

# Sunday Reading.

A GREAT MOSLEM TEMPLE.  
The Mosque of Omar and its Traditions—  
The Character of Omar.

The great Mosque of Omar on the site of Solomon's Temple on Mount Moriah, is regarded as the most magnificent building in the city of David. There are few structures, either ancient or modern, that are held in such reverence. Here, say the adherents of Mohammed, the great prophet ascended to heaven, and their traditions tell that the print of his sandalled foot is still seen on the rock from which he took his final flight.

Some thirty years ago, it was strictly forbidden that any one, not a Moslem, should enter the mosque, or even tread on the ground on which it stands. This rule, however, has been relaxed, and nowadays pilgrims of any creed are allowed to enter the first, of course, paying a "backsheesh" to the officials. As to travellers, the consuls of the various countries usually secure permission for them to visit the mosque. The consul sends a dragoman with an official letter to the "Mutassarif" (governor), who directs the party in charge of the El-Haram to receive the strangers.

Visitors have to discard their shoes at the threshold. Except in cold weather, the court-room of the mosque is always crowded, some of the visitors being mere curiosity seekers, and others students, who pore over the pages of the Koran with the design of consecrating themselves to religious duties. The square is one of the pleasantest places in the city, being exposed to the exhilarating breezes that come from the direction of the Mount of Olives.

Religious services are held unceasingly in the mosque. On festivals, such as the "great feast" (the first after Ramadan, the "fasting month") the mosque of Omar, the gathering place of many thousands of the country people, who come there once a year for worship and pleasant excursions. They linger around the mosque during the day and find a shelter with some acquaintance overnight.

On their homeward journey, these rural pilgrims, especially the women sing the songs of joy peculiar to the Moslems, in which they celebrate their visit to "the rock," from the top of which they believe their prophet took his way to heaven. This rock, they declare, is suspended between heaven and earth, being literally supported in air.

The mosque is now in a state of partial decay. The gate to the right is the main entrance, and adjoins the western wall of the city, known as "the wailing place of the Jews." Several "dacroories" (black men from the Sudan), are posted at the different corners of the mosque to prevent the intrusion of "unbelievers" and to check disorder of any kind. They are paid from the "mosque fund." The mosque is very rich, its guardians controlling the revenues from many buildings that belong to the Moslem church, and which devout Moslems have bequeathed to it. Some wealthy Mohammedans have left their entire property, "in the name of the prophet," to this temple.

Omar, Abu-Hafsa Ibn-al Khatab, was the second of the great Moslem Calips, and lived in the sixth century. He was the third cousin of Abdullah, the father of Mohammed, and in his early career was a violent enemy of the prophet, but afterwards became a staunch friend. After Mohammed's death, Omar caused Abubekr to be proclaimed Caliph, and he became prime minister, afterwards succeeding to the Caliphate. In his reign Syria was conquered for the Crescent, Jerusalem was besieged and captured and the keys of the Holy City were handed to Omar in person by the messenger of Sophronius the high priest. He spared the lives of the inhabitants, and granted them religious liberty. All the other important cities of Palestine capitulated in rapid succession. Omar's nature, however, was sincere and not all were dealt with as leniently by his victorious armies as the people of Jerusalem. Many stories of his remarkable sense of justice are preserved in Moslem literature. He was assassinated in the mosque at Medina by a Persian slave named Abu-Lula Firuz and was buried in that city close to the tombs of Mohammed and Abu-Bekr. Omar was the first ruler who kept armies under pay, and assigned pensions to faithful public servants. He is also said to be the first to establish a municipal police force and to promulgate laws defining the relations and the responsibilities of masters and servants. Thus, in some sense he was a public benefactor, but his frightful career of sanguinary conquest and slaughter is one of the saddest pictures in the world's history.

The Cost of a Slack Wire.

In the course of a recent discussion on the propriety of spending public money for repairs, a certain vote was opposed. One of the advocates of the expenditure related the following incident: A few years ago there was a serious accident on the Lachine canal at Montreal. The wire from the deck to the engine room of a certain steamer that was passing through the canal had become slack. The officer in charge on deck pulled the wire to ring the bell in the engine room and stop the steamer as he entered one of the locks. The wire being out of order, the bell did not ring, the steamer kept on at full speed, the lock gates were smashed by the collision, the waters were suddenly let out, and many vessels inside were greatly damaged. There was also an obstruction to business for several days at a crowded season of the year, and a great fleet of upward and downward bound craft were detained with very great detriment to their cargoes.

