

An Ancient Autograph.

"So you are collecting autographs, are you?" said Uncle Jack, as Dorothy brought out her pretty album. "That reminds me that I saw an autograph when I was in Constantinople last year, that was almost as old as civilization itself. It was written—let me see—well, in the time of Abraham."

"Why, Uncle Jack, in Abraham's time they didn't have paper, did they?" asked Ned.

"No, indeed. Paper wasn't invented; nor, ink either. Yet it was a genuine autograph, and written by a king, too."

"I know; it was cut in stone," said Dorothy, wisely.

Uncle Jack shook his head. "It was a written autograph—the king's own hand, with no carving or cutting about it. Dorothy."

"Well, I give it up said Ned; and Dorothy uttered the same words with the addition: "Do tell us about it, please, Uncle Jack."

"Take your Bibles; then, and turn to the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. The first name in the chapter is that of the writer of an ancient autograph, and the second name has something to do with it, too."

"Amraphel, King of Shinar; Arioch, king of Ellasar." read Ned, "Oh, yes, I remember; they were two of the kings who made war against Sodom and Gomorrah, and captured Lot, and Abraham went after them and rescued Lot, and chased them clear to Hobab, near Damascus."

"That's right, and now I will give you something else to remember. Those are the Jewish names of the kings and their countries, just as we often have our names for foreign places that are a trifle different in pronunciation and spelling from the way the foreigners themselves write or speak them. So Amraphel was 'Hammurabi' in his own land of Babylonia, called 'Shinar' by the Jews; and Arioch was 'Eri-Aku,' in his country of Larsa, which they called 'Ellasar.'

"Now for our autograph letter. Eri-Aku has usurped the kingdom from the real king, Sin-iddinnam, and Sin-iddinnam had taken refuge at the Babylonian court. After the campaign against Sodom, the Elamites, who had put Nri-Aku upon the throne, and who had also made Hammurabi himself pay tribute, became less powerful, and Hammurabi finally threw off their yoke, and then helped Sin-iddinnam to go back to Larsa and reconquer his kingdom. It was after this overthrow of the Elamites that Hammurabi wrote a letter to Sin-iddinnam with his own hand."

"But what did he write it on?" asked Dorothy, with irrepressible curiosity.

"Clay!" said Uncle Jack. "The Babylonians used thin tablets or cakes of clay. They wrote on them while soft, with a sharp-pointed stick, and then baked them in the sun or in an oven. They used the cuneiform character, which looks like a series of tiny nail scratches, and often takes a magnifying glass to read, it is so crowded and cramped. The tablets are usually very small, you see, so that the postman could carry them."

"The postman?" exclaimed Ned, incredulously.

"Yes, indeed. These tablets were usually put into envelopes, like our letters today—only the envelopes were of leather or linen, tied about with a string or thong, and sealed up with an extra lump of clay, on which the writer pressed his seal. Then the postman carried them by the thousands, for Babylonia was a busy commercial empire, and there was a great deal of correspondence to and fro between different towns, and some of them went to Egypt and Syria. But we are forgetting Amraphel's letter to his brother king. It was so short that anyone could remember it."

"To Sin-iddinnam, Hammurabi says:

"The [images of the] goddesses of Emutbolim, which are assigned to thee, the troops under the command of Tnuhsamar will bring to thee in safety. When they reach thee, with the troops which thou hast, destroy the people, and the goddesses to their dwellings let them bring in safety."

"You see, they were heathen, and cruel, both of them: so I am glad that Abraham defeated Amraphel, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am!" said Dorothy, with decision. "But isn't it wonderful to have a real autograph like that from so long ago! Will clay ever wear out, Uncle Jack?"

"Hardly. Once baked, it seems to be practically indestructible by time. Amraphel's tablet will last when every book printed in this present century of ours shall have molded away to dust. There are hundreds and hundreds of these autograph tablets written by kings, and merchants, and doctors, and boatmen, and farmers—every class of people, in fact, in the empire. Some are from women."

