THE FIRE AND THE CALF.

"So they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."—Ex. 32: 24.

[The sermon from which the following abstract is made was preached by the late Phillips Brooks, Bishop of the Episcopal diocese of Massachusetts, in London. It is regarded by many as one of the strongest sermons he ever preached. It certainly admirably illustrates his spirit and methods as a preacher.—WATCHMAN.]

The real story of what actually happened had been written earlier in the chapter. When the people brought Aaron their golden earrings "he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf; and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." That was what really happened, and this is the description which Aaron gave of it to Moses: "So they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

Aaron was frightened at what he had done. He was afraid of the act itself, and he was afraid of what Moses would say about it. Like all timid men, he trembled before the storm which he raised. And so he tried to persuade Moses, and perhaps in some degree even to persuade himself, that it was not he that had done this thing. He lays the blame upon the furnace. "The fire did it," he declares. He will not blankly face his sin, and yet he will not tell a lie in words. He tells what is literally true. He had cast the earrings into the fire, and this calf had come out. But he leaves out the one important point, his own personal agency in it all; the fact that he had molded the earrings into the calf's shape, and that he had taken it out and set it on its pedestal for the people to adore. He tells it so that it shall all look automatic. It is a curious, ingenious, but transparent lie.

MODERN AARONS.

Let us look at Aaron's speech a little while this morning, and see what it represents. For it does represent something. There never was a speech more true to one disposition of our human nature. We are all ready to lay the blame upon the furnaces. "The fire did it," we are all of us ready enough to say. Here is a man all gross and sensual, a man still young who has already lost the freshness and the glory and the purity of youth. He is profane; he is cruel; he is licentious; all his brightness has grown lurid; all his wit is ribaldry. You know the man. As far as a man can be, he is a brute. Suppose you question that man about his life. You expect him to be ashamed, to be repentant. There is not a sign of anything like that. He says, "I am the victim of circumstances. What a corrupt, licentious, profane age this is in which we live! When I was in college I got into a bad set. When I went into business I was surrounded by bad influences. When I grew rich, men flattered me. When I grew poor, men bullied me. The world has made me what I am, this fiery, passionate, wicked world. I had in my hands the gold of my boyhood which God gave me. Then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." And so the poor, wronged, miserable creature looks into your face with his bleared eyes and asks your pity. Another man is not a profligate, but is a miser, or a mere business machine. "What can you ask of me," he says, "this is a mercantile community. The business man who does not attend to his business goes to the wall. I am what this intense commercial life has made me. I put my life in there, and it came out this." And then he gazes fondly at his golden calf, and his knees bend under him with the old long habit of worshipping it, and he loves it still, even while he abuses and disowns it. And so with the woman of society. "The fire made me this," she says of her frivolity and pride. And so of the politician and his selfishness and partizanship. "I put my principles into the furnace, and this came out." And so of the bigot and his bigotry, the one-sided conservative with his stubborn resistance to all progress, the one-sided radical with his ruthless iconoclasm. So of all partial and fanatical men. "The furnace made us," they are ready to declare. "These times compel us to be this. In better times we might have been better, broader men; but now, behold. God put us into the fire, and we came out this." It is what one is perpetually hearing about disbelief. "The times have made me sceptical. How is it possible for a man to live in days like these and yet believe in God and Jesus and the resurrection? You ask me how I, who was brought up in the faith and in the church, became a disbeliever. Oh, you remember that I lived five years here," or "three years there." "You know I have been very much thrown with this set or with that. You know the temper of our town. I cast myself into the fire, and I came out this." One is ready to understand, my friends, how the true soul, struggling for truth, seems often to be worsted in the struggle. One is ready to have tolerance, respect, and hope for any man who, reaching after God, is awed by God's immensity and his own littleness, and falls back crushed and doubtful. His is a doubt which is born in the secret chambers of his own personal consciousness. It is independent of his circumstances and surroundings. The soul which has truly come to a personal doubt finds it hard to conceive of any age of most implicit faith in which it could have lived in which that doubt would not have been in it. It faces its doubt in a solitude where there is none but it and God. All that one understands, and the more he understands it the more unintelligible does it seem to him, that any earnest soul can really lay its doubt upon the age, the set, or the society it lives in. No; our age, our society, is what, with this figure taken out of the old story of Exodus, we have been calling it. It is the furnace. Its fire can set, and fix, and fasten what the man puts into it. But, properly speaking, it can create no character. It can make no truly faithful soul a doubter. It never did. It never can.