Indeed, the whole loss was estimated roughly at scarcely less than one million and a quarter dollars. The speaker asked his hearers to consider how much would have been saved by spending a quarter of a dollar in having that wire tightened before the catastrophe occurred. Carelessness in such matters sometimes leads to spiritual

calamities. When in the closet the Christian finds that some fault or secret sin interrupts communion with his God he should never disregard it, but examine himself to see where he is in fault. The way of access by which he speaks with God and receives direction from him can never remain slack without serious danger to the believer.

THE WORSHIP OF "KWANON"  
One of the Most Peculiar of China's Many Strange Idolatries.

Once a year the people about Swatow, in China, go to a temple on a small island near-by to worship the Chinese "Queen of Heaven," to whom mercantile men think they owe their success upon sea and land. Miss Daniels a missionary at Swatow, who visited the temple describes in the Gospel in all lands, the temple, the idol, and the worship:

"The temple dedicated to the goddess stands high, and is reached by a flight of stone steps. It is highly ornamented in flowers, fowl, fishes and beasts, the ridge-pole being crowned by a great dragon. A noisy theatre operates a few feet in front of the steps, and on all sides are people with the tables for supplying food or mock money. Going up the steps one sees directly in front of the temple an altar for making offerings to the spirits of such of the departed as have no children to worship them. To the right of this is a huge paper image, its head as high as the top of the temple, its face and hands as hideous as you can imagine. This is the ruler of these departed spirits, and it is his duty to settle disagreements among those spirits who are inclined to quarrel. To the left of the altar is a furnace, in which bushels of ashes and embers show that during the past two days great quantities of mock money have been offered."

"Within the temple, at the farther end, sits the goddess in her usual, with a heavy canopy above, all elaborately wrought in silk. With her attendant on either side she is quite unmindful of the earnestness with which two devotees are tossing their bamboo slips, eagerly watching for the favorable position of one black and one white side up, to show that their petition will be granted. In front of the goddess is a row of three altars, each about ten feet long and three wide. One is covered with lighted tapers and incense pots, in which incense sticks are burning, filling the building with smoke. The others are loaded with mock money and all kinds of food brought for offerings. Here are the entire heads of swine stained a bright pink and roasted, fowls of all kinds, fish of all kinds, and the best of fruits, all of which are offered, then taken home and eaten by the family."

"Beyond these altars are mats upon which the worshippers kneel after having made their offerings; and gongs are beaten with a deafening noise while they prostrate themselves before the idol. "We turn aside and wander a short distance from the temple, where we find a number of women whom we tell of our God. Some listen, others examine our dress and inquire after our families. When we ask them regarding their worship, the greater number acknowledge that their goddess can hear nothing, can say nothing, and can in no way help them, and they worship because it is their custom. Others say they did not come to worship, but are out for pleasure; others hold that the goddess does not help them. Thus, we spend four hours talking with these poor women; and hope that some may have heard the Gospel, to accept it in the future."

Messages of Help for the Week.

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." "O come let us sing unto the Lord: Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving." Psalms 122, 1, and 95, 1, 2.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Tim., 3, 16.

"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim., 2, 5.

"He is able to save them to the uttermost that cometh unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7, 25.

"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name." John 20, 31.

"By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Eph. 2, 8.

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Rom. 5, 1, 2, 5.

It is more than twenty years ago since Bishop Wilberforce, riding with Earl Grosvenor to Mr. Leveson-Gower's seat in Surrey, where Mr. Gladstone so often stays, fell from his horse and was killed. It was said at the time that he desired a sudden death. Singular confirmation of this is afforded by a story told in an obituary notice of the Rev. George Crabbe Rolfe, for fifty-four years vicar of Hailey, Oxon. The writer says: "On one occasion the Bishop and Mr. Rolfe were riding together down a very steep hill in the parish, the vicar on his old pony, the Bishop, as usual, on his good mount. The latter rode down somewhat too precipitately for the vicar and his pony, and Mr. Rolfe, on catching his lordship up, twitted him upon his intrepid horsemanship. To this the Bishop replied that a sudden death was about the happiest thing that could happen to a man."

## NEWS AND NOTABILLA.

The Catacombs of Rome contain the remains of about six million people.

