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*Joseph Mazzini Wheeler*

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

# BIBLE ROMANCES.

BY

G. W. FOOTE.

FIRST SERIES.



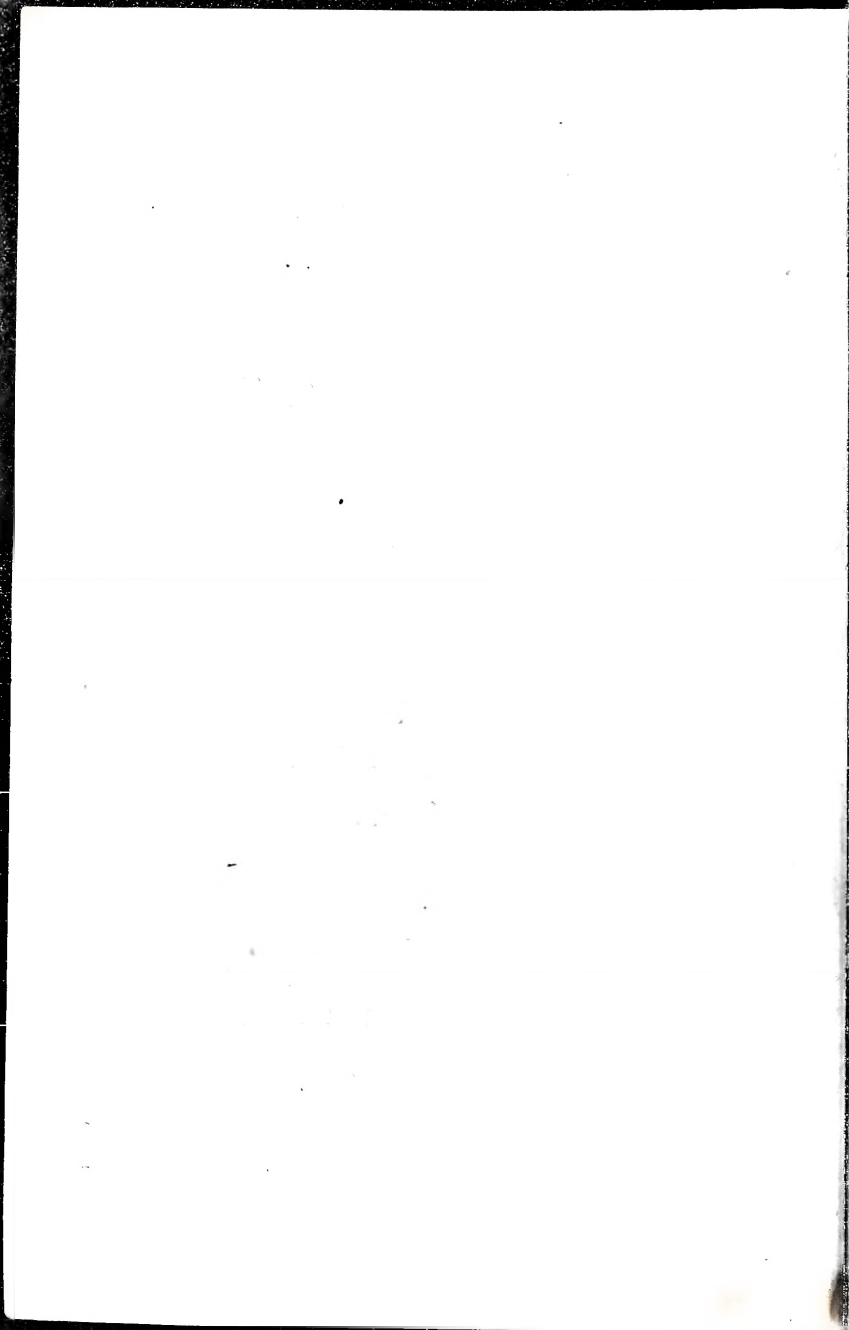
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## BIBLE ROMANCES.—1.

# THE CREATION STORY.

By G. W. FOOTE.

THE Book of Genesis is generally thought, as Professor Huxley says, to contain the beginning and the end of sound science. The mythology of the Jews is held to be a divine revelation of the early history of man, and of the cosmic changes preparatory to his creation. The masses of the people in every Christian country are taught in their childhood, that God created the universe, including this earth with all its flora and fauna, in five days; that he created man, "the bright consummate flower" of his work, on the sixth day, and rested on the seventh. Yet every student knows this conception to be utterly false; every man of science rejects it as absurd; and even the clergy themselves mostly disbelieve it. Why, then, do they not disabuse the popular mind, and preach what they deem true, instead of what they know to be false? The answer is very simple. Because they feel that the doctrine of the Fall is bound up with the Genesiac account of Creation, and that if the latter be discredited the former will not long be retained. The doctrine of the Fall being the foundation of the scheme of Atonement, the clergy will never admit the Creation Story to be mythical until they are forced to do so by external pressure. At any rate they cannot be expected to proclaim its falsity, since by so doing they would destroy the main prop of their power. What the recognised teachers of religion will not do, however, should not be left undone, especially when it is so needful and important. Men of science, by teaching positive and indisputable truths, are gradually but surely revolutionising the world of thought, and dethroning the priesthoods of mystery and superstition. Yet their influence on the masses is indirect, and they do not often trouble themselves to show the contradiction between their discoveries and what is preached from the pulpit. Perhaps they are right. But it is also right that others should appeal to the people in the name not only of science, but also of scholarship and common sense, and show them the incredible absurdity of much that the clergy are handsomely paid to preach as the veritable and infallible Word of God.

The Creation Story, with which the Book of Genesis opens, is incoherent, discrepant, and intrinsically absurd, as we shall attempt to show. It is also discordant with the plainest truths of Science. Let us examine it, after casting aside all prejudice and predilection.

If the universe, including this earth and its principal inhabitant,

man, was created in six days, it follows that less than six thousand years ago, chaos reigned throughout nature. This, however, is clearly untrue. Our earth has revolved round its central sun for numberless millions of years. Geology proves also that millions of years have elapsed since organic existence first appeared on the earth's surface, and this world became the theatre of life and death. Darwin speaks of the known history of the world as "of a length quite incomprehensible by us," yet even that he affirms "will hereafter be recognised as a mere fragment of time" compared with the vast periods which Biology will demand. The instructed members of the Church have long recognised these statements as substantially true, and they have tried to reconcile them with Scripture by assuming that the word which in the History of Creation is rendered *day* really means a *period*, that is an elastic space of time which may be expanded or contracted to suit all requirements. But there are two fatal objections to this assumption. In the first place, the same word is rendered *day* in the fourth commandment, and if it means period in Genesis, it means period in Exodus. In that case we are commanded to work six periods and rest on the seventh, and each period must cover a geological epoch. How pleasant for those who happen to be born in the seventh period, how unpleasant for those born in one of the six! The lives of the one class all work, those of the other all play! In the second place, the account of each day's creation concludes with the refrain, "and the evening and the morning were the first (or other) day." Now evening and morning are terms which mark the luminous gradations between night and day, and these phenomena, like night and day, depend on the earth's revolving on its axis, and presenting different portions of its surface to the sun. Evening and morning clearly imply a space of twenty-four hours, and the writer of Genesis, whoever he was, would probably be surprised at any other interpretation of his words. It is sometimes argued, as for instance by Dr. M'Caul, that these primeval days were of vast and unknown duration, the evening and the morning not being dependent on their present causes. But this supposition could only apply to the first three days, for the sun, moon, and stars were created on the fourth day, expressly "to rule over the day, and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness." The fifth and sixth days, at least, must be understood as of normal length, and thus the chronological difficulties remain. All animal life was brought into existence on the last two days, and therefore the Bible still allows an antiquity of less than six thousand years for the world's fauna. Geology and Biology allow millions of years. Here then Science and the Bible are in flagrant and irreconcilable contradiction.

The fact that the writer of Genesis represents light as existing three days before the creation of the sun, the source of light, has

frequently been noticed. One learned commentator supposed that God had infused a certain "luminosity" through the air, which was not exactly the same as the light of the sun. But light is not a *thing*; it is a phenomenon caused by definite laws of astronomy and optics. Such explanations are but fanciful refuges of superstition. "God said let there be light and there was light," is not the language of science and history, but the language of poetry. As such it is sublime. We find a similar expression in the Vedas of the Hindoos: "He thought, I will create worlds, and they were there!" Both become ridiculous when presented to us as a scientific statement. The physical astronomer knows how worlds are formed, as well as how their movements are determined; he knows also the causes of light; and he knows that none of these processes resembles the accounts given in the Creation Stories of the Hebrews and the Hindoos.