THE SOURCE OF THE DISEASE.

If the world is thus full of the Aaron spirit, of the disposition to throw the blame of wrong-doing upon other things and other people, to represent to others, and to our own souls, that our sins do themselves, what is the real spiritual source of such a tendency, and where are we to look to find its cure? Its source is a vague and defective sense of personality. Anything which makes less clear to a man the fact that he, standing here on his few inches of the earth, is a distinct, separate being, in whom is lodged a unit of life, with his own soul, his own character, his own chances, his own responsibilities, distinct and separate from any other man's in all the world; anything that makes all that less clear dem-ralizes a man, and opens the door to endless self-excuses. And you know, surely how many tendencies there are to-day which are doing just that for men. Every man's personality, his clear sense of himself, seems to be standing to-day where almost all the live forces of the time are making their attacks upon it. It is like a tree in the open field from which every bird carries away some fruit. The enlargement of our knowledge of the world, the growing tendency of men to work in large companies, the increased despotism of social life, the interesting studies of heredi-tation, the externality of a large part of our action, the rush and competition for the prizes which represent the most material sort of success, the spread of knowledge by which at once all men are seen to know much, and, at the same time, no man is seen to know everything; all these causes enfeeble the sense of personality.

THE REMEDY.

And if this is the trouble, where then, is the help? If this is the disease, where is the cure? I cannot look for it anywhere short of that great assertion of the human personality which is made when a man personally enters into the power of Jesus Christ. Think of it! Here is some Aaron of our modern life trying to cover up some sin which he has done. The fact of the sin is clear enough. There is no possibility of concealing that. It stands out wholly undisputed. It is not by denying that the thing was done but by beclouding the fact that he did it with his hands, with his own will; thus it is that the man would cover up his sin. He has been nothing but an agent, nothing but a victim; so he assures his fellow-men, so he assures himself. And now suppose that while he is doing that, the great change comes to that man by which he is made a disciple and servant of Jesus Christ. It becomes known to him as a certain fact that God loves him individually, and is educating him with a separate personal education, which is all his own. The clear individuality of Jesus stands distinctly out and says to him, "Follow me!" Jesus stops in front of where he is working just as evidently, with just as manifest intention of calling him as that with which He stopped in front of the booth where Matthew was sitting collecting taxes, and says, "Follow Me!" He is called separately, and separately he does give himself to Christ. Remember all that is essential to a Christian faith. You cannot blur it all into indistinctness and generality. In the true light of the redeeming incarnation, every man in the multitude stands out as every blade of grass on the hillside stands distinct from every other when the sun has risen. In this sense, as in many another, this is the true light which lightereth every man that cometh into the world.

The Bible calls it a new birth, and in that name, too, there are many meanings. And among other meanings in it must there not be this—the separateness and personality of every soul in Christ? Birth is the moment of distinctness. The meanest child in the poorest hovel in the city, who by and by is to be lost in the great whirlpool of human life, here at the outset where his being comes, a new fact, into the crowded world, is felt in his distinctness, has his own personal tending, excites his own personal emotion. When he is born and when he dies, but perhaps most of all when he is born, the commonest, most commonplace and undistinguished of mankind asserts the fact of privilege of his separateness. And so when the possession of the soul by Christ is called the "New Birth," one of the meanings of that name is this, that then there is a reassertion of personality, and the soul which had lost itself in the slavery of the multitude finds itself again in the obedience of Christ.

THE CHANGED ATTITUDE.