In England three hundred years ago, anyone absent from church on Sunday was fined one shilling.

There are 9,000,000 English-speaking people who profess no particular religion, and there are 1,100,000 atheists.

The 1893 International Convention of Christian Endeavor Societies is to be held at San Francisco. Next year's convention will be held at Cleveland, Ohio.

Canon Edwards Cust, Archdeacon of Richmond—no relation of the Dean of York—entered the other day on his nineteenth year, so that the united ages of the Dean of Ripon and himself, whose birthdays occurred in the same week, are 175 years.

In 1850, it is said, there were about ten Norwegian pastors in the United States. Now the Norwegians in the North-west have three large church bodies with 652 pastors and 1,705 congregations. The Lutheran synod of Wisconsin numbers 83,783 communicants, and sustains 8,805 parochial schools.

In Christians, in Norway, there is an average population of 13,000 for each church, and in Copenhagen an average of 26,000; or, including the suburbs of Fredericksborg, even of 28,000. Should Copenhagen be supplied with churches only as well as Christians, the number of parishes would have to be increased from thirteen to twenty-eight.

The returns of the various Methodist churches in New Zealand, which have been secured as the basis of negotiations for reunion, are as follows: Wesleyans, 102 ministers and 56,130 adherents; primitives, 25 ministers, 5,220 adherents; free methodists, 14 ministers, 1,905 adherents; bible christian, 9 ministers, 1,039 adherents; total of 150 ordained ministers and 64,324 adherents.

A touching old rural custom still prevails in the western parts of France during the harvest season. On the edge of a field bordering the highway a sheaf of grain is left standing, to which all the peasants of the village contribute, and which is called "the stranger's sheaf," as it is the property of the first tramp or other homeless wanderer who may care to carry it away and profit by its price.

The Christian World, of London, has been publishing a series of articles on the Statists. In the last number it gives a summary of the statistics which is of great interest. In 1870, it says, the adherents numbered about 70,000. It was then that they commenced to attract special attention. In 1887, they were estimated at 200,000 to 300,000, and at the present time the writer claims that a moderate and reasonable estimate would put their numbers about 250,000.

Archdeacon Sinclair is very fond of riding and cycling. As London does not afford the opportunities he would like for the indulgence in these exhilarating exercises, he makes the most of his annual six weeks of holiday. During these holidays he often makes Thurso Castle, the ancestral seat of his family, which, built on the very brink of the Pentland Firth, looks straight out to Iceland beyond the huge headlands of Thurso Bay and the Orkney Islands. In August, 1891, the Archdeacon went down on his tricycle, doing the 720 miles in sixteen days.

A Chicago correspondent of the London Church Times says: "Down in the grounds of the Columbian Exposition a few days ago an earnest Church woman said to me—"

"Talk about Catholicity and Christian unity! You should have been at the little church in Woodlawn near the Fair grounds last Sunday, to have seen a practical illustration of both. There were present, besides our own people, English, French, Germans, Swiss, Swedes, Syrians, Egyptians and Dahomeyans, and at the altar rail white and black Christians knelt side by side. One of the fiercest looking warriors among the Dahomey villagers greeted the pastor of this church one day with 'How do, Missionary! And proved to be a Christian in spite of his savage adornments.' It is also a fact that the greater number of the so-called Turks in the Turkish quarter of 'Midway Plaisance' are Syrians and Christians."

The church beadle is about to be revived, says an English paper. In the old times, says a very gossipy and somewhat individual; but in a long time now he has been regarded with a feeling not at all proportionate to that which his dimensions and his gilt buttons ought to inspire. In St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey he wears a black gown, and in most City churches a uniform which seems a combination of postman and railway guard. But in St. Agn's Kensington Park, the beadle has been restored to his ancient prestige. He is duly vested, and sits in state in the chancel, except when, armed with his staff, he marches at the head of the choir. He it is who is responsible for the reverent conduct of the worshippers and the expulsion of any wrongdoers. If he attend to his duties properly he will be the most important person at marriage ceremonies, like his prototype in Paris churches, the "suisse," who gives the three knocks on the floor with his staff when the wedding procession enters.

Odd Offerings.