Science knows nothing of six creative epochs, any more than of six creative days; and it is quite certain that the order of Creation given in Genesis differs widely from the revelations of Geology. For instance (and one instance in such a case is as good as a thousand), fish and fowl are said to have been created on the same day. Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that day means period. The conclusion still is that fish and fowl were created together. Starting from this conclusion, what should we expect to find in our geological researches? Why, the fossil remains of fish and of fowl in the same epochs. But we find nothing of the kind. Marine animals antedate the carboniferous period, during which all our coal deposits were laid, but no remains of fowl are found until a later period. Now the carboniferous period alone, according to Sir William Thompson, covers many millions of years; so that instead of fish and fowl being contemporaneous, we find them geologically separated by inconceivable spaces of time. Here again the Bible and Science fatally disagree,

Even if we admit that the fifth day of creation was a *period*, the chronology of the Bible is still fatally at variance with fact. With respect to the antiquity of the human race, it is precise and unmistakable. It gives us the age of Adam at his death, and the ages of the other antediluvian patriarchs. From the Flood the genealogies are carefully recorded, until we enter the historic period, after which there is not much room for dispute. From the creation of Adam to the birth of Christ, the Bible allows about four thousand years. The antiquity of the human race, therefore, according to Scripture, is less than six thousand years. Science, however, proves that this is but a fragment of the vast period during which man has inhabited the earth. There was a civilisation in Egypt thousands of years before the alleged creation of Adam. The Cushite civilisation was even more ancient. Archæology shows us traces of man's presence, in a

runder state, long before that. The researches of Mr. Pengelly in Kent's Cavern proved that cave-men lived there more than two hundred thousand years ago; while geological investigations in the Valley of the Somme have established the fact that primitive men existed there in the tertiary period. Professor Draper writes: "So far as investigations have gone, they indisputably refer the existence of man to a date remote from us by many hundreds of thousands of years. It must be borne in mind that these investigations are quite recent, and confined to a very limited geographical space. No researches have yet been made in those regions which might reasonably be regarded as the primitive habitat of man. We are thus carried back immeasurably beyond the six thousand years of Patristic chronology. It is difficult to assign a shorter date for the last glaciation of Europe than a quarter of a million of years, and *human existence antedates that.*" The chronology of the Bible is thus altogether obsolete.

The idea of a seven-days' creation was not confined to the Jews; it was shared by the Persians and Etruscans. The division of the year into months and weeks is a general, although not a universal practice. The ancient Egyptians observed a ten-days' week, but the seven-days' week was well known to them. The naming of the days of the week after the seven Planets was noted by DION CASSIUS as originally an Egyptian custom, which spread from Egypt into the Roman Empire. The Brahmans of India also distinguish the days of the week by the planetary names. This division of time was purely astronomical. The Jews kept the Feast of the New Moon, and other of their ceremonies were determined by lunar and solar phenomena. We may be sure that the myth of a seven-days' creation followed and did not precede the regular observance of that period.

There is one feature of the Hebrew story of creation which shows how anthropomorphic they were. The Persians represent Ormuzd as keeping high festival with his angels on the seventh day, after creating all things in six. But the Hebrews represent Jehovah as *resting* on the seventh day, as though the arduous labors of creation had completely exhausted his energies. Fancy *Omnipotence* requiring rest to recruit its strength! The Bible, and especially in its earlier parts, is grossly anthropomorphic. It exhibits God as conversing with men, sharing their repasts, and helping them to slaughter their foes. It represents him as visible to human eyes, and in one instance as giving Moses a back view of his person. Yet these childish fancies are still thrust upon us as divine truths, which if we disbelieve we shall be eternally damned!

Let us now examine the Creation Story internally. In the first place, we find two distinct records, the one occupying the whole of the first chapter of Genesis and the first three verses of the second, at which point the other commences. These two

records belong to different periods of Jewish history. The older one is the Elohist, so called because the creator is designated by the plural term *Elohim*, which in our version is translated *God*. The more modern one is the Jehovistic, in which *Elohim* is combined with the singular term *Jehovah*, translated in our version *the Lord God*. The Elohist and Jehovistic accounts both relate the creation of man, but instead of agreeing they widely differ. The former makes God create man in his own image; the latter does not even allude to this important circumstance. The former represents man as created male and female at the outset; the latter represents the male as created first, and the female for a special reason afterwards. In the former God enjoins the primal pair to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth;" in the latter there is no such injunction, but on the contrary, the bringing forth of children in sorrow is imposed upon the woman as a punishment for her sin, and she does not appear to have borne any offspring until after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Lastly, the Elohist record makes no mention of this Paradise, in which, according to the Jehovistic record, the drama of the Fall was enacted, but represents man as immediately commissioned to subdue and populate the world. Such discrepancies are enough to stagger the blindest credulity.

We now proceed to examine the Jehovistic account of Creation in detail. We read that the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, the Hebrew word for which is *adamah*. The word Adam means "be red," and *adamah* may be referred to the red soil of Palestine. Kalisch also observes that man may have been originally called Adam on account of the red color of his skin. The Chinese represent man as kneaded of *yellow* earth, and the *red* Indians of *red* clay. The belief that man was formed of earth was not confined to the Jews, but has been almost universal, and undoubtedly arose from the fact that our bodies after death return to the earth and resolve into the elements. The Lord God placed this forlorn first man in the Garden of Eden, with the command to till it, and permission to eat of the fruit of all its trees except "the tree of knowledge of good and evil." How Adam trespassed and fell, and brought a curse upon himself and all his innocent posterity, we shall consider in another pamphlet. The story of the Fall is infinitely curious and diverting, and must be treated separately.

Adam's first exploit, after he had taken a good look round him, was very marvellous. All the cattle and beasts of the field and fowl of the air were brought before him to be named, and "whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." This first Zoological Dictionary is unfortunately lost, or we should be able to call every animal by its right name, which would doubtless gratify them as well as ourselves. The

fishes and insects were not included in this primitive nomenclature, so the loss of the Dictionary does not concern them.

The Lord made the animals pass before Adam seemingly with the expectation that he would choose a partner from amongst them. Nothing, however, struck his fancy. If he had fallen in love with a female gorilla or ourang-outang, what a difference it would have made in the world's history!

After this wonderful exploit "the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam," who surely must have been tired enough to fall into a good sound natural sleep, without a heavenly narcotic. While in this state one of his ribs was extracted for a purpose we shall presently refer to, and which he discovered when he awoke. This curious surgical operation involves a dilemma. If Adam was upright after it, he must have been lopsided before; if he was upright before it, he must have been lopsided after. In either case the poor man was very scurvily treated.

It has been maintained that God provided Adam with another rib in place of the one extracted. But this is a mere conjecture. Besides if the Lord had a spare rib in stock he might have made a woman of it, without cutting poor Adam open and making a *pre mortem* examination of his inside.

The divine operator's purpose was a good one, whatever we may think of his means. He had discovered, what Omniscience would have foreknown, that it was not good for man to be alone, and had resolved to make him a help-meet. Adam's "spare-rib" was the raw material of which his wife was manufactured. The Greenlanders believed that the first woman was fashioned out of the man's *thumb*. The woman was brought to Adam, who said—"This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." Not a word did he say about "soul of my soul." Perhaps he suspected she had none, and with some truth, if we go no further than our English version. When the Lord God made man, he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul," but apparently no such operation was performed on Eve. Indeed it is very difficult to prove from the Bible that woman has a soul at all. Women should reflect on this. They should also reflect on the invidious fact that they were not included in the original scheme of things, but thrown in as a make-weight afterwards. Let them ponder this a while, and the churches and chapels in which this story is taught would soon be emptied. The majority of those who occupy seats in such places wear bonnets, and most of those who don't, go there for the sake of those who do.

When Adam had thus accosted his bride he grew prophetic. "Therefore," said he, "shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." In his desire to give the institution of marriage the highest sanction, the writer of this story perpetrated a gross anachronism. Adam had no parents, nor any experience of



marriage. Unless, therefore, we credit him with superhuman prescience, it is absurd to make him talk in this way.

Eve's name, no less than Adam's, betrays the mythological character of the story. It means the "mother of all," and was evidently applied to her by the Jewish writers in order to signify her supposed relationship to the human race.

While God was engaged in the work of creation, why did he not make two human couples, instead of one? The arrangement he adopted involved the propagation of the human species through incest. Adam and Eve's sons must have had children by their sisters. If two couples had been created, their families might have intermarried, and mankind would not then have sprung from the incestuous intercourse of the very first generation. Surely omnipotence might have obviated the necessity of a crime against which civilised consciences revolt with unspeakable disgust.

Adam and Eve were placed by God in the Garden of Eden. "Eden," says Kalisch, "comprised that tract of land where the Euphrates and Tigris separate; from that spot the 'garden in Eden' cannot be distant. Let it suffice that we know its general position." Its exact position can never be ascertained. What a pity it is that Noah did not occupy some of his leisure time, during the centuries he lived after his exit from the ark, in writing a typography of the antediluvian world! The Greeks placed Paradise in the Islands of the Blessed, beyond the Pillars of Hercules in the western main. The Swede, Rudbeck, asserts that Paradise was in Scandinavia; some Russian writers supposed it to have been in Siberia; and the German writers, Hasse and Schulz, on the coast of Prussia. Eastern traditions place it in Ceylon, and regard the mountain of Rahoun as the spot where Adam was buried. Some old Christian writers hazarded the theory that Paradise was beyond the earth altogether, on the other side of the ocean, which they conceived to encircle it, and that Noah was conveyed to our planet by the deluge. Kalisch gives a long list of ancient and modern authorities on the subject, who differ widely from each other as to the actual position of Eden, their only point of agreement being that it was *some-where*.