"Well," said Ned, "I think it makes this chapter in Genesis just as interesting as it can be, to hear about Amraphel's private correspondence; and to think Uncle Jack has seen it with his own eyes! But I tell you, Uncle Jack, I wouldn't have wanted to be a postman in ancient Babylonia for clay isn't so light as paper! I've had it on my boots, and I know! and the little talk ended up in a laugh all round.—Ex."

Be not discouraged at broken and spilled resolutions; but to it and to it again!—S. Rutherford.

The Young People

EDITOR

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All articles for this department should be sent to Rev. A. T. Dykeman, Fairville, N. B., and must be in his hands one week at least before the date of publication.

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The prayer meeting "notes" for November are being prepared by Rev. A. T. Robinson, of Middle Sackville. We bespeak for them a careful and prayerful reading. We are very thankful to Rev. H. O. Millington for his excellent notes for October. We hope all our Young People are interested in these articles, and making a careful study of them.

Men of Israel Help.

Pastors and Secretaries, we are waiting for reports from your Societies. What are you doing? Are you taking up the Sacred Literature Studies? What are you doing with the Conquest Missionary Course? Are you doing anything about our Missionaries' Salary? Tell us what you are doing, and it will inspire others. Sit right down and write us as soon as you read this. Don't wait until "tomorrow" or you will forget it. Tomorrow is the devil's word. Today is God's word and should be your word.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday.—A period of Waiting. I Kings 17:8-24.

Tuesday.—Meeting with Ahab the King. I Kings

18:7-21.

Wednesday.—The Contest on Mount Carmel. I Kings

18:23-39.

Thursday.—Prevailing Prayer. I Kings 18:41-46; Jas.

5:17, 18.

Friday.—Frightened and Disheartened. I Kings 19:1-18.

Saturday.—The Chariot of Fire. II Kings 2:1-15.

Sunday.—In the Holy Mount. Mark 9:1-13.

Prayer Meeting Topic.—November 8.

Great men of the Bible. Elijah. 2 Kings 2:1-12; Matt. 11:14 and Jas. 5:17, 18.

Our general theme is, great men of the Bible; Our particular theme is Elijah; and that again is narrowed down to the snap shots we get of him in the passages assigned and quoted above. In the first photograph Elisha stands beside Elijah dividing the space and the honors with him, and in the second John stands a trifle before him; yet we shall be able, I trust, to get three fairly good looks at Elijah for all that. Let us consider Elijah in relation to his successor. Elijah is about to lay down his wand of office. The time has come for him to move on. He feels "the tide which drew from out the boundless deep turn again home," bearing him on its bosom. Another must be found to take up the great task he is called upon to abandon. Many are they that would aspire to the office, but how many are fit for it? To be head of the schools of the prophets; to rebuke wrong in King's palaces without winking; to be chief herald for Jehovah on earth at a time when Jehovah was held in contempt,—all that called for a man who could not lightly be turned aside from a holy purpose; one made of martyr stuff, whose devotion to God burned within him even unto death. None other need apply. He would put these young aspirants of the schools to the test.

He makes his last visit to them. By some independent channel they have received knowledge of his departure. All are ambitious to follow and if possible succeed him. So Elijah puts their holy ambition to the test. He assumes a distant, touch-me-not manner, as Jesus later did with the Syrophenian woman. Unlike that woman they are easily discouraged and give up. Plainly they would never do to play the lion's part.

But there is one man among them who is persistent. Elisha burns with a zeal of God's glory. He covets the spiritual blessing of succession—the elder brother's place and portion—even if it does mark him for death at the royal court. Three times Elijah discourages him, but each time Elisha swells out with a determination as fixed as his own, and reckless of consequences, swears that he will not leave him. Elijah thinks now he sees one worthy to succeed him in his perilous office, but he adds one more test. "If you see me when I am taken from thee it shall be so unto thee: but if not it shall not be so." This was a most subtle test: but Elisha was equal to it. He was determined above all things else to have that blessing. Not Elijah's last conversation, nor lawless ideas that troop through the mind embedden, nor his own bitter reflections on his own personal loss can divert his mind from the point for a moment. Swiftly and noiselessly the messenger of heaven came by, but Elisha abides the test. He is awake and alert and cries out to the departing one like a man of swift decisions, and God hears and on him drops Elijah's mantle as the only one worthy to wear it.

