

ANCIENT TROY AND BIBLICAL CRITICISM.

Dr. Schliemann, by his recovery and reconstruction of ancient Troy, has not only thrown a wonderful light upon ancient Greek life and literature; but has indirectly made an invaluable contribution to the science of criticism, vindicating it against those sceptical principles by which it has to so lamentable an extent been perverted. Dr. Schliemann's life is itself a romance, a wonderful illustration of the power of an enthusiastic desire to overcome impossibilities. He was equipped in a very remarkable way for the special work to which he has given his life. The results more than justify his expectations and amply reward his sacrifices. He has introduced a new epoch in the study of classical antiquity, and brought out of the darkness or the dimness of the past into clear light the long-forgotten ages of free historic Greece; has systematically and thoroughly excavated ancient Troy, demonstrating both the reality and the site of that ancient city beyond all reasonable question. The antiquities which he has unearthed carry us back to the later stone age of the Aryan race; he has proved that the first inhabitants, the builders of the first city, must have come across the Hellespont from Europe, being of Thracian descent, and has restored to our vision the ancient city of Priam, and proved the historic basis which underlies the Homeric poem.

The very existence of Homer had been called in question. His grand epic was declared to be a congeries of songs sung by wandering bards, and accidentally brought together in one volume. The historical veracity of the events related was impeached, and their contents reduced to shadowy legends. The tendency of this sceptical criticism was utterly to destroy all faith in ancient history. Dr. Schliemann's work has scattered their fine theories to the winds, and demonstrated the substantial verity of these ancient poems, showing us that they possess a veritable historic basis. Professor Sayce eloquently sets forth the nature of this remarkable vindication:

"Wolf and his followers had torn in pieces the body of Homer; the school of Niebuhr had criticized the legends of pre-literary Hellas until it had left none of them remaining; and the science of comparative mythology had determined that 'the tale of Troy divine,' like that of the beleaguering of the Cadmean Thebes, was but a form of the immemorial story how the battlements of the sky were stormed day after day by the bright powers of heaven. All this was announced in the name of 'culture' and of 'advanced scholarship.' Sober minds did not believe it; there were 'old fogies' who still clung firmly to the conviction that Homer and Troy were real facts, and whatever embellishments may have been added by the fancy of the poet or the colorings of tradition, that there was a groundwork of substantial truth for the story of Agamemnon and Helen, of Priam and Andromache. The persistent and practical labours of one man have in ten years worked a silent and complete revolution in our conceptions of Greek history. We no longer with Grote draw the line of the historical period of Greece at the sixth or seventh century, B.C., but we have been transported back to a period when the Phœnician influence was not yet well felt in the Ægean, and to that remote time when the great Hittite empire, with its capital at Carchemish, was contending on equal terms with Assyria and Egypt; an empire contemporary with the age of Ulysses. Thanks to the enthusiasm, the liberality, and the pertinacity of Dr. Schliemann,

'the heroes of the Iliad and Odyssey have become to us men of flesh and blood, whom we can watch in almost every act of their daily life, and even determine their nature and the capacity of their skulls.'

Now the same spirit of scepticism which discredited the poems of Homer denies the authorship and authenticity of the Books of the Bible, and attributes to them a mythical and legendary origin. The methods followed, and the principles alleged are the same in both cases. Dr. Schliemann has shown that the methods are uncritical and the principles false. In vindicating Homer, he has vindicated the Scriptures. He has indirectly furnished strong corroboratory testimony to the veracity and genuineness of the Books which contain the records of God's revelation of grace and redemption.

NO MAN, NO METHOD, COMMON OR UNCLEAR,

God's ways are wonderful. He often employs instrumentalities which seem to us unreasonable or contemptible, and we are very apt to indulge in a kind of religious fastidiousness, which takes offence at the simplicity, the brusqueness, or the unconventional character of the methods which God has manifestly blessed in the ingathering of men into His kingdom. The following incident related by an esteemed contemporary made a strong impression upon us. He says:—

"We went with some children to Wood's Dime Museum, in Philadelphia, to see its curiosities. While passing, our eye rested on a caricature of the famous and now popular picture of the 'Last Supper.' The figures were of wax, monstrous in conception and execution. They were arranged around a table on trestles about three feet high. If it had not been a sacred subject it would have been disgusting. The impression it made was banished as a duty. But years after, when examining a man as to the evidence of his faith, he said he had been converted by the impression that had been made by the 'Last Supper,' in Wood's Museum, but which to us was a horrid representation. He said he had gone there with his little children, and while waiting for them his eye rested on this representation, and though a refined and reverent man in his taste, it produced on him the very opposite impression that it did on us. It started with him a long train of reminiscences. He thought of the old church of his boyhood; the old-fashioned communion-table, and the marching up of the communicants to take their places—his father and mother, long since gone, among the number. He recalled in that vivid hour the man of God who had stood 'fencing the tables,' as it was called, denouncing the sins which make men unworthy. He saw the venerable elders, standing at the foot of the table, and all these impressions overwhelmed him, especially at the thought of God's bounteous opportunities to him. He then and there gave his heart to God in the Museum at Ninth and Arch streets, Philadelphia."