The Creation Story of the Bible cannot be considered as anything but a Hebrew myth. Scholars have abundantly shown the absurdity of supposing that Moses wrote it. Doubtless, as a piece of traditional mythology, it is very ancient, but it cannot be traced back in its present literary form beyond the Babylonish captivity. Men of science without exception disbelieve it, not only with regard to the world in general, but also with regard to the human race. In his famous article on "The Method and Results of Ethnology," Professor Huxley made this declaration:—  
"There are those who represent the most numerous, respectable,

and would-be orthodox of the public, and who may be called 'Adamites,' pure and simple. They believe that Adam was made out of earth somewhere in Asia, about six thousand years ago; that Eve was modelled from one of his ribs; and that the progeny of these two having been reduced to the eight persons who landed on the summit of Mount Ararat after an universal deluge, all the nations of the earth have proceeded from these last, have migrated to their present localities, and have become converted into Negroes, Australians, Mongolians, etc., within that time. Five-sixths of the public are taught this Adamitic Monogenism as if it were an established truth, and believe it. *I do not; and I am not acquainted with any man of science, or duly instructed person, who does.*" The clergy, then, who go on teaching this old Creation Story as true, are either unduly instructed or dishonest, ignorant or fraudulent, blind guides or base deceivers. It is not for us to determine to which class any priest or preacher belongs: let the conscience of each, as assuredly it will, decide that for himself. But ignorant or dishonest, we affirm, is every one of them who still teaches the Creation Story as a record of actual facts, or as anything but a Hebrew myth.

The origin of the human race is far different from that recorded in Genesis. Man has undoubtedly been developed from a lower form of life. The rude remains of primitive men show that they were vastly inferior to the present civilised inhabitants of the world, and even inferior to the lowest savages with whom we are now acquainted. Their physical and mental condition was not far removed from that of the higher apes; and the general opinion of biologists is that they were descended from the Old World branch of the great Simian family. There is, indeed, no *absolute* proof of this, nor is it probable that there ever will be, as the fossil links between primitive man and his Simian progenitor, if they exist at all, are most likely buried in that sunken continent over which roll the waters of the South Pacific Ocean. But as the line of natural development can be carried back so far without break, there is no reason why it should not be carried farther. The evolution theory is now almost universally accepted by men of science, and few of them suppose that man can be exempted from the general laws of biology. At any rate, the Bible account of Creation is thoroughly exploded, and when that is gone there is nothing to hinder our complete acceptance of the only theory of man's origin which is consistent with the facts of his history, and explains the peculiarities of his physical structure.

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## BIBLE ROMANCES.—2.

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# NOAH'S FLOOD.

By G. W. FOOTE.

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THE Bible story of the Deluge is at once the biggest and the most ridiculous in the whole volume. Any person who reads it with the eyes of Common sense, and some slight knowledge of science, must admit that it is altogether incredible and absurd, and that the book which contains it cannot be the Word of God.

About 1,656 years after God created Adam, and placed him in the garden of Eden, the world had become populous and extremely wicked; indeed, every thought and imagination of man's heart was evil continually. What was the cause of all this wickedness we are not informed; but we are told that the sons of God took unto them wives of the daughters of men because they were fair, and we are led to suppose that these matches produced giants and other incurably wicked offspring. No physiological reason is assigned for this strange result, nor perhaps was there any present to the mind of the writer, who probably had witnessed unhappy marriages in his own family, and was anxious to warn his readers, however vaguely, against allowing their daughters to be inveigled into matrimonial bonds with pious sniffing fellows, who professed themselves peculiarly the children of their Father in heaven. However, the narrative is clear as to the fact itself: men had all gone irrecoverably astray, and God had repented that he ever made them. In such a case an earthly human father would naturally have attempted to improve his family; but the Almighty Father either was too indifferent to do so, or was too well aware of the impossibility of reforming his own wretched offspring; and therefore he determined to drown them all at one fell swoop, just as cat-loving old ladies dispose of too numerous and embarrassing feline progeny. Bethinking him, however, God resolved to save alive one family to perpetuate the race; he was willing to give his creatures another chance, and then, if they persisted in going the wrong way, it would still be easy to drown the lot of them again, and that without any reservation. He had also resolved at first to destroy every living thing from off the face of the earth; but he afterwards decided to spare from destruction two of every species of unclean beasts, male and female, and fourteen, male and female, of all clean beasts and of all fowls of the air and of every creeping thing. Noah, his wife, his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and their wives (eight persons in all), were the only human beings to be preserved from the terrible fate of drowning

Noah was commanded by God to build an ark for the reception of the precious living freight, the dimensions of which were to be, in English measure, 550 feet long, 93 feet wide, and 55 feet deep. Into this floating box they all got; the flood then came and covered the earth, and all besides were drowned.

Now this is a very strange, a very startling story; it seems more like a chapter from the "Arabian Nights" or the "Adventures of Baron Munchausen" than from the sacred Scriptures of any Religion. Carnal reason prompts us to ask many questions about it.

1. How did Noah contrive to bring these beasts, birds, and insects all together in one spot? The task seems superhuman. Some species could be found only in very remote places—the kangaroo only in Australia, the sloth only in South America, the polar bear only in the Arctic regions. How could Noah, in those days of difficult locomotion, have journeyed in search of these across broad rivers, and over continents and oceans? Did he bring them singly to his dwelling-place in Asia, or did he travel hither and thither with his menagerie, and finish the collection before returning home? There are, according to Hugh Miller, 1,658 known species of mammalia, 6,266 of birds, 642 of reptiles, and 550,000 of insects; how *could* one man, or a hundred men, have collected specimens of these in those days, and in such a brief space of time? The beasts clean and unclean, male and female, might be got together by means of terrible exertion, but surely to assemble the birds and reptiles and insects must transcend human capacity. Some of the last class would of course not require much seeking; they visit us whether we desire their company or not; and the difficulty would not be how to get them into the ark, but how on earth to keep them out. Others, however, would give infinite trouble. Fancy Noah occupied in a *wild-goose* chase, or selecting specimens from a wasps' or hornets' nest, or giving assiduous chase to a vigilant and elusive blue-bottle fly!

But suppose Noah to have succeeded in his arduous enterprise, the question still remains, how did he keep his wonderful zoological collection alive? Some of them could live only in certain latitudes; the inhabitants of cold climates would melt away amidst the torrid heat of Central Asia. Then, again, there are some insects that live only a few hours, and some that live a few days at the utmost; what means were adopted for preserving these? Some animals, too, do not pair, but run in herds; many species of fish swim in shoals; sometimes males and sometimes females predominate, as in the case of deer, where one male heads and appropriates a whole herd of females, or in the case of bees, where many males are devoted to the queen of the hive. These could not have gone in pairs, or lived in pairs; their instincts pointed to another method of grouping. How did

Noah provide for *their* due preservation? When these questions are answered others speedily arise; in fact, there is no end to the difficulties of this marvellous story.

2. Whence and how did Noah procure the food for his huge menagerie? That he was obliged to do so, that the animals were not miraculously preserved without food, we are certain; for he was expressly commanded by God to gather food for himself and for them. "Take thou unto thee," it was said to him, "of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them." What provision was made for the *carnivorous* animals, for lions, tigers, vultures, kites, and hawks? Some of these would require not simply meat, but *fresh* meat, which could not be provided for them unless superfluous animals were taken into the ark to be killed, or Noah had learned the art of potting flesh. Otters would require fish, chameleons flies, woodpeckers grubs, night-hawks moths, and humming-birds the honey of flowers. What vast quantities of water also would be consumed! In fact, the task of collecting food to last all the inmates of the ark, including the eight human beings, for more than a year, must have been greater even than that of bringing them together in the first place from every zone. The labors of Hercules were mere trifles compared with those of Noah. Poor old patriarch! He amply earned *his* salvation. Had he been possessed of one tithe of Jacob's cunning and business sagacity, he would have struck a better bargain with God, and have got into the ark on somewhat easier terms. Few men would have undertaken so much to gain so little.

3. How were all the animals, with their food, got into the ark? The dimensions as given in the Bible would be insufficient to accommodate a tithe of them; the ark could not have contained them all, if they were packed together like herrings or sardines. Even if they were so packed, space would still be required for their food; and for what a vast quantity! An animal even with man's moderate appetite would consume in the course of twelve months solid matter to the extent of four or five times its own weight, and some animals are of course far more voracious. This difficulty as to stowing the animals and their food into the ark is quite insuperable; it is not to be obviated by any employment of miraculous intervention. Not even omnipotence can make a clock strike less than one, and God himself must fail to make two things occupy the same space at the same time.