And now what will be the attitude of this man, with his newly awakened selfhood, towards that sin which he has been telling himself that his hands did, but that he did not do? Who is he? A being whom Christ has forgiven, and then in virtue of that forgiveness made His servant. All his new life dates from and begins with his sin. He cannot afford to find his consciousness of himself only in the noble parts of his life, which it makes him proud and happy to remember. There is not enough of that to make for him a complete and continuous personality. It will have great gaps if he disowns the wicked demonstrations of his selfhood and says, "It was not I," wherever he has done wrong. No! Out of his sin, out of the bad, base, cowardly acts which are truly his, out of the weak and wretched passages of his life which it makes him ashamed to remember, but which he forces himself to recollect and own, out of these he gathers the consciousness of a self all astray with self-will, which he then brings to Christ and offers in submission and obedience to His perfect will.

You try to tell some soul rejoicing in the Lord's salvation that the sins, over whose forgiveness by its Lord it is gratefully rejoicing, were not truly its; and see what strange thing comes. The soul seems to draw back from your assurance as if, if it were true, it would be robbed of all its surest confidence and brightest hope. You meant to comfort the poor penitent, and he looks into your face as if you were striking him a blow. And you can see what such a strange sight means. It is not that the poor creature loves those sins or is glad that he did them, or dreams for an instant of ever doing them again. It is only that through those sins, which are all the real experience he has had, he has found himself, and finding himself has found his Saviour and the new life.

So the only hope for any of us is in a perfectly honest manliness to claim our sins. "I did it, I did it," let me say of all my wickedness. Let me refuse to listen for one moment to any voice which would make my sins less mine. It is the only honest and only hopeful way, the only way to know and be ourselves. When we have done that, then we are ready for the gospel, ready for all that Christ wants to show us that we may become, and for all the powerful grace by which He wants to make us be it perfectly.

BOOK REVIEW.

FRESH LIGHT FROM THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS. By A. H. Sayce, LL. D. Price 90 cents. British American Book and Tract Society, Granville St., Halifax, N. S.

Additions continue to be made from time to time by the explorer and decipherer to the helps for reading the Book of Genesis and the other early books of the Bible. Dr. Sayce, in *Fresh Light*, a volume of 160 pages, turns the results of discovery up to date on the Book of Genesis, and on the account of the Exodus out of Egypt. The reading of the Moabite Stone, the revelations of the kingdom of the Hitites, the Assyrian invasions, and the names and doings of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Belshazzar and others, are submitted to fresh light; in which they add great interest to the study of the Bible. The classical writers of Greece and Rome knew but little about peoples and languages already vanished in their day; and they seem not to have cared much for the antecedents of nations whom they despised. Their principal historian had learned something from Manetho of Egypt, Berossus of Babylon, and Philo Byblius of Phœnicia; but this information, as was expected, has turned out, in the light of recent discovery, to be largely fanciful.

Adverse critics had started the theory that Genesis, like the early records of Greece and Rome, was a collection of myths and legends. But by the resurrection of the records of nations, long since buried, the accounts in the Book of Genesis have been confirmed as true history; the men and women of the book as real characters, and not the creations of the writers of fiction. The lives, language and customs of the people whom Abraham left in Chaldea have come to the light of day by the reading of hitherto undeciphered inscriptions, and by exhuming and deciphering those concealed in the ruins of ancient cities ever since their overthrow.

