

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

THE FIRST FAMILY: THE CHILDREN.

By Alderman Armstrong.

"Children are a heritage of the Lord." What a sad heritage, full of trouble and grief, the first born of the newly created world would prove to be. No doubt mystery coupled with joy and gladness, was the experience of the parents upon the advent of the first tiny, puny, helpless babe, born in their own image and likeness, and we can only think that the tenderest and most glowing feelings would be called forth and even gratitude to the offended God whose children they themselves were; for, in Cain, there would spring up the prospect of the promise of restoration being fulfilled. Eve readily acknowledged the source from which the first child came for she said upon his birth: "I have gotten a man from the Lord." If Cain was a heritage of the Lord, he, in after life, showed that he, Cain, received a heritage from his father—a heritage of sin.

Moses is very brief in narrating these important events in the history of our race. A matter of twenty nine words is sufficient to record the birth of the two first children—Cain and Abel, and fifteen words are used to inform us of the occupation of both as they grew in stature and in strength. "Abel was a Keeper of Sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." The first family was a family of farmers. Work from the beginning has been a condition of life—the chief, old as the fall; if any man will not work neither shall he eat. Adam and Cain were Agriculturists, Abel was a Stock farmer. Work is the great law of life. Work and worship are the ground work of human happiness, the secret of blessedness for the present and the future life. Worship also had an early origin. In process of time, we are told, the two brothers "made an offering unto the Lord." There is no record that Adam ever did so; still by inference we must be assured that the offended God was recognized in the family, as Eve acknowledged God on the birth of her first born, and the fact that the children acknowledged God by bringing an "offering"—shows that religion and worship was a characteristic in the first household; that there was a family altar. The nature of the offerings, each brought was of that which was the product of his labor—though God accepted the one and rejected the other. God was not offended by the offering of Cain; it was right in motive; wrong in its nature which defect could have been righted when the nature of acceptable sacrifice was better understood. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Cain's sacrifice was a bloodless sacrifice. Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock. He had grasped the right idea! Had put himself in typical and prophetic line with the great prospective sacrifice—Jesus the Lamb of God who taketh away the Sin of the world. To obey is better than sacrifice and to harken than the fat of rams. Cain had obeyed, had followed the instinct inherent in man to worship and sacrifice, but he would not harken! God wanted to talk, to reason with him: Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance changed? Cain's moral condition was in no state for communication with God. Hatred and wrath were in his heart, still he could talk with his brother, could speak words in anger which led to the first recorded crime, the Capital crime of murder! bringing himself within the reach of the law; he that sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed; and though Cain escaped this punishment he became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, and lived in per-

petual fear: That it shall come to pass that everyone that findeth me shall slay me. No wonder Cain said unto the Lord "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Many since then have followed in the footsteps of Cain, who have borne his "mark" but have not had his protection, for: "The Lord set a mark upon Cain lest any finding him should kill him."

What an unhappy family the first human family must have been—Father and mother transgressors of God's Commandments. The eldest son a fratricidal murderer and a fugitive and vagabond in the earth; and the second son "the voice of whose blood crieth from the ground."—The parents' reflections upon their disobedience must have been extremely bitter; still the bitter was mixed with sweetness for God in His goodness gave Eve a substitute son and she called his name Seth; for God, she said, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

London, Ont.

THE ENGLISH EDUCATION BILL.

Over the English Education Bill it is now a fair stand up fight between the Church of England and the Nonconformists. Roman Catholics profess to be aggrieved, and the Pope, it is said, is considering what final attitude that church will assume. But the bill grants much to the Romanists, and Mr. Birrell in his speech went out of his way to flatter and compliment them. The labor party go for secularism, but the nation as a whole prefer that some religious teaching be given in all the schools. Therefore, the tug-of-war is between the Anglican clergy and the Nonconformists. The Bishops are almost unanimous against, the Nonconformists are unanimous for, except as to the four-fifths clause, which gives too great an opportunity to the Episcopal "priest." Evangelical Nonconformists, says the Belfast Witness, contend for an elementary religious teaching every day on the fundamentals of Christianity, and we believe the nation as a whole and common sense are with them on that point. It is the greatest duel since Cromwell's time, and the world will watch the struggle with intense interest.