You too, it may be, are anxious to do some great thing for God and to play some prominent part. Pause there,

dear friend, and ask thyself if thou canst measure up to Elijah's test. Is your desire to serve, a little one, or a great, overmastering passion, that displaces fear of rebuke, fear of man's displeasure and the fear of death? You desire but are you deterred? Do you stay in Gilgal, in Beth-el or on the hills overlooking Jordan? You would do great things for Christ? Good, but remember that Christ's great things were and are and even shall be preceded by the wilderness, Gethsemane, and the pain and shame of the cross. Art thou willing for them? Be not concerned for honors but for fitness. Measure up to Elijah's test and you may have Elijah's mantle any day. "Canst thou drink the cup that I drink of," said Christ.

11. Elijah in relation to the forerunner. There is a resemblance between John and Elijah. Elijah appeared at a time when Jehovah's religion was really extinct: so did John. Elijah was a spectacular figure, coming suddenly into view: so was John. Elijah was a preacher of righteousness: so was John. Elijah was bred in the wilderness, and rough in the exterior but mighty in power: so was John. Elijah lived simply: so did John. Elijah rebuked sin in the royal palace: so did John. Elijah got into trouble through the machinations of an evil queen: so did John. Elijah spoke fearlessly for one higher than himself: so did John. What do you do?

111. Elijah in relation to his God. He was a man of of prayer. This is the secret of his triumphant life. No man ever yet did much for God who was not like Elijah in that respect. Elijah's affected the course of nature. Skeptics mock at that; but if there be a Supreme Will at the helm of things that Will may sometimes vary the course of things. The hands of my watch usually turn from left to right; but sometimes they turn from right to left. That's because there's an intelligent will behind them working to a plan. James makes prayer an efficient cause when he says, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." It is a powerful lever in our hands. Do we press it hard? Elijah did. He addressed himself to downright intercession. He was earnest and definite in his asking. He asketh that it might not rain. His prayer was backed by a clean life. Rain was withheld. He asked again that rain might come and it came. He knew what he wanted and went for it as Elisha went for his blessing.

Elijah was not the only man to prevail over the elements in prayer. Others since his day have been similarly heard. Prayer brought rain about the time James was writing his epistle. (Josephus Ant. 18:86). Luther's prayers prevailed for rain in his day. So did Chas. G. Finney's in our own day. And if anyone doubts the miracle of Elijah's summer rain, let him gaze on the golden rain by which 2,200 orphans are nourished in Bristol, and 600 missionaries with their schools and hospitals in the China Inland Mission. Better not cavil at these miracles till these later ones are explained.

Elijah believed in God and walked with God in prayer and one day he walked so far that, as a little girl quaintly said of Enoch, God said to him, "You are a long way from home now, Elijah. Hadn't you better come home and stay with me."

So Elijah went up in the prophetic age as Enoch had gone in the patriarchal, and as our Master went up in our own. And these three translations are the pledges of the great translation to come when those who are alive and remain on the earth shall be caught up to meet their Lord in the air.

A. T. ROBINSON.

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Illustrative Gatherings.

(Selected by the Editor.)

Elijah Was a Man of Prayer. Jas. 5:17-18.

PRAYER.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed,
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

—Montgomery.

He prayeth best who loveth best.

—Coleridge.

Leave not off praying to God, for either praying will make thee leave off sinning; or continuing in sin will make thee desist from praying.

—Fuller.

Prayer is the rope up in the belfry; we pull it, and it rings the bell up in heaven.

—Christmas Evans.

Search through the world, we still shall find,
That wide as spreads the ambient air,
The common language of mankind,
In peril, want, or woe, is prayer.

—Anon.

Man is: "An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light;
And with no language but a cry."