As the records were made in stone and in soft brick, afterwards baked, they have remained unchanged till the present day. This gives them a value which they could not have, had they been written on vellum or papyrus and copied and recopied from century to century. They stand as they were written. No theories are necessary in regard to the errors of copyists. It now turns out that the Assyrians and Babylonians of Abraham's day were of Semitic origin, and hence kindred in race to the Jews and Phœnicians. These people were the successors of a different race which they had conquered. They, too, had had a language and libraries of brick and stone. It was preserved and was the dead language of the Assyrians and Babylonians. In this way much light is shed back behind the times of the Babylonians and Assyrians, referred to in the Bible, upon the times, customs, language and religion of the Accadians, their predecessors. So abundant has been the Assyrian literature brought to light by the spade, that scholars say they have more means to examine that language than is in the possession of the Hebraist to help him interpret that language. This aids in understanding some difficult passages in the Bible hitherto in dispute among Oriental scholars. By the Assyrian language they are also enabled to read the literature of the Accadians, their predecessors. We get in this way some of the sacred writings of this ancient people. Like the oldest Vedas of India, they show the first departure from Monotheism, and the worship of the most ancient times. These sacred hymns bear a striking resemblance in both form and sentiment to the early parts of the Bible. Through them, there runs a vein of monotheism, although their form is polytheistic. Here is a sample quoted in *Fresh Light* by Dr. Sayce:

"O my God, Thou givest no rest to Thy servant.
In the waters of the raging flood take his hand.
The sin he has sinned turn into good.
Let the wind carry away the transgression I have committed.
Destroy my manifold wickedness like a garment.
O my God, seven times seven are my transgressions,
my transgressions are ever before me."

The reading of the Moabite Stone, discovered in 1869, shows that the language of the Moabites differed but little from the language of the Jews. The contents of this monument is a flash of light upon the Orient in the days of Elijah and Elisha. The records of Scripture are confirmed, and the god and religion of Moab also brought more distinctly into view.

These revelations show that Cyrus was not a follower of Zoroaster, and therefore a monotheist, as has always been assumed, although some parts of Isaiah could not be explained in harmony with this theory. Now Cyrus tells his own story. He was directly from Elam, east of the Persian Gulf, and a polytheist, although by descent he was a Persian. Subsequent history led to the custom of calling him a Persian. The prophecies, therefore, in which he plays so important a part, are made all the more marvellous when it is learned that Cyrus came from Elam, and not from Persia. The taking of Babylon was not as it has been represented. The capture of that city, ascribed to Cyrus, was the taking of it by Darius Hystaspes. *Fresh Light* is indeed fresh light on a good many parts of the Old Testament Scriptures.

— We shall "know hereafter." The promise is absolute. God has nothing to conceal or defend in His providences. . . . . They may show us that only these sorrows could have purified and perfected our love for our departed dead, and they may teach us that the heavenly ministry of our sainted friends may have surpassed both to ourselves and to glorified souls the possibility of any earthly influence. In the day when all hidden things shall be made known, we may find that we needed these representatives of our hearts and homes in heaven more than we required them on earth. The surprising knowledge may burst upon us that they preceded us that they might help to prepare our abode on high. We may learn that their eyes were closed on earth's duties only that they might open upon nobler and grander duties in our behalf; that the hands which we folded so tenderly above the silent bosom took on new activity, and the mute lips we kissed so passionately became vocal in celestial services that will enhance our own immortal joys, and make heaven more homelike forever to us.—*Rev. Dr. J. Richards Boyle, in the Ministry of Bereavement.*

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NATHANIEL.

BY MARY L. T. WITTER.

What we receive depends largely on what we are. Not only we have not, because we ask not, and because we ask amiss; but, also, because we are not in a condition to receive. When the anguished father brought to Jesus his boy with a deaf and dumb spirit, he cried out: "If Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus answered, "If thou canst," which was equivalent to saying, the healing depends not only on My power, but on thy receptibility. And when the nobleman in the parable commanded that the unused pound be given to him who had made his one pound ten, the servants were surprised, and exclaimed, "Lord, he hath ten pounds!" But the nobleman assured his servants that the large possessions of the successful trader, so far from being a reason why he should not receive more, was the very reason why he should, for it was a principle in the economy of grace that to him who had should be given.

We have an illustration of this principle in the case of Nathaniel. When he was coming to Jesus, Jesus said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathaniel did not, in mock modesty, say, "Rabbi, thou dost esteem my character too highly." He knew that he was one of the true Israelites, that he abhorred all false pretensions as to doing, or feeling, or being, and hence he gratefully, unhesitatingly accepted the eulogy and ingeniously asked, "Whence knowest thou me?" "Before Philip called thee," answered Jesus, "when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."