4. How were the inmates of this floating menagerie, supposing them got in, supplied with fresh air? According to the Bible narrative the ark was furnished with but one window of a cubit square, and one door which was shut by God himself, and it may be presumed, quite securely fastened. Talk about the Black-hole of Calcutta, why it was nothing to this! What a scramble there must of been for that solitary window and a

mouthful of fresh air! Lions, tigers, jackals, hyænas, boa-constrictors, kangaroos, eagles, owls, bees, wasps, bluebottles, with Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and their wives, all in one fierce mêlée. But the contention for the precious vital air must, however violent, have soon subsided: fifteen minutes would have settled them all. Yet curiously enough the choking animals suffered no appreciable injury; by some occult means they were all preserved from harm; which furnishes another illustration of the mysterious ways of God. What powerful perfumes, too, must have arisen from all those animals! So powerful indeed that even the rancid flavor of foxes and skunks must have been undistinguishable from the blended scents of all their fellow passengers. Those who have visited Wombwell's menagerie, or stood in the monkey-house of the Zoological Gardens, doubtless retain a lively recollection of olfactory disgust, even although in those places the most scrupulous cleanliness is observed; but their experience of such smells would have been totally eclipsed if they could but for a moment have stood within Noah's ark amidst all its heterogeneous denizens. However the patriarch and his sons managed to cleanse this worse than Augean stable passes all understanding. And then what trappings they must have had up and down those flights of stairs communicating with the three storeys of the ark, in order to cast all the filth out of that one window. No wonder their children afterwards began to build a tower of Babel to reach unto heaven; it was quite natural that they should desire plenty of steps to mount, so as to gratify fully the itch of climbing they had inherited from their parents.

5. Where did all the water come from? According to the Bible story the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days, and covered all the high hills and mountains under the whole heaven. Now mount Ararat itself, on which the ark eventually rested, is seventeen thousand feet high, and the utmost peaks of Himalaya are nearly twice as high as that; and to cover the whole earth with water to such a tremendous height would require an immense quantity of water; in fact, about eight times as much as is contained in all the rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans of our globe. Whence did all this water come? The Scripture explanation is sadly insufficient; the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. The writer evidently thought that there were great fountains at the bottom of the sea, capable of supplying water in unlimited quantities from some central reservoir; but science knows nothing whatever about them; nay, science tells us that the internal reservoir, if there be one, must contain not water, but liquid fire. If *this* great reservoir poured its contents into the sea, the result would be similar to that frightful catastrophe

imagined by the Yankee who wished to see Niagara Falls pour into Mount Vesuvius.

The supply from that quarter thus failing, we are forced back upon the rain which descended from the windows of heaven, wherever they may be. It rained forty days and forty nights. Forty days and forty nights! Why forty million days and nights of rain would not have sufficed. The writer was evidently in total ignorance of the laws of hydrology. The rain which falls from the clouds originally comes from the waters of the earth, being absorbed into the atmosphere by the process of evaporation. The utmost quantity of water that can thus be held in suspense throughout the entire atmosphere is very small; in fact, if precipitated, it would only cover the ground to the depth of about five inches. After the first precipitation of rain, the process of evaporation would have to be repeated; that is, for every additional descent of rain a proportionate quantity of water would have to be extracted from the rivers, lakes, and seas below. Now, surely every sane man must perceive that this pretty juggle could not add one single drop to the previously existing amount of water, any more than a man could make himself rich by taking money out of one pocket and putting it into another. The fabled man who is reported to have occupied himself with dipping up water from one side of a boat and emptying it over on the other, hoping thereby to bale the ocean dry, must have been the real author of this story of Noah and his wonderful ark.

Some Christian writers, such as Dr. Pye Smith, Dr. Barry, and Hugh Miller, have contended that the author of the book of Genesis is describing not a universal but a partial deluge; not a flood which submerged the whole earth, but one that merely covered some particular part of the great Central Asian plains. But surely, apart from any consideration pertaining to the very emphatic language of the text, rational men must perceive that the difficulty is not obviated by this explanation, but rather increased. How could the waters ascend in one place to the height of seventeen thousand feet (the height of Mount Ararat) without overflowing the adjacent districts, and, indeed, the whole earth, in conformity to the law of gravitation? Delitzsch is bold enough to assert that the flood of water was ejected with such force from the fountains beneath that it assumed quite naturally a conical shape. But then, even supposing that this explication were anything but sheer silliness, which it is not, how would the learned commentator account for the water retaining its conical shape for months after the force of upheaval had expended itself? These explanations are entirely fanciful and groundless. The language of the narrative is sufficiently explicit. "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth;" "all in whose nostrils was the breath of life;" "and every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground;" and Noah *only*

remained alive and they that were with him in the ark." Such are the precise unmistakable words of Scripture, which no sophistry can explain away. But even if the contention for a partial deluge could be made good, the fundamental difficulties would still remain. As Colenso observes, the flood, "whether it be regarded as a *universal* or a *partial* deluge, is equally incredible and impossible."

Geology absolutely contradicts the possibility of any such catastrophe as the deluge within the historic period. According to Sir Charles Lyell, no devastating flood could have passed over the forest zone of *Ætna* during the last twelve thousand years; and the volcanic cones of *Anvergne*, which enclose in their ashes the remains of extinct animals, and present an outline as perfect as that of *Ætna*, are deemed older still. Kalisch forcibly presents this aspect of the question: "Geology teaches the impossibility of a universal deluge since the last six thousand years, but does not exclude a partial destruction of the earth's surface within that period. The Biblical text, on the other hand, demands the supposition of a universal deluge, and absolutely excludes a partial flood."

6. What became of all the fish? In such a deluge the rivers and seas must have mingled their waters, and this in conjunction with the terrific outpour from the windows of heaven, must have made the water brackish, too salt for fresh-water fish, and too fresh for salt-water fish; and consequently the aquatic animals must all have perished, unless, indeed, they were miraculously preserved—a contingency which anyone is free to conjecture, but no one is at liberty to assert. seeing that the inspired writer never even hints such a possibility. Now there is no evidence whatever that Noah took any *fish* with him into the ark; under natural circumstances they must have perished outside; yet the seas and rivers still teem with life. When did the new creation of fish take place?

7. What became of all the vegetation? Every particle of it must have rotted during such a long submergence. But even if mysteriously preserved from natural decay, it must still have been compressed into a mere pulp by the terrific weight of the super-incumbent water. Colenso estimates that the pressure of a column of water 17,000 feet high would be 474 tons upon each square foot of surface—a pressure which nothing could have resisted. Yet, wonderful to relate, just prior to the resting of the ark on Mount Ararat, the dove sent out therefrom, returned with an olive leaf in her mouth *just plucked off*. A fitting climax to this wonderful story.

Finally the story relates how the ark rested on the top of Mount Ararat, whence its inmates descended to the plains below, which were then quite dry. Mount Ararat towers aloft three thousand feet above the region of eternal snow. How the poor



animals, aye, even the polar bear, must have shivered! And what a curious sight it must have been to witness their descent from such a height. Often have I speculated on the probable way in which the elephant got down, and after much careful thought I have concluded thus: either he had waxed so fat with being fed so long on miraculous food that he rolled pleasantly down like a ball, with no other injury than a few scratches; or he had become so very, very thin with living simply on expectations, in default of more substantial fare, that he gently floated down by virtue of levity, like a descending feather.

And then what journeys some of the poor animals would have to make; the kangaroo back to Australia, the sloth to South America, the polar bear to the extreme north. How they lived on the road to their ultimate destinations the Lord only knows. There was no food for them; the deluge had destroyed all vegetation for the herbivorous animals, all flesh for the carnivorous. Not even a nibble was left for the sheep.

As for poor Noah, the first thing recorded of him after his watery expedition is that he drank heavily of wine and got into a state of beastly inebriation. And who can wonder that he did so? The poor old man had floated about on oceans of water for more than a year, and probably he was heartily sick of his watery prospect. The astonishing thing is that he did not get water on the brain. It was quite natural that he should swill deep potations of some stronger fluid on the first available opportunity. Surely he had water enough during that twelve months to last a lifetime; enough to justify his never touching the wretched fluid again.

While Noah was dead drunk, his second son, Ham, saw "the nakedness of his father," and reported the fact to his two brethren, who took a garment and, walking backwards, so that they might not see, covered the patriarch's nudity. On recovering from his drunken stupor, Noah discovered "what his younger son had done unto him," and proceeded at once to vigorous cursing. Ham was the offender, if there was any offence at all, which is not very clear; but punishment in the Bible is generally vicarious, and we read that the irate patriarch cursed Canaan, the son of Ham, for his father's misdemeanor. Flagitiously unjust as it is, this proceeding thoroughly accords with Jehovah's treatment of Adam's posterity after he and Eve had committed their first sin by eating of the forbidden fruit.

Before Noah got drunk he had received from God the assurance that the world should never more be destroyed by a flood, As a perpetual sign of this covenant the rainbow was set in the heavens. But the rainbow must have been a common sight for centuries before. This phenomenon of refraction is the result of natural causes, which operated before the Flood, as well as after. The earth yielded its fruits for human sustenance, and

therefore rain must have fallen. If rain fell before the Deluge, as we are bound to conclude, the rainbow must have been then as now. The usual practice of commentators is to explain this portion of the narrative by assuming that the rainbow was visible before the covenant with Noah, but only after the covenant had a special significance. But, as Colenso observes, the writer of the story supposes the rainbow was then first set in the clouds, and is evidently accounting for the *origin* of this beautiful phenomenon, which might well appear *supernatural* to his uninstructed imagination.