Toronto was two or three years ago visited by an evangelist who indulged in much grotesque and, as it appeared to us, unseemly and irreverent talking. He shocked the reverent by his improprieties and disgusted the thoughtful by the puerilities of his expositions and appeals. Yet we know that this man proved an instrument of good to very many. Not a few drunkards were permanently reclaimed by him; and then there were noteworthy cases of self-sufficient sceptics brought to repentance and to faith in Christ. Then there is the Salvation Army with its mimicry of military drill and titles, its noisy parades, and its eccentric and vulgar methods.

Yet we cannot refuse to credit the testimony of hundreds of its converts to the good it has brought to them, as well as of very many impartial witnesses, lay and cleric, who from without have given their impartial evidence of the reality of the remarkable work which it has accomplished amongst the degraded and ignorant.

What, then, is the moral to be drawn from these abnormal methods and their results? Surely it is to call no man, and no method, common or unclear, to despise no instrumentality which God may use in the building up of His kingdom; and to take a large and hopeful view of many developments which would otherwise give us pain, anxiety, or disgust.

The Sunday School.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

6th SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, JULY 20th, 1884

BIBLE LESSON.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID.—2 Sam. vii. 1-16.

The kingdom of Israel is now at peace, ruling over the twelve tribes, honoured by its friends and feared by its foes. The capital on Mount Zion is extending its borders, and increasing its population; the palace of its king looms up above the houses, and beside it stands the tabernacle, where the ark rests after its long wandering. The hour has now come for a new revelation of God's plan of redemption. By the shadow of Eden's closed gate God gave the first dim promise of One who should come to heal the serpent's sting. Twenty centuries rolled away, and then the Almighty called forth the family of Abraham, and promised that in it should all the earth be blessed. Two hundred years later from the dying lips of Jacob broke the prophecy that in Judah's line the Shiloh should appear. Then silence reigned for six centuries, while the divine plans were awaiting a fit hour in which to point with clearer light down the future, to narrow the field of prophecy, and to mark out the line through which the Messiah shall come to Israel and to the world. That hour has now dawned, and to David the king is given the assurance that in his family the royal honour shall remain until his kingdom shall culminate in a throne never to pass away. Walking upon the roof of his palace, David sees beneath him the modest tent which enshrines the ark of the covenant. A loyal servant of God, he resolves that no longer shall his home outshine that which is the emblem of the Lord's presence. He plans to build a temple which shall be a worthy dwelling-place of the Most High. The Lord accepts his pious purpose, but reserves its accomplishment to a more fitting time, and then makes to him the glad announcement that his house shall sit upon the throne forever; and from him shall proceed a line that shall never end, and a kingdom that shall encompass all the earth.

I. THE PURPOSE: vs. 1-3.

Although the ark had been brought to Zion and placed in the tent erected for it; and the Levitical services restored, yet David is not even yet satisfied. The king is at rest indeed from toil and war, and rest, it is noted, is God's gift. He who gives trials for our training, gives rest for our growth. But though enjoying this rest, the heart of David is unsatisfied, and that which weighs upon him he communicates to his trusty counsellor the prophet Nathan. (Trace his connection with David and Solomon. Observe, too, his wisdom and courage.) David is sitting in his palace; thinking perhaps of God's goodness to him. Across yonder he sees the tent where the ark now is. He thinks, "My house is a costly palace of cedar—God's house a mere tent!" (ver. 2). He could not bear to think that his stately palace should stand in such contrast to the Sacred Tent. Zealous for God's honour, he purposes to build for Him a house worthy of His worship. It is His desire to do something for God's glory that prompts him. The desire was in itself most praiseworthy, and Nathan at once approves. The devout spirit, the zeal for God's glory, the adoring heart anxious to expend its best upon His service—all this was well pleasing to the Lord. "Thou didst well in that it was in thine heart." 2 Chron. vi. 8. A most

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