Nathaniel, it may be presumed, had sought the shade of some sequestered fig tree; and there, unseen by human eye, had held communion with God, and knew that he had been seen only by Him who seeth in secret, and hence that Jesus of Nazareth was God. In an ecstacy he exclaimed: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." As Jesus marvelled at the faith of a certain centurion, so He seemed to have marvelled at the faith of Nathaniel. "Jesus answered, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily I say unto you, ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

This loving imagery put into plain language would be about as follows: "Thou shalt see or understand that there is constant communication between heaven and earth, between God the Father and the Son of man, God the Son; and that the Son of man, though on earth is also in heaven."

The pure in heart see God; and seeing God renders the heart still more pure; so that the effect becomes the cause and again the cause the effect, till the believer attains "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Nathaniel's guilelessness enabled him to understand that Jesus was the Christ, caused him to be the recipient of a wonderfully rich promise, and fitted him to experience the fulfillment of that promise.

— Christ had tender human friendships. He loved that little home at Bethany. Christ was not opposed to common sense. He was the soul of it; He did not make wild and fruitless charges upon society; He did not throw Himself at the face of the hierarchy; He fell in with existing institutions. He was no stoic; He loved the joys and felt the ills of life; He was no suicide; He did not exhaust His strength fruitlessly, nor give Himself up to martyrdom till He knew His time had come. He was a whole man, walking in all the breadth of human life, and the glory of His life was this: that wherever He went, whether at the synagogue, or at a wedding, or dinner, or fishing party, or a storm at sea, or at the custom house steps, He there upheld, with a glorious decision and dignity and grace, God's own humanity, the genuine, heavenly thing, as it is where it is rooted in God, pure as a lily and strong as a cedar of Lebanon. And wherever across the pathway of this divine manhood there stood up to oppose its influence any worldly sham, any devil's lie, any beguiling temptation, any form of false humanity, He accepted the gage of battle at once, with all its consequences. He showed His colors, and pointed, both by words and deeds, to the God who was overhead. For the love of God and humanity He bore His cross, and that is what we are to do. Oh, it is not the world that we are to hate! Christ did not hate the world. God does not. How could he, when He gave His Son for it? No! it is the world, in false relations, standing in its own light. It is not earthly pleasure, but earthly pleasure divorced from heavenly good; it is the creature usurping the place of the Creator, turned into a shadow instead of a divine token.—*Rev. J. H. Denison, D. D.*

— You fear to cross the deep, deep waters; you shrink from the strange, and, it may be, the stormy passage to eternity. You say: "Oh! if I could but reach the celestial city without having to cross the stream of death!" God knows your frame; He remembers that you are dust, and feels the tenderest parental compassion for those who fear Him; and therefore you may be assured that the trials which His love ordains, whether in life or in death, are necessary trials, and He will give you support under them. His grace is sufficient for you as well as for others. Oh! trust yourself to him; repose with confidence upon His promises and believe that in a dying hour your succor shall be equal to your need. Do not test your preparedness for that hour by the strength and comfort which you now possess; but by the solemn engagement which Christ has made, never to leave nor forsake you. He is with you now to help you glorify Him by your life; when death comes, He will be with you then, and help you glorify Him by your death. Dying grace will not be vouchsafed until a dying hour. You do not want it now, but it will be abundantly vouchsafed then. Wait for it in faith.—*Life's Evening.*

— "Mamma suffered for many years without relief till she used B. B. B. Three bottles cured her."
MILLIE B. PARKER, Norland, Ont.

The Trifolium Gospel.