¶ Besides the manifold absurdities of this story there are other aspects of it even more startling. What a picture it presents of fiendish cruelty and atrocious vindictiveness! What an appalling exhibition of divine malignity! God, the omnipotent and omniscient ruler of the universe, is represented as harboring and executing the most diabolical intentions. He ruthlessly exterminates all his children except a favored few, and includes in his vengeance the lower animals also, although they were innocent of offence against his laws. Every creature in whose nostrils was the breath of life, with the exception of those preserved in the ark, was drowned, and the earth was turned into a vast slaughter-house. How imagination pictures the terrible scene as the waters rise higher and higher, and the ravening waves speed after their prey! Here some wretched being, baffled and hopeless, drops supinely into the raging flood; there a stronger and stouter heart struggles to the last. Here selfish ones battling for their own preservation; there husbands and wives, parents and children, lovers and maidens, affording mutual aid, or at last, in utter despair, locked in a final embrace and meeting death together. And when the waters subside, what a sickening scene presents itself! Those plains, once decked with verdure, and lovely in the sun and breeze, are covered with the bones of a slaughtered world. How can the Christian dare to justify such awful cruelty? The God of the Pentateuch is not a beneficent universal father, but an almighty fiend.

This story of Noah's Flood is believed still because people never examine what is taught them as the word of God. Every one who analyses the story must pronounce it the most extraordinary amalgam of immorality and absurdity ever palmed off on a credulous world.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## BIBLE ROMANCES.—3.

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# EVE AND THE APPLE.

By G. W. FOOTE.

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CHRISTIANITY is based upon the story of the Fall. In Adam all sinned, as in Christ all must be saved. Saint Paul gives to this doctrine the high sanction of his name, and we may disregard the puny whipsters of theology, who, without any claim to inspiration, endeavor to explain the Genesiac narrative as an allegory rather than a history. If Adam did not really fall he could not have been cursed for falling, and his posterity could not have become partakers either in a sin which was never committed or in a malediction which was never pronounced. Nor can Original Sin be a true dogma if our first parents did not transmit the germs of iniquity to their children. If Adam did not fall there was no need for Christ to save us; if he did not set God and man at variance there was no need for an atonement; and so the Christian scheme of salvation would be a *fiasco* from beginning to end. This will never do. No Garden of Eden, no Gethsemane! No Fall, no Redemption! No Adam, no Christ!

Mother Eve's curiosity was the motive of the first transgression of God's commandments in the history of the world, and the whole human race was brought under the risk of eternal perdition because of her partiality to fruit. Millions of souls now writhe in hell because, six thousand years ago, she took a bite of an apple. What a tender and beautiful story! God made her to be Adam's helpmeet. She helped him to a slice of apple, and that soon helped them both outside Eden. The sour stuff disagreed with him as it did with her. It has disagreed with all their posterity. In fact it was endowed with the marvellous power of transmitting spiritual stomach-ache through any number of generations.

How do we know that it was an *apple* and not some other fruit? Why, on the best authority extant after the Holy Scriptures themselves, namely, our auxiliary Bible, "Paradise Lost;" in the tenth book whereof Satan makes the following boast to his infernal peers after his exploit in Eden:—

"Him by fraud I have seduced  
From his Creator, and, the more to increase  
Your wonder, with an *apple*."

Yet another authority is the profane author of "Don Juan," who, in the first stanza of the tenth canto, says of Newton :

"And this is the sole mortal who could grapple,  
Since Adam, with a fall, or with an *apple*."

Milton, being very pious, was probably in the counsel of God. How else could he have given us an authentic version of the long colloquies that were carried on in heaven? Byron, being very profane, was probably in the counsel of Satan. And thus we have the most unimpeachable testimony of two opposite sources to the fact that it was an *apple*, and not a rarer fruit, which overcame the virtue of our first parents, and played the devil with their big family of children.

This apple grew on the Tree of Knowledge, which God planted in the midst of the Garden of Eden, sternly enjoining Adam and Eve not to eat of its fruit under pain of death. Now the poor woman knew nothing of death and could not understand what a dreadful punishment it was; and there was the fruit dangling before her eyes every hour of the day. Is it any wonder that she brooded incessantly on the one thing forbidden, that her woman's curiosity was irresistably piqued by it, and that at last her longing grew so intense that she exclaimed, "Dear me! I can't refrain any longer. Let the consequences be what they will, I must have a bite." God made the woman; he knew her weakness; and he must have known that the plan he devised to test her obedience was the most certain trap that could be invented. Jehovah played with poor Eve just as a cat plays with a mouse. She had free-will, say the theologians. Yes, and so has the mouse a free run. But the cat knows she can catch it again, and finish it off when she is tired of playing.

Not only did God allow Eve's curiosity to urge her on to sin, he also permitted the serpent, "more subtil than any beast of the field," to supplement its action. This wily creature is popularly supposed to have been animated on the occasion by the Devil himself; although, as we shall explain in another *Romance* entitled "The Bible Devil," the book of Genesis makes not even the remotest allusion to such a personage. If, however, the tempter was the Devil, what chance had the poor woman against his seductive wiles? And even if he was only a serpent, he was very "subtil" as we are told, and able to talk like a book, and we know that these creatures have fatal powers of fascination. Surely Mother Eve was heavily handicapped. God might have given her fair play, and left her to fight the battle without furnishing auxiliaries to the strong side.

The serpent, we have said, could converse in human speech. His conversation and his conduct will be dealt with in the *Romance* just referred to. Suffice it here to say that he plainly told the woman that God was a liar. "He," said the tempter, "has said ye shall surely die if ye touch the fruit of this tree. Don't

believe it. I tell you, ye shall not surely die." What could poor Eve think? In addition to her native curiosity here was another incentive to disobedience. Which of these two spoke the truth? There was only one way of deciding. She stretched forth her hand, plucked an apple, and began to eat. And immediately, says Milton,

"Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,  
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe  
That all was lost."

What a rumpus about a trifle! It reminds us of the story of a Jew who had a sneaking inclination for a certain meat prohibited by his creed. One day the temptation to partake was too strong; he slipped into a place of refreshment and ordered some sausages. The weather happened to be tempestuous, and just as he raised his knife and fork to attack the savory morsel, a violent clap of thunder nearly frightened him out of his senses. Gathering courage, he essayed a second time, but another thunderclap warned him to desist. A third attempt was foiled in the same way. Whereupon he threw down his knife and fork and made for the door, exclaiming "What a dreadful fuss about a little bit of pork."

Eve's transgression, according to the learned Lightfoot, occurred "about *high noone*, the time of eating." The same authority informs us that she and Adam "did lie comfortlesse, till towards the cool of the day, or *three o'clock afternoon*." However that may be, it is most certain that the first woman speedily got the better of the first man. She told him the apple was nice and he took a bite also. Perhaps he had resolved to share her fortunes good or bad, and objected to be left alone with his menagerie. Lightfoot describes the wife as "the weaker vessel," but a lady friend of ours says that the Devil stormed the citadel first, knowing well that such a poor outpost as Adam could easily be carried afterwards.

Having eaten of the fruit, and thus learned to distinguish between good and evil, Adam and Eve quickly discovered that they were naked. So they "sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." We are not told who gave them lessons in sewing. Perhaps they acquired the art through intuition. But the necessary implements could not have been gained in that way. Dr. Thomas Burnet, whose mind was greatly exercised by the astounding wonders of the Bible, very pertinently asked "Whence had they a needle, whence a thread, on the first day of their creation?" He, however, could give no answer to the question, nor can we, except we suppose that some of the female angels had attended a "garden party" in Eden and carelessly left their needles and thread behind them. Any reader who is dissatisfied with this explanation must inquire of the nearest parson, who, as he belongs to a class supposed to know almost everything, and

believed to have access to the oracles of God, will doubtless be able to reveal the whole gospel truth on the subject.

A little later, God himself, who is everywhere at once, came down from everywhere to the Garden of Eden, for the purpose of taking a "walk in the cool of the day." He had perhaps just visited the infernal regions to see that everything was ready for the reception of the miserable creatures he meant to damn, or to assure himself that the Devil was really not at home; and was anxious to cool himself before returning to his celestial abode, as well as to purify himself from the sulphurous taint which might else have sent a shudder through all the seraphic hosts. Apparently he was holding a soliloquy, for Adam and Eve "heard his voice." Colenso, however, renders this portion of the Romance differently from our authorised version—"And they heard the sound of Jehovah-Elohim walking in the garden in the breeze of the day." Delitzsch thinks they heard the sound of his footsteps, for God used to visit them in the form of a man! Could the force of folly farther go? Any devout Theist, who candidly thought over this petty fiction, would find its gross anthropomorphism inexpressibly shocking.