The opening article in the April Studio (41 Leicester Square, London, W.C., England) is a most helpful one on "Modern Flower Painting and its Character," with exceedingly attractive illustrations both colored and otherwise. The following article too, on "The Art of Alex. Roche, R.S.A.," by Haldane MacFall, is exceedingly interesting. Roche is one of the most gifted artists the city of Glasgow has produced. The idea given of his work by this article and the several illustrations is that of breadth and feeling. He appears to be at home with a great variety of subjects. "In his rare gift of colour one fairy godmother gave him rich dower; another gave him a rare sense of composition; and yet a third, as though he were not already rich enough, granted him a keen perception of character; these gifts he has used to masterly purpose, whether he paint the bloom of beauty that lies in young womanhood's fair cheek, or with vigorous brush raises before our eyes the swing and heave of the waters; whether he catch the strong lights that play on land and sea, or set the very winds upon his canvas." The third and concluding notice of The Arts and Crafts' Exhibition at the Grafton Gallery appears in this number, and we have also an article on "Russian Peasant Industries" which is suggestive.

THE VALUE OF PREACHING.

We are frequently told that the influence of the pulpit is waning, and that other forces are rapidly taking its place. Seeing that a really good preacher never fails to secure a large congregation, it is difficult to believe that these lamentations are justified. In the April number of the "Optimist," a quarterly review, which deals with questions of the day in a Christian spirit, Mr. W. G. Edwards Rees makes some very sensible remarks on the subject. He begins by pointing out that, whatever the quality of present-day preaching, there can be no doubt that good preaching is now, as ever, the highest and most necessary of human tasks. At the same time, he admits that there are forces in the world today which make against the influence of preaching. There is the eager pursuit of pleasure due to the reaction from the monotonous toil to which so many people today are condemned. A third depressing influence is the aloofness of the working classes, millions of whom stand apart from the denominations. We owe this aloofness to several causes, chief among which must be counted the working of a voluntary system that, drawing the main support of a preaching ministry from the prosperous classes, sends the most effective preachers to the places where they are least wanted. But, no doubt, the main objection to modern preaching is in Mr. Rees' words, "the inferiority of so much of it." The journalist, the labour leader, the political speaker have all improved; but the preacher stands much where he did years ago. But the fact remains that the age urgently needs the preacher. "While the power and worth of the pulpit," writes Mr. Rees, "have thus relatively declined, the importance of the pulpit's message and of the adequate telling of it were never so evident. The very changes which are held to account for the reluctance of the modern world to hear the preacher constitute a clamorous demand for a higher standard of preaching, for better men as preachers, for a fuller and more definite training of the preacher for his function. The increasing materialisation of life is in itself a strong plea for the more forceful and attractive presentation of spiritual verities and values. The mad quest of pleasure is in itself an argument for a more watchful and intelligent criticism of life, in the light of the Gospel, and for a more moving appeal to the truth as it is in Him who said, 'I am the Truth.' The prophetic voice is needed in England more than at any time since the third quarter of the eighteenth century." What is needed is that the churches should devote their chief attention to the production of true preachers, and that the preacher should look upon this as his life work, and apply himself to it with all his heart and soul. "These ministers of the Gospel who undertake the importance of preaching are making a deplorable mistake. Parochial and social work are necessary and important to the best degree; but the life and force and soul of a church depend upon the pulpit and the man who occupies it, and the message he delivers."—The Christian Globe.

With a load of 440 pounds camels are capable of travelling twelve or fourteen days without water, going forty miles a day. They are fit to work at five years old, but their strength begins to decline at twenty-five, although they usually live to forty. The Tartars have herds of these animals, 1,000 sometimes belonging to one family. The Timbuctoo or Meharri breed is remarkable for speed and used only for couriers, going 800 miles in eight days with simply a meal of dates or grain at nightfall.