An Irish legend tells that St. Patrick was once preaching to a barbarous tribe in the open air, and having occasion to speak of the doctrine of the Trinity, the sublime mystery was too much for the rude and ignorant people, and they were about to mob him, when he was providentially saved by his ready wit. He lifted from the green sward at his feet a sprig of shamrock. Holding it up before them, he arrested their attention and awakened their sympathy, while he discoursed of the great truth of the three-one from the humble type of the trifolium plant. The illustration was crude and imperfect, but it was suited to a primitive people; and the legend records that the chief and his people were so impressed with the figure and the discourse of St. Patrick, that they became Christians and were there and then baptized into the three-fold name. It is also said that from this incident the shamrock became the national emblem of the Irish people. The trifolium plant may also be used to illustrate the three-lobed character of the gospel. In the fifteenth chapter of Luke there is given the account of three illustrations grouped by Jesus into *one* parable. In the first illustration is shown the work of the Godhead for lost man. The second illustration shows the work of the Christian church. The woman represents the church. And the third illustration shows the sinner's part in the gospel work.—*Dr. Alexander Jackson.*

Can Not Take Away.

However beautiful the rose upon the breast of the bride, no art has taught us how to make its fragrance and loveliness perpetual. However perfect a day in June, it is followed by its sure December. Bright as are the skies above the head of the laughing boy, there comes a time when the voice of the brook no longer sings to him the old time invitation to the forest. However fair the palace, time will stain its beauty with tears and crumble its strength with decay. However mighty the empire, the day will come when upon its broken heaps the fox will play unscared, and the adder, sunning itself undisturbed, be the sole occupant of the royal court. To-day the curious traveller thrusts his sharp spade into the mounds of Assyrian kings, drags the funeral trophies of Rameses to the unaccustomed light, and thrusts his fingers into the sepulchral urns of the Cæsars.

But there is one thing of which even time cannot rob the soul, one thing which in the history of the race never grows old; it is the consciousness of God's redeeming love revealed in Jesus Christ. That which was the boy's song is still the old man's staff. The lad who joined his infant voice with others in the praises of Jesus in the Sunday-school, as an old man goes down into the valley of the shadow of death with the same joy upon his now trembling lips. The world may take away fortune, youth, fame, but it is powerless to rob the believing heart of that peace which comes from its reconciliation with God in Christ Jesus.—*Sel.*

Not Self, But Christ.

There is more pulp than pluck in a great deal of what passes for piety. It is an audacious attempt to get a free ride to heaven in a drawing room car, with plenty of select company and good fare on the road.

"Will Dr. A. be in his pulpit to-day? Will the music be up to the mark? Is it likely to clear off? Then I'll try to go to church to-day." With such a soliloquy on Sabbath morning, how much grace is there likely to be left for the wear and tear of the week?

The piety that Christ smiles upon is a piety that will stand a pinch and face a storm; that would rather eat an honest crust than fare sumptuously on unholy gains; that gladly gives up its couch of ease to sally on its mission among the outcasts; that sets its Puritan face like a flint against fashionable sins. We talk glibly about "taking up a cross," but a cross is intended for somebody's crucifixion. On Calvary's cross we know full well who bled away His precious life. On our cross self is to be the victim. Paul, the heroic, was emphasizing this fact when he commanded Christians to mortify their members which are upon the earth. The American Revision of the New Testament hits the sense of this passage more accurately: "Put to death your own members," etc. Loyalty to Christ often demands the plucking out of the right eye and the amputation of the right arm. The sublime glory of Abraham's offering really was that he was willing to thrust the knife through the very heart of self. Oh, it is not the taking up, it is the giving up, that makes a strong, athletic, heroic Christian.—*Dr. T. L. Cuyler.*

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The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving. To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, but we must sail, and not drift nor lie at anchor.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

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GEORGE LAWSON, Ph. D., LL. D., F. L. C., G. B. and Ireland.

February 15.

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSON

FIRST QUARTER.

ISRAEL AFTER THE CAPTIVITY

(Condensed from Peloubet's Select Not

Lesson IX. Feb. 26. Neh. 8

READING THE LAW.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I m
hold wondrous things out of Thy l
Ps. 119: 18.

EXPLANATORY.