Knowing that God was everywhere, Adam and Eve nevertheless "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." But they were soon dragged forth to the light. Adam, who seems to have been a silly fellow, explained that he had hidden himself because he was *naked*, as though the Lord had not seen him in that state before. "Naked!" said the Lord, "Who told thee that thou wast naked. Hast thou eaten of that tree, eh?" "O, Lord, yes," replied Adam; "just a little bit; but it wasn't my fault, *she* made me do it, O Lord! O Lord!" Whereupon God, who although he knows everything, even before it happens, was singularly ill-informed on this occasion, turned fiercely upon the woman, asking her what she had done. "Oh, if you please," whimpered poor Eve, "it *was* I who took the first bite; but the serpent beguiled me, and the fault you see is not mine but his. Oh dear! oh dear!" Then the Lord utterly lost his temper. He cursed the serpent, cursed the woman, cursed the man, and even cursed the ground beneath their feet. Everything about at the time came in for a share of the malison. In fact, it was what the Yankees would call a good, all-round, level swear.

The curse of the serpent is a subject we must reserve for our pamphlet on "The Bible Devil." The curse of the woman was that she should bring forth children in pain and sorrow, and that the man should rule over her. With her present physiological condition, woman must always have suffered during conception as she now does; and therefore Delitzsch infers that her structure must have undergone a change, although he cannot say in what respect. He dwells also on the "subjection" of woman, which "the religion of Revelation" has made by degrees more endur-

able; probably forgetting that the Teutonic women of ancient times were regarded with veneration, long before Christianity originated. Besides, the subordination of the female is not peculiar to the human race, but is the general law throughout the animal world.

Adam's curse was less severe. He was doomed to till the ground, and to earn his bread by the sweat of his face. Most of us would rather take part in the great strenuous battle of life, than loll about under the trees in the Garden of Eden, chewing the cud like contemplative cows. What men have had to complain of in all ages is, not that they have to earn their living by labour, but that when the sweat of their faces has been plenteously poured forth the "bread" has too often not accrued to them as the reward of their industry.

Orthodox Christianity avers that all the posterity of Adam and Eve necessarily participate in their curse, and the doctrine of Original Sin is taught from all its pulpits. Only by baptism can the stains of our native guilt be effaced; and thus the unbaptized, even infants, perish everlastingly, and hell, to use the words of a Protestant divine, holds many a babe not a span long. A great Catholic divine says—"Hold thou most firmly, nor do thou in any respect doubt, that infants, whether in their mothers' wombs they begin to live and then die, or when, after their mothers have given birth to them, they pass from this life without the sacrament of holy baptism, will be punished with the everlasting punishment of eternal fire." Horror of horrors! These men call sceptics blasphemers, but they are the real blasphemers when they attribute to their God such supreme injustice and cruelty. What should we think of a legislator who proposed that the descendants of all thieves should be imprisoned, and the descendants of all murderers hung? We should think that he was bad or mad. Yet this is precisely analogous to the conduct ascribed to God, who should be infinitely wiser than the wisest man and infinitely better than the best.

The crime of our first parents was indeed pregnant with the direst consequences. It not only induced the seeds of original sin, but it also brought death into the world. Milton sings—

"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world."

And Saint Paul (Romans v., 12) writes "As by one man sin came into the world, and death by sin."

Now this theory implies that before the Fall the inhabited portion of the world was the scene of perfect peace. Birds lived on seeds and eschewed worms, and the fierce carnivorous animals grazed like oxen. The lion laid down with the lamb. "Waal," said the Yankee, "I don't doubt that, but I rayther guess the lamb was *inside*." The fact is that most of the carnivorous

animals could not live on a vegetable diet; and therefore they must either have subsisted on flesh before the Fall, which of course involves *death*, or their natures must have undergone a radical change. The first supposition contradicts scripture, and the second contradicts science.

Geology shows us that in the very earliest times living creatures died from the same causes which kill them now. Many were overwhelmed by floods and volcanoes, or engulfed by earthquakes; many died of old age or disease, for their bones are found distorted or carious, and their limbs twisted with pain; while the greater number were devoured, according to the general law of the struggle for existence. Death ruled universally before the human race made its appearance on the earth, and has absolutely nothing to do with Eve and her apple.

Adam and Eve were warned by God that in the day they ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge they should surely die. The serpent declared this to be rank nonsense, and the event proved his veracity. What age Eve attained to the Holy Bible saith not, for it never considers women of sufficient importance to have their longevities chronicled. But Adam lived to the remarkably good old age of nine hundred and thirty years. Like our Charles the Second he took "an unconscionable time a-dying." One of his descendants, the famous Methusaleh, lived thirty-nine years longer; while the more famous Melchizedek is not even dead yet, if any credence is to be placed in the words of holy Saint Paul.

But all these are mere lambs, infants, or chicken, in comparison with the primeval patriarchs of India. Buckle tells us that, according to the Hindoos, common men in ancient times lived to the age of 80,000 years, some dying a little sooner and some a little later. Two of their kings, Yudhishter and Alarka, reigned respectively 27,000 and 66,000 years. Both these were cut off in their prime; for some of the early poets lived to be about half a million; while one king, the most virtuous as well as the most remarkable of all, was two million years old when he began to reign, and after reigning 6,300,000 years, he resigned his empire and lingered on for 100,000 years more. Adam is not in the hunt with that tough old fellow. On the principle that it is as well to be hung for a sheep as a lamb, faithful Christians should swallow him as well as Adam. When the throat of their credulity is once distended they may as well take in everything that comes.

What followed the Curse clearly shows that man was not originally created immortal. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden expressly in order that they might not become so. God "drove them forth" lest they should "take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." Many orthodox writers, who have to maintain the doctrine of our natural immortality, preserve a discreet silence on this text. Our great Milton, who has so largely determined the Protestant theology



of England, goes right in the face of Scripture when he makes God say of man,

"I at first with two fair gifts  
Created him endowed, with happiness  
And immortality."

The fact is, the Book of Genesis never once alludes to any such thing, nor does it represent man as endowed with any other soul than that "breath of life" given to all animals. It is also certain that the *ancient Jews* were entirely ignorant of the doctrine of a life beyond the grave. The highest promise that Moses is said to have made in the Decalogue was that their "days should be long in the land." The Jews were a business people, and they wanted all promises fulfilled on this side of death.

Nor is there any real *Fall* implied in this story. God himself says that "the man," having eaten of the forbidden fruit, "is become as one of us." That could scarcely be a fall which brought him nearer to God. Bishop South, indeed, in a very eloquent passage of his sermon on "Man Created in God's Image," celebrates the inconceivable perfection of the first man, and concludes by saying that "An Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of Paradise." But a candid perusal of Genesis obliges us to dissent from this view. Adam and Eve were a very childish pair. Whatever intellect they possessed they carefully concealed. Not a scintillation of it has reached us. Shakespeare and Newton are an infinite improvement on Adam and Eve. One of the Gnostic sects, who played such havoc with the early Christian Church, utterly rejected the idea of a Fall. "The Ophites," says Didron, "considered the God of the Jews not only to be a most wicked but an unintelligent being. . . . According to their account, Jaldabaoth, the wicked demi-god adored by the Jews under the name of Jehovah, was jealous of man, and wished to prevent the progress of knowledge; but the serpent, the agent of superior wisdom, came to teach man what course he ought to pursue, and by what means he might regain the knowledge of good and evil. The Ophites consequently adored the serpent, and cursed the true God Jehovah."

Before expelling Adam and Eve from Eden, the Lord took pity on their nakedness, and apparently seeing that their skill in needle-work did not go beyond aprons, he "made coats of skins, and clothed them." Jehovah was thus the first tailor, and the prototype of that imperishable class of workmen, of whom it was said that it takes nine of them to make a man. He was also the first butcher and the first tanner, for he must have slain the animals and dressed their skins.

Lest they should return he "placed at the east of the Garden of Eden *Cherubims*, and a flaming sword which turned every

way, to keep the way of the tree of life." As this guard seems never to have been relieved, profane wits have speculated whether the Flood drowned them, and quenched the flaming sword with a great hiss. Ezekiel describes the Cherubims with characteristic magnificence. These creatures with wings and wheels were "full of eyes round about." And "everyone had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle." What monsters! No wonder they effectually frightened poor Adam and Eve from attempting a re-entrance into the Garden.

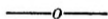
Perhaps the reader would like to know what became of the Tree of Knowledge. One legend of the Middle Ages relates that Eve along with the forbidden fruit broke off a branch which she carried with her from Paradise. Planted outside by her hand, it grew to a great tree, under which Abel was killed; at a later time it was used in building the most holy place of Solomon's temple; and finally it yielded the beams out of which the cross was made! Another legend says that, after the Fall, God rooted out the Tree of Knowledge, and flung it over the wall of Paradise. A thousand years after it was found by Abraham, none the worse for its long absence from the soil. He planted it in his garden, and while doing so he was informed by a voice from heaven that this was the tree on whose wood the Redeemer should be crucified.