An English paper names fresh laid eggs as the most unusual offering ever taken in a church. Such an offering it has been customary for some time to have on one Sunday each spring, at High Halden Church, in Kent. On its being held this year on the 7th of May last, 610 eggs were brought to the church, or one egg for nearly every person in the parish. These eggs were sent up, as usual, for the sick and very poor of the parish of St. Luke, Camberwell. Another unusual offering was that of toys taken on the last Hospital Sunday at a special Children's Flower Service, held at Curzon Chapel, Mayfair. The first collection from the natives of New

Guinea, at a meeting held in Port Moresby, in aid of the London Missionary Society, included: 325 spears, sixty-five shell armlets, ninety-two bows, 180 arrows, besides shells, drums, shell necklaces, feather and other ornaments, valued at £10. A correspondent reported in the 'Standard' in the spring of 1892, an unusual offering at a small town in Suffolk. When the money was counted, pieces of cardboard carefully silvered over, and of the exact size of three-penny bits, were taken from the bags, a device stamped upon them making them as much like those coins as possible.

HIS FIRST EXTEMPORE SERMON.

The Incident that led a Clergyman to Abandon Written Discourses.

Rev. Arthur Robin writes in the illustrated Church News:—The first extempore sermon I ever preached was to an itinerant congregation of two dogs. It came to pass in this wise. Thirty years ago it took me a whole day to set down a sermon in some sort of shape. I used to write for the pulpit all Monday. Bishop Wilberforce told me he had never heard the like thereof. On his authority it was a record, and I believe it still stands as a record that has never been equalled.

On Wednesday evening, in the glorious summer time of 1867, when I was a curate-in-charge in hospitable, picturesque Burnham, just by the Beeches, I was going to testify at the close of the day to the bucolics on a village green. I had a weather-beaten sermon in my pocket, which, I much fear, had at sometime done such duty to divers of the simpler sort in sundry other places. While I journeyed by the hedges through the lanes, my only companions in the solitude of the nearing twilight were a big St. Bernard and a prize pug-dog. With them alone for a congregation I found myself preaching my first extempore sermon. Under the circumstances there was nothing to check or chill my own self-confidence, consequently in my harangue I neither stumbled nor fell. I neither stopped for an idea nor paused for a word. If I could thus, without once coming to grief, address an unconverted world, through a St. Bernard and a pug, in what was a faultless flow, why, I then bet myself, should I otherwise go to the dogs, I contemptuously of the familiar written word within my pocket, I preached with all this passion in the little school-house on the green? The dogs had behaved quite beautifully. My natural timidity had never been known to have begotten an impromptu yet. I was moved by the success of the *al fresco* address, and I kept the weather-beaten treatise, of less spontaneous times, where it was. My rustic congregation was manifestly all agog with delight, and I shall never forget, what I said, but how I said it.

Between manner and matter, happily for me, there was no one fit to judge, and because of the success of the full-dress rehearsal with the dogs I was just a little above myself. I felt, indeed, to be wound up for all time when the mock frogs gaped upon me, when the pretty little schoolmistress, who, with her own hands, devoutly and devotedly prepared that room for divine service, simply said, as I disappeared into the night, "Oh, Mr. Robbins, it was all so beautiful, so wonderfully beautiful. You will never write another sermon will you?" And I never did. Innocently and artlessly, peradventure, the little mistress thought I was certainly created to lower the record of Demosthenes himself, after he had experimented with the stones in his mouth, and then spake plain. I never told her when I had her good night, and I have never told anyone else till now, how I preached my first extempore sermon, and in what manner I first of all went to the dogs.

The Seed and the Fruit.

When the gospel seed is sown the harvest is sure, but it may be long in coming and may appear in unexpected places. A lady in Melbourne, Australia, had proof of this recently. She says: "I was visiting in the hospital one day in connection with the Flower Mission, when I noticed a new case, a woman with a dark skin and very dark hair. Thinking she was a negro, I passed on, but on coming down the ward again she opened her eyes and stretched out her hands for some of my flowers. I gave her some, and found she was one of the Syrian women who carry about small things for sale in the streets. When I asked her if she knew my Saviour, she said, 'Oh, yes!' Then she told me that she had heard about him first, and learned to love him as a little girl in a school at Damascus, and she was now teaching her children about him, too."

"I left her one of my favorite texts, 'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty'; and the following Wednesday, directly she saw me, she said so eagerly, 'I remember the text you taught me, and I have been saying it over to myself, 'Mine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.' She soon got better and left the hospital, and I have not seen her since, but I have her name (Babea Camy) in my bible; she wrote it herself, that I might remember to pray for her."

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