may now learn the names, ages, conditions, and frequently something of the history of these shrivelled old mummies that are exhumed and placed before us, after their burial for thousands of years.

This is what the Rosetta Stone has done, and can you wonder that it is so highly prized, or that the learned men who have so rejoiced in its discovery should take it for granted that everybody else has been engrossed with it, like themselves, and of course has learned all about it?

The Moabite Stone, another famous relic of ancient times, was found in the year 1868 by Mr. Klein, a missionary, travelling in the country of Moab. It was a thick slab of basalt, measuring about three feet five inches high, and one foot nine inches wide. The inscription upon it is the oldest existing writing in alphabetic characters, as it dates from about nine hundred years before Christ. It records the doings of Mesha, king of Moab, during the days of the Israelitish prophet Elisha, and of Jehoram and Jehoshaphat, kings of Judah and Israel, mentioned in the Bible in the third chapter of the second Book of Kings. A full translation of the writing is given on page 32 of the second volume of "Scribner's Monthly" magazine.—*St. Nicholas.*

"DIED POOR."

"It was a sad funeral to me," said the speaker; "the saddest I have attended for many years."

"That of Edmonson?"

"Yes."

"How did he die?"

"Poor—poor as poverty. His life was one long struggle with the world, and at every disadvantage. Fortune mocked him all the while with golden promises that were destined never to know fulfilment."

"Yet he was patient and enduring," remarked one of the company.

"Patient as a Christian—enduring as a martyr," was answered. "Poor man! He was worthy of a better fate. He ought to have succeeded, for he deserved success."

"Did he not succeed?" questioned one who had spoken of his patience and endurance.

"No, sir. He died poor, just as I have stated. Nothing that he put his hand to ever succeeded. A strange fatality seemed to attend every enterprise."

"I was with him in his last moments," said the other, "and thought he died rich."

"No, he has left nothing behind," was the reply. "The heirs will have no concern as to the administration of his estate."

"He left a good name," said one, "and that is something."

"And a legacy of noble deeds that were done in the name of humanity," remarked another.

"And precious examples," said a third.

"Lessons of patience in suffering, of hope in adversity, of heavenly confidence when no sunbeams fell upon his bewildered path," was the testimony of another.

"And high truths, manly courage and heroic fortitude."

"Then he died rich," was the emphatic declaration.

"Richer than the millionaire who went to his long home on the same day, miserable in all but gold. A sad funeral, did you say? No, my friend, it was a triumphal procession. Not the burial of a human clod, but the ceremonies attendant on the translation of an angel. Did not succeed? Why, his whole life was a series of successes. In every conflict he came off the victor, and now the victor's crown is on his brow.—*Exchange.*

REASON AND FAITH.

"Reason and faith," says one of our old divines with the quaintness characteristic of his day, "resemble the two sons of the patriarch. Reason is the first-born, but faith inherits the blessing." The image is ingenious and the antithesis striking, but nevertheless the sentiment is far from just. It is hardly right to represent faith as younger than reason, the fact undoubtedly being that human beings trust and believe long before they reason or know. The truth is that both reason and faith are coeval with the nature of man, and were designed to dwell in his heart together. They are, and ever were, and in such creatures as ourselves must be, reciprocally complementary; neither can exclude the other. It is impossible to exercise an acceptable faith without reason for so exercising it—that is, without exercising reason while we exercise faith, as it is to apprehend by our reason, exclusive of faith, all the truths on which we are compelled daily to act, whether in relation to this world or the next. Neither is it right to represent either of them as failing of the promised heritage, except as both may fail alike by perversion from their true end, and deprivation of their genuine nature; for if to the faith of which the New Testament speaks so much, a peculiar blessing is promised, it is evident from that same volume that it is not a faith without reason, any more than a "faith without works" which is commended by the Author of Christianity. And this is sufficiently proved by the injunction, "to be ready to give a reason for the hope," and therefore for the faith, "which is in you."

If, therefore, we are to imitate the quaintness of the old divine on whose dictum we have been commenting, we should rather compare reason and faith to the two trusty spies, "faithful amongst the faithless," who confirmed each other's report of "that good land which flowed with milk and honey," and to both of whom the promise of a rich inheritance there was given, and in due time amply redeemed. Or rather, if we might be permitted to pursue the same vein a little further, and throw over our shoulder for a moment that mantle of allegory, which none but Bunyan could wear long and wear gracefully, we would represent reason and faith as twin-born—the one in form and feature the image of manly beauty, the other of feminine grace and loveliness, but to each of whom, alas, is allotted a sad privation. While the bright eyes of reason are full of piercing and restless intelligence, his ears are closed to sound; and while faith has an ear of exquisite delicacy, on her sightless orbs, as she lifts them toward heaven, the sunbeam plays in vain. Hand in hand, in mutual love, the brother and sister pursue their way through a world on which day breaks and night falls alternately. By day the eyes of reason are the guide of faith, and by night the ear of faith is the guide of reason.—*Henry Rogers.*

THE "Golden Rule" pleads for a less frequent use of the word "No." "It has often seemed to us that a little of this reserve in the use of the word 'No' would prove a benefit in many families. The veto power is greatly overworked in family government. Needless denials are almost as bad as harmful compliances. In some homes there is such a running fire of 'Noes' in answer alike to the prattling pleas of babyhood, and the earnest and often reasonable requests of youth, that we might think the chief office of parenthood is to deny its children. The habit springs from the perplexities of family government, and needless denials come to be the rule in the household, largely because it is the quickest and easiest way to settle matters. Let not parents be too sure of this. Nothing, according to our observation, has such a tendency to weaken just parental authority as an indiscriminate, and, therefore, often unjust, use of the veto power. The difference between yes and no is often the difference between happiness and wretchedness, just as truly in the case of children as that of their elders. And without relaxing in the least any needed restraint, or giving way the innocent inch that leads to the disastrous ell, we are sure there may wisely be more compliance and concessions in many homes."