Space does not allow us to dwell at length on the Paradise Myths of other ancient peoples, which singularly resembled that of the Jews. Formerly it was alleged that these were all corruptions of the Genesiac story. But it is now known that most of them date long anterior to the very existence of the Jewish people. As Kalisch says, "they belonged to the common traditionary lore of the Asiatic nations." The Bible story of Paradise is derived almost entirely from the Persian myth. It was after contact with the reformed religion of Zoroaster, during their captivity, that the remnant of the Jews who returned to Palestine collated their ancient literature, and revised it in accordance with their new ideas. The story of Eve and her Apple is, as every scholar knows, an oriental myth slightly altered by the Jewish scribes to suit the national taste, and has absolutely no claims on our credence. And if this be so, the doctrine of the Fall collapses, and down comes the whole Christian structure which is erected upon it.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

## THE BIBLE DEVIL.

By G. W. FOOTE.



THE Christian Godhead is usually spoken and written of as a Trinity, whereas it is in fact a Quarternion, consisting of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and God the Devil. The Roman Catholics add yet another, Goddess the Virgin Mary. God the Devil, whom this *Romance* treats of so far as his history is contained in the Bible, is popularly supposed to be inferior to the other persons of the Godhead. In reality, however, he is vastly their superior both in wisdom and in power. For, whereas they made the world, he has appropriated it almost entirely to himself; and, whereas they who created all its inhabitants, have only been able to lay down a very narrow-gauge railway to the Kingdom of Heaven, he has contrived to lay down an exceedingly broad-gauge railway to the Kingdom of Hell. Few passengers travel by their route, and its terminus on this side is miserably small; but his route is almost universally patronised, its terminus is magnificent, and there is an extraordinary rush for tickets.

According to the Christian scheme, the Devil tempted Adam and Eve from their allegiance to God in the form of a serpent. He played the devil with Eve, she played the devil with Adam, and together they have played the devil with the whole human race ever since.

But let any unbiassed person read the Genesiac story of the Fall, and he will certainly discover no reference to the Devil. A serpent is spoken of as "more subtle than any beast of the field;" it is throughout represented simply as a serpent; and nowhere is there the faintest indication of its possessing any supernatural endowments.

The Story of the Fall contains clear relics of that Tree and Serpent worship which in ancient times prevailed so extensively over the East. The serpent was formerly regarded as the symbol of a beneficent God. In Hindustan, says Maurice, "the veneration of the serpent is evident in every page of their mythologic history, in which every fabulous personage of note is represented as grasping or as environed with a serpent." According to Layard, the word which signifies "life" in the greater part of the Semitic languages signifies also "a serpent." And Jacob Bryant says that the word "Ab," which in Hebrew means Father, has also the same meaning as the Egyptian "Ob," or "Aub," and signifies "a serpent," thus etymologically uniting the two ideas. The Tree and the Serpent were frequently associated, although they were sometimes worshipped apart. The Aryan races of the

Western world mostly worshipped the Tree alone. The Scandinavians had their great ash "Yggdrasill," whose triple root reaches to the depths of the universe, while its majestic stem overtops the heavens and its branches fill the world. The Grecian oracles were delivered from the oak of Dodona, and the priests set forth their decrees on its leaves. Nutpi or Neith, the goddess of divine life, was by the Egyptians represented as seated among the branches of the Tree of Life, in the paradise of Osiris. The "Hom," the sacred tree of the Persians, is spoken of in the Zendavesta as the "Word of Life," and, when consecrated, was partaken of as a sacrament. An oak was the sacred tree of the ancient Druids of Britain. We inherit their custom of gathering the sacred mistletoe at Yule-tide, while in our Christmas Tree we have a remnant of the old Norse tree-worship. During the Middle Ages the worship of trees was forbidden in France by the ecclesiastical councils, and in England by the laws of Canute. A learned antiquary remarks that "the English maypole decked with colored rags and tinsel, and the merry morrice-dancers (the gaily decorated May sweeps) with the mysterious and now almost defunct personage, Jack-in-the-green, are all but worn-out remnants of the adoration of gods in trees that once were sacred in England."

Now the serpent and the tree were originally both symbolic of the generative powers of nature, and they were interchangeable. Sometimes one was employed, sometimes the other, and sometimes both. But in that great religious reformation which took place in the faiths of the ancient world about 600 years before the time of Christ, the serpent was degraded, and made to stand as a symbol of Ahriman, the god of evil, who, in the Persian religion, waged incessant war against Ormuzd, the god of beneficence. The Persian myth of the Fall is thus rendered from the Zendavesta by Kalisch:—

"The first couple, the parents of the human race, Meshia and Meshiane, lived originally in purity and innocence. Perpetual happiness was promised them by Ormuzd, the creator of every good gift, if they persevered in their virtue. But an evil demon (Dev) was sent to them by Ahriman, the representative of everything noxious and sinful. He appeared unexpectedly in the form of a serpent, and gave them the fruit of a wonderful tree, Hom, which imparted immortality and had the power of restoring the dead to life. Thus evil inclinations entered their hearts; all their moral excellence was destroyed. Ahriman himself appeared under the form of the same reptile, and completed the work of seduction. They acknowledged him instead of Ormuzd as the creator of everything good; and the consequence was they forfeited for ever the eternal happiness for which they were destined."

Every reader will at once perceive how similar this is to the Hebrew story of the Fall. The similarity is intelligible when we remember that all the literature of the ancient Jews was put

into its present form by the learned scribes who returned with the remnant of the people from the Babylonish captivity, and who were full of the ideas that obtained in the Persian religion as reformed by the traditional Zoroaster.

As we have said, the Hebrew story of the Fall contains clear relics of Tree and Serpent worship. There is also abundant proof that during the long ages in which the Jews oscillated between polytheism and monotheism this worship largely prevailed. Even up to the reign of Hezekiah, as we find in the Second Book of Kings, the serpent was worshipped in groves, to the great anger of the king, who cast out the idolatry from among his people.

Having explained the subject thus, let us now assume with orthodox Christians that the serpent in Eden was animated by the Devil, or was indeed the Devil himself incarnate.

We have already observed that the Devil excels his three rivals in wisdom and in power. While they were toiling so strenuously to create the world and all that therein is, he quietly stood or sat by as a spectator. "All right," he might have murmured, "work away as hard as you please. You've more strength than sense. My turn will soon come. When the job is finished we shall see to whom all this belongs." When the work was completed and they had pronounced all things good, in stepped the Devil, and in the twinkling of an eye rendered imperfect all that they had so labored to create perfect; turning everything topsy-turvey, seducing the first pair of human beings, sowing the seeds of original sin, and at one stroke securing the wholesale damnation of our race. What were they about, to let him do all this with such consummate ease? Surely they must have slept like logs, and thus left the whole game in his hands. He made himself the "prince of this world," although they created it; and if those may laugh who win, he was entitled to roar out his mirth to the shaking of the spheres.

Besides being the prince of this world and of the powers of darkness, the Devil is described as the father of lies. This, however, is a gross libel on his character. Throughout the contest with his rivals he played with perfect fairness. And from Genesis to Revelation there can be adduced no single instance in which he departs from the strict line of truth. On one occasion when Jehovah desired a lying spirit to go forth and prophesy falsely to his people, he found one ready to his hand in heaven and had no need to trouble Satan for a messenger. The Lord God had told Adam, "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "Nay," said the Devil, when he began business "ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Every word of his speech was true. Instead of dying "in the day" that he ate of the fruit, Adam lived to the fine old age of nine hundred and thirty years.

And after the "fall" the Lord God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." The Devil's truthfulness is thus amply vindicated.

Satan's visit to Eve was paid in the form of a serpent. She manifested no astonishment at being accosted by such a creature. It may be that the whole menagerie of Eden spoke in the human tongue, and that Balaam's ass was only what the biologists would call "a case of reversion" to the primitive type. Josephus and most of the Fathers conceived of the serpent as having had originally a human voice and legs; so that if he could not have walked about with Eve arm in arm, he might at least have accompanied her in a dance. Milton, however, discredits the legs, and represents the serpent thus:—

"Not with indented wave,  
Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,  
Circular base of rising folds, that towered,  
Fold above fold, a surging maze, his head  
Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes;  
With burnish'd neck of verdant gold, erect  
Amidst his circling spires, that on the grass  
Floated redundant."

Very splendid! But the doctors differ, and who shall decide?

What followed the eating of the forbidden fruit we have dealt with in "Eve and the Apple." We shall therefore at once come to the curse pronounced upon the serpent. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The final portion of this curse is flagrantly mythological. Among the Hindoos, Krishna also, as the incarnation of Vishnu, is represented now as treading on the bruised head of a conquered serpent, and now as entwined by it, and stung in the heel. In Egyptian pictures and sculptures, likewise, the serpent is seen pierced through the head by the spear of the goddess Isis. The "enmity" between mankind and the serpent is, however, not universal. Amongst the Zulus the snake is held in great veneration, as their dead ancestors are supposed to reappear in that form; and in ancient times, as we have already observed, serpents were actually worshipped.