A SUNDAY-SCHOOL OF THE OLDE
This chapter should begin with
clause of the last verse of the p
chapter: "And when the seventh
was come," etc. The occasion
celebration of the new-moon fea
seventh month (ch ap. 7: 75).
ginning of every month was un
as a sacred festival; but this, th
mencement of the seventh mon
kept with distinguished honor
feast of trumpets" (Lev. 2
Trumpets were blown every wh
less the feast fell on the Sabbath
ITS MEMBERS. Ver. 1. *All th
gathered themselves together as o*
They came from all the surr
country. The numbers prese
been variously estimated at fro
to 50,000. The congregation wa
up of *men and women, and all th
hear with understanding* (ver.
parents brought those of their
who were old enough to und
They were eager to learn their d
they asked Ezra to bring the bo
law.

ITS PLACE OF MEETING. *Into
or wide, open square, or cour
was before the water gate.* The
assembly was the open space
the temple, called Ophel, lying
the temple-wall and the city-
would thus lie within the moder
area.

THE LEADER. *They spake u
the scribe.* This is the first m
Ezra in the present book, and
proof we have had that he was
porary with Nehemiah. It se
possible that he should have
Jerusalem during the events na
Neh. 2-6, and have played n
them. Probably he returned
court of Artaxerxes soon after
the reforms which he relates i
and did not revisit Jerusalem
the time when the walls were c
If he had thus just returned
absence of more than ten years
be natural for the people to re
to resume the work of expositi
law to which he had accustom
on his former visit (see Ezra 7
The scribe. One who devotes
writing off the law, hence,
and teacher of the inspired w
THE TEXT BOOK. *The book*
The common name of the fiv
Moses, or the Pentateuch.
was probably the whole body
writings, which had been coll
one volume by the care of
first great scribe, and which
substance what we call the b
Old Covenant, or Testamen
the Lord had commanded. W
had revealed and commande
obey.

2. *Ezra the priest.* He was
well as scribe. *Both men a*
Both have equal need of stud
Word. It is a great wrong
Sabbath congregations are
composed of twice as many
men.

3. *He read therein . . . fro
ing until midday.* Or, "from
He began as soon as it was lig
and read on (he and his assi
7) till noon, that is, for si
more. The reading appea
been varied by occasional
(vers. 7, 8). *The ears of al
were attentive.* Though there
in the Hebrew for "attentiv
meaning is quite correctly
ears of all the people were to
—fixed on that, and on nothi
4. *Ezra . . . stood upon
wood.* An elevated scaffold
broad enough to allow 14
stand with ease upon it, an
erable height (ver. 5).

THE TEACHERS. Ezra's
lightened by the aid of the
present. Thus we find two
of helpers named in these
The *first* kind are named in
second kind of helpers are n
7. *And beside him stood,* et
is known of most of these pe
5. *And Ezra opened the
"book" was a long strip of
rolled upon a stick at either
it was called a "roll" (Isa
"scroll" (Isa. 34: 4). The
in parallel columns acros
rolls are still used in Jewish
When Ezra "opened the
really unrolled the scroll.
*opened it, all the people s
show attention and respect.
tomary for the people, and
officiating minister, to stan
reading from the sacred bo
during the remarks that fol
4: 16, 20). It is not mea
people stood during the wh
for six hours, from light t
stood whenever the Script
and sat during the explana
6. *Ezra blessed the Lord,
the service with prayer.
people answered.* Respons
no new thing. *Amen,*
which is true"; "So let it
as it were, the stamp of
assertion, and making it b
oath. "Amen" involves t
ceptance and truthfulness
their hands. An appeal
they accepted the law t
would obey it. *Bowed th
worshipped the Lord with
the ground.* They sank d
posture of humble, earnes
falling on their knees, a
ing forward and down t
came "between their kn
18: 42).
7. *And the Levites: i.
Levites,"* for those nam
Levites. *Caused the peopl
the law.* In the three wa
the next verse. *The peop
place.* Rather, "were in
remained throughout the
reading and exposition w
their places. It is not
they stood* (at least, all th