THE fourth stanza of the poem, "Lead, Kindly Light," recently published by us, was not written by Cardinal Newman, the author of the three other stanzas. So a gentleman affirms in the New York "Evening Post," claiming to have a letter to that effect from the Cardinal under date of January 5th.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN ITEMS.

THE three large Jesuit schools in Paris have not only been evacuated, but their doors have been walled up by order of the Government.

THE curates of St. Margaret's, Liverpool, have all resigned, to go as missionaries to India, and Bishop Kyle has declined to license their successors, on the ground that the parish does not conform to the standards and usages of the Church of England.

REV. DR. JOHN HALL, speaking the other day in New York, said that in Dublin he was chaplain to a prison in which there were some eight hundred convicts. He had only the Presbyterians to look after, and there were only fifteen in the prison, and his congregation was constantly declining in numbers. It ran down to only eight. And he said it was a fact that in Ireland, where the Presbyterians were as one to eight of the population, the Presbyterian criminals are only as one to forty.

A PARIS correspondent writes: Step after step is being taken in the direction of the separation of Church and State. Episcopal stipends have been reduced to the figures of the Concordat, the crucifixes have been removed from the Paris schools, a Secular Education Bill has been sent up to the Senate, and educational diplomas are now to be gained without the necessity of an examination in religious subjects. The Supreme Council on Prisons is also to be remodelled like the Educational Council, to the exclusion of the Archbishop of Paris, the Chief Rabbi, and the President of the Protestant Consistory, hitherto *ex officio* members.

THE census office of the United States announces the following approximate distribution of the population of the country: Males, 25,520,542; females, 24,632,284; natives, 43,475,506; foreign born, 6,667,360; whites, 43,404,877; coloured, 6,577,151; Indians and half breeds not in tribal relations, on reservations under care of the Government, 65,122; Chinese, 103,463; other Asiatics, 255. The number of coloured persons to each hundred thousand whites is 15.153, against 14.528 in 1870. The number of females to every hundred thousand males is 96.519, against 97.801 in 1870. The number of foreign born inhabitants to every hundred thousand natives is 15.359, against 16.875 in 1870.

THE revival of Protestantism in France, if viewed in connection with its relations to Africa, has an added significance. Perhaps no one of the foreign powers is so active in developing the resources of its colonies as this Republic. By so doing the way is prepared for religious activities in the future. Their proposed railroad from Timbuctoo to the Atlantic coast is already as well assured as almost any project for internal improvements in Africa. In 1878 they had expended \$425,000 for artesian wells in Algeria, and much desert land by this means has been brought into use. It is also noteworthy that, up to 1862, 150,000 palms had been planted in the vicinity of these wells.

THE Universities of Oxford and Cambridge appear to be looking very sharply after their copyright interest in the revised New Testament which is about to be published. "The Record" recently printed a summary of the points of difference between the revised and the authorized versions; and "The Christian World," like the majority of the newspapers of the United Kingdom, religious and non-religious, borrowed more or less freely from "The Record" article, or from articles derived from that source. The solicitors to the Universities pronounce the summary to be an infringement of the copyright of the Universities, and have demanded an apology from the offenders for anticipating the publication of the volume.

A GRAND religious ceremony has lately been held at Nazareth to inaugurate a magnificent altar presented by the Emperor of Austria to the Monastery of the Holy Land. The Austrian Consular Agent was present, and the Imperial Chaplain, Von Hiersberg, assisted by a large number of priests, officiated. Three thousand persons of all creeds, including Mohammedans, attended the solemnity, which lasted four hours. The Austrian National Hymn was played on the organ, to the sound of all the church bells in the neighbourhood. The members of the different religious communities established in Nazareth and the children of the Girls' Orphanage were amongst the congregation. The ceremony is said to have made a deep impression on all present, and was the all-absorbing topic of Nazareth.—*London Review.*

THE spreading of Christianity in South Africa is largely due to the German Protestant Missions, who have for a long time been the chief pioneers of civilization among the Kaffirs, and have steadily been paving the way for British domination to the north, the east, and the west of the Cape. Letters from the Transvaal relate that twenty-two stations of the Berlin Missionary Society are threatened with destruction from the Boers. Bothshabelo, the head station, founded by the Rev. Mr. Me enski, has incurred the special displeasure of the Boers, on account of the favour with which it has been treated by the English authorities. Another reason assigned for the enmity of the Boers against the German missionaries is that the latter belong to the Lutheran Church, which is viewed with ill-will by the bigoted members of the Old Reformed Church, to which the Boers mostly belong.

THE Rev. Joseph Cook, of Boston, lately preached to a crowded audience in the Chalmers Territorial Church, West Port, Edinburgh. He gave as his reason for standing in that pulpit under the shadow of the gray Castle rock, near the spot where martyrs had suffered, and with the Greyfriars' Churchyard within the sound of his voice, that America viewed with intense interest the experiment inaugurated by Chalmers for reclaiming the lapsed masses of the population in large cities by means of aggressive Christianity as embodied in territorial churches. Mr. Cook, in the course of his sermon, spoke of the indebtedness of his country to the struggles of the Scottish people for their civil and religious liberties. In glowing language he urged his hearers to hold to the covenant, as in his opinion the high tide mark of civilization had been reached when in St. Margaret's Church at Westminster the National Covenant was signed.