

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

MINISTRY OF ANGELS.

Extract from *The Spirit World*.

By Rev. Joseph Hamilton.

Speaking of angelic interference in human affairs, I may give here the substance of a conversation which I have just had with a very intelligent friend of mine. This man is a lawyer of forty years' legal experience, so that we may well suppose that he is not very credulous in regard to things pertaining to the unseen, yet he believes most firmly in the ministry of angels. He told me the case of a child that fell from a fourth storey window in New York, but that instead of being dashed to death on the pavement below, simply floated down, and alighted on the pavement without harm.

My friend asked me how I would account for such a marvellous escape. I replied: "How can it possibly be accounted for, except in the supposition that an angel took charge of the child, stayed it up, and broke its fall? And that just accords with what is written of angels. 'In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.'"

My friend was decidedly of the same opinion. He added that he would like to follow that child's history, for he imagined that such a wonderful preservation meant that the child was destined for some great future. But I took rather a different view. I supposed that such cases might not be so unusual, but that it is only very rarely that our dull senses can apprehend them. Besides, it appeared more natural, and more human, to suppose that an angel was simply passing by and was moved by sympathy to save the child from death, without knowing or thinking anything about the child's future. This would but accord with human instinct in ourselves which would prompt us to plunge into a river to save a drowning child, without thinking for a moment of the child's possible future. I have said that such a compassionate interference on the part of an angel appears more human; and I use that word human deliberately, for I think, those elder brethren of ours are very human, only on a higher plane.

My friend and I then spoke of other cases of angelic action in Scripture history. We spoke especially of the destruction of the Assyrian host by an angel. In this case also we had a slight divergence of view. He supposed that that destruction was accomplished by some kind of a Miasma which in divine providence was arranged to strike just at the very time and the very place required. This seemed to me rather far-fetched, and involving far more of the nature of a miracle than the direct interposition of an angel. The record says that the thing was done by an angel, and we do not see any sense in lugging in an angel if no angel was there. Still, if we even allow that to be taken as a mere figure, consider the far greater miracle, and one far harder to believe, in the supposed Miasma. This involves a concatenation of causes and effects, stretching probably through thousands of years in the past, and reaching its destined time and place at a particular spot and a particular hour. How much simpler and easier it is to imagine that one of God's mighty angels was on hand to execute His will directly just as the history records. And this view is strongly sustained by that other case in which it is said that in one appointed night an angel slew the first born in every

Egyptian family. How would the Miasma theory work here? The Miasma would need not only to strike at the appointed time and place, but it would have to single out the first born, strike him, and spare all the rest. This would surely be too much to expect of a Miasma, but it would most easily and naturally be accomplished by an angel. This simple way of taking the record as it stands, would save us from many difficulties.

This case of my friend accepting this simple angelic theory in the case of the child, and rejecting it in the case of the Assyrian army, may be taken as a sample of much of the current thought about angelic ministry. You see my friend could imagine an angel in the one case where there is no Scriptural hint of one; but he discards the angel in the other case where the Scripture clearly affirms that there was an angel. It seems to me that what we need is more sympathy and reverence to accept the record as it stands, instead of explaining it away, or combining it with our vain philosophy.

We may repeat here a few things that should enlarge our views as to this intercourse between the angelic race and the human. We have seen that both men and angels are designated "sons of God;" and though we may occupy different planes of sonship, yet the fact that we have the same title brings us into a degree of affinity. We have also seen that the words man and angel are often in Scripture used interchangeably. Thus a man may really be an angel, and an angel may be a man. Then we have the fact that when angels appeared in this world, they usually appeared as men. Sometimes they appeared so entirely human that they were mistaken for ordinary men. At other times, when they but partly laid aside their celestial glory, their form and features were distinctly human.

Then we showed how probable it is that angels, like ourselves, had a time of probation. Others believe that, like ourselves, some of them sinned and were redeemed.

It is to be noted, also, that men and angels meet on the same plane in ministering to our Lord during his life here. On different occasions we find that angels ministered to his necessity, thus putting themselves on a level with those devout and faithful women who followed him even to the cross.

We ventured also the opinion that this human form of ours is the angelic form as well; and we instanced several considerations in favor of this view.

It would really seem, then, that we are but one family. We may have varying powers, and vocations, and spheres of life for the present; yet the divine Father may regard us as but one family, and we ourselves may better realize this close relation by and by.

We of the human race are the children of the vast family of God. Our elder brethren are the angels. They are "old in the years of heaven." They may have been singing God's praise ages and ages before this world was made. We know at any rate that at creation's dawn "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." And those sons of God—our elder brethren—have been shouting and singing ever since. Those angels are our elder brethren and sisters. Yes, and we think we must look up to them as so much older and wiser than ourselves, for a long time, if not forever. It is humbling, but it is also re-assuring. It is humbling; for the infants know very little, are very feeble, and make many mistakes. But it is re-assuring; for we

infants are the objects of tender love and care and who can say but that we may rise to their position, one day, and be in our turn brethren and sisters to other weak children, it may be of some other world, but still children of the same universal family.

Unhappily, too, we are not only the children, but the sick children of God's great family. We are sick with sin, sorrow, and toil. But our elder brethren and sisters—these angels of God—are hovering round with unknown ministries of love, and exulting with joy when they see any signs of recovery.

I shall never forget an experience that gave me a very realistic impression of the joy with which an angel recovers a lost soul. I was aboard a steamer off the Pacific coast, when she lost her rudder, and drifted out to sea. Three days and nights we drifted unable to reach the golden gate of San Francisco. But the tugs were searching for us; and one bright summer morning the Wizard bore down upon us, threw a cable overboard, hatched us fast and towed us into the harbour. As I saw that little steamer bounding over the waves and bearing down upon us apparently with so much joy, I could understand something of the exultation of an angel in rescuing a lost soul.

NOTE AND COMMENT.

There is something peculiarly gratifying to Canadian pride in the distinction conferred upon Dr. Robert Bell, chief geologist of the Canadian Survey, by the American Geographical Society, says the Canadian Gazette, of London, Eng. Never before has the Cullum Medal been conferred upon a geographer who was not a citizen of the United States, and Dr. Bell is thus doubly honored, for only last year he received the patron's, or King's, gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society. Dr. Bell's name is a household word with Canadians. His surveys and explorations, extending 1,000 miles north of the United States boundary, have removed from the maps of the Canadian hinterland its former vacant appearance, and form the subject of a great many maps published by the Geological Survey of Canada in the last five years. It is a happy illustration of the brotherhood of science that the extent and value of Dr. Bell's work during the last half century should thus receive spontaneous recognition at the hands of the great geographical societies.

The Christian Advocate of New York city appreciates the importance of the Hudson's Bay route, as shown by the following editorial paragraph in its last number: "The Hudson's Bay route to Europe passed awhile ago out of the visionary into the possible, and has now entered the realm of the probable. Canada's railroad systems are pushing their lines towards the ports on the shore of the bay. It can be reached from the south, the southwest and the west, and they will convey the produce of the wheat fields and the cattle ranges. The Hudson's Bay route to Europe is shorter by from 700 to 1,000 miles than others, and it is open for four or five months each year. Grain and cattle from Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta will require only one transfer on their way to Europe. The Canadian Pacific, the Canadian Northern, Grand Trunk Pacific and the Great Northern will soon have terminals in that bay."

If to-morrow should mark your entrance into glory, then live to-day as you will wish you had when you see Him.—Chapman.