The middle portion of the curse has not yet been fulfilled. The serpent lives on more nutritious food than dust. In the Zoological Gardens the inmates of the serpent-house enjoy a more solid diet. The fact is, we have here an oriental superstition. Kalisch points out that "the great scantiness of food, on which the serpent can subsist, gave rise to the belief, entertained by many Eastern nations, that they eat dust." This

belief is referred to in Micah vii., 17; Isaiah lxxv., 25, and elsewhere in the Bible. Among the Indians the serpent is believed to live on wind.

That the serpent "goes" upon its "belly" is, of course, a fact. Before the curse it must have moved about in some other way. Milton's poetical solution of the difficulty we have already given. During the Middle Ages those seraphic doctors of theology, who gravely argued how many angels could dance on the point of a needle, speculated also on the serpent's method of locomotion before the "fall." Some thought the animal had legs, some that it undulated gracefully on its back, and others that it hopped about on its tail. The ever-bold Delitzsch decides that "its mode of motion and its form were changed," but closes the controversy by adding, "of the original condition of the serpent it is, certainly, impossible to frame to ourselves a conjecture." All this is mere moonshine. Geology, as Colenso remarks, shows us that the serpent was the same kind of creature as it is now, in the ages long before man existed on the earth.

Why the serpent was cursed at all is a question which no Christian can answer. The poor animal was seized, mastered, occupied, and employed by the Devil, and was therefore absolutely irresponsible for what occurred. It had committed no offence, and consequently the curse upon it, according to Christian doctrine, was a most brutal and wanton outrage.

Having done such a splendid stroke of business in Eden, the Devil retired, quite satisfied that the direction he had given to the affairs of this world was so strong and certain as to obviate the necessity of his personal supervision. Fifteen centuries later the human race had grown so corrupt that God (that is, the three persons in one) resolved to drown them all; preserving, however, eight live specimens to repeople the world. How the Devil must have laughed again! He knew that Noah and his family possessed the seeds of original sin, which they would assuredly transmit to their children, and thus prolong the corruption through all time. Short-sighted as ever, Jehovah refrained from completing the devastation, after which he might have started afresh. So sure was the Devil's grip on God's creation that, a few centuries after the Flood, there were not found ten righteous men in the whole city of Sodom, and no doubt other cities were almost as bad.

According to the Bible, the Devil's long spell of rest was broken in the reign of King David, the man after God's own heart, but a very great scoundrel nevertheless. The Second Book of Samuel (xxiv., 1) tells us that "Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." Now the First Book of Chronicles (xxi., 1) in relating the same incident says, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Who shall reconcile this discrepancy?

Was it God, was it Satan, or was it both? Imagine David with the celestial and infernal powers whispering the same counsel into either ear! A Scotch minister once told us that this difficulty was only apparent. The Devil, says he, exercises only a delegated power, and acts only by the express or tacit permission of God; so that it matters not which is said to have provoked David. Yes, but what of the consequences? Because the king, despite all protests, took a census of his people, the Lord sent a destroying angel, who slew by pestilence seventy thousand of them. Where, in the whole history of religion, shall we find a viler sample of divine injustice?

Besides, if the Devil acts in all cases only by God's permission, the latter is responsible for all the former's wrong-doing. The principal, and not the agent, must bear the guilt. And this suggests a curious problem. Readers of "Robinson Crusoe" will remember that when Man Friday was undergoing a course of theological instruction, he puzzled his master by asking why God did not convert the Devil. To his unsophisticated mind it was plain that the conversion of the Devil would annihilate sin. Robinson Crusoe changed the subject to avoid looking foolish, but Man Friday's question remains in full force. Why does not God convert the Devil? The great Thomas Aquinas is reported to have prayed for the Devil's conversion through a whole long night. Robert Burns concludes his "Address to the Devil" with a wish that he 'wad tak a thought an' men.'" And Sterne, in one of his wonderful strokes of pathos, makes Corporal Trim say of the Devil, "He is damned already, your honor;" whereupon, "I am sorry for it," quoth Uncle Toby. Why, oh why, we repeat, does not God convert the Devil, and thus put a stop for ever to the damnation of mankind? Why do not the clergy pray without ceasing for that one object? Because they dare not. The Devil is their best friend. Abolish him, and disestablish hell, and their occupation would be gone. They must stick to their dear Devil, as their most precious possession, their stock-in-trade, their talisman of power, without whom they were worse than nothing.

The Devil's adventures in the Book of Job are very amusing. One day there was a drawing-room or *levée* held in heaven. The sons of God attended, and Satan came also among them. He seems to have so closely resembled the rest of the company that only God detected the difference. This is not surprising, for the world has seen some very godly sons of God, so very much like the Devil, that if he met one of them in a dark lane by night, he might almost suspect it to be his own ghost. God, who knows everything, as usual asked a number of questions. Where had Satan been, and what had he been doing? Satan replied, like a gentleman of independent means, that he had been going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it. "Well," said the Lord, "have you observed my servant Job? What a good man! perfect and upright. I'm proud of him." Oh yes,



Satan had observed him. He keeps a sharp eye on all men. As old Bishop Latimer said, whatever parson is out of his parish the Devil is always in his. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" said Satan. "He is wealthy, prosperous, happy, and respected; you fence him about from evil; but just let trouble come upon him, and he will curse you to your face." This was a new view of the subject; the Lord had never seen it in this light before. So he determined to make an experiment. With God's sanction Satan went forth to afflict Job. He despoiled his substance, slaughtered his children, covered him with sore boils from head to foot, and then set on his wife to "nag" him. But Job triumphed; he did not curse God, and thus Satan was foiled. Subsequently Job became richer than ever and more renowned, while a fresh family grew up around his knees. "So," say the Christians, "alls well that ends well!" Not so, however; for there remains uneffaced the murder of Job's children, who were hurriedly despatched out of the world in the very midst of their festivity. When the celestial and infernal powers play at conundrums, it is a great pity that they do not solve them up above or down below, and leave the poor denizens of this world free from the havoc of their contention.

In the New Testament, as in the Old, the Devil appears early on the scene. After his baptism in Jordan, Jesus was "led up of the spirit in the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil." When he had fasted forty days and nights he "was afterward an hungered." Doctor Tanner overlooked this. The hunger of Jesus only began on the forty-first day. The Devil requests Jesus to change the stones into bread, but he declines to do so. Then he sets him "on a pinnacle of the temple" in Jerusalem, and desires him to throw himself down. Jesus must have been exceedingly *sharp set* in that position. Meanwhile, where was the Devil posted? He could scarcely have craned his neck up so as to hold a confabulation with Jesus from the streets, and we must therefore suppose that he was sharp set on another pinnacle. A pretty sight they must have been for the Jews down below! That temptation failing, the Devil takes Jesus "up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him *all* the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." This is remarkably like seeing round a corner, for however high we go we cannot possibly see the whole surface of a globe at once. "All these things," says Satan, "will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." What a generous Devil! They already belonged to Jesus, for doth not Scripture say "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof"?—a text which should now read "the earth is the landlords' and the emptiness thereof." This temptation also fails, and the Devil retires in disgust.

What a pretty farce! Our burlesques and pantomimes are nothing to it. Satan knew Jesus, and Jesus knew Satan. Jesus knew that Satan would tempt him, and Satan knew that Jesus knew it. Jesus knew that Satan could not succeed, and Satan

knew that also. Yet they kept the farce up night and day, for no one knows how long; and our great Milton in his "Paradise Regained" represents this precious pair arguing all day long, Satan retiring after sunset, and Jesus lying down hungry, cold and wet, and rising in the morning with damp clothes to renew the discussion.

Soon after Jesus went into the country of the Gergesenes, where he met two fierce men possessed with devils which he determined to exorcise. The devils (for *the* Devil had grown numerous by then), not liking to be turned adrift on the world, without home or shelter, besought Jesus to let them enter the bodies of a herd of swine feeding by. This he graciously permitted. The devils left the men and entered the swine; whereupon the poor pigs, experiencing a novel sensation, never having had devils inside them before, "ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters." Whether the devils were drowned with the pigs this veracious history saith not. But the pigs themselves were not paid for. Jesus wrought the miracle at other people's expense. And the inhabitants of that part took precisely this view of the case. For "the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts." No doubt they reflected that if he remained working miracles of that kind, at the end of a week not a single pig would be left alive in the district.

Entering in Genesis, the Devil appropriately makes his exit in Revelation. The twelfth chapter of that holy nightmare describes him as "a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads; and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." What a tail! The writer's ideas of size were very chaotic. Bringing a third part of the stars of heaven to this earth, is much like trying to lodge a few thousand cannon-balls on the surface of a bullet.

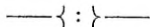
Finally the Devil is to be "bound for a thousand years" in hell. Let us hope the chain will be strong; for if it should break, the pit has no bottom, and the Devil would go right through, coming out on the other side to renew his old tricks.

Such is the Romance of the Bible Devil. Was ever a more ludicrous story palmed off on a credulous world? The very clergy are growing ashamed of it. But there it is, inextricably interwoven with the rest of the "sacred" narrative, so that no skill can remove it without destroying the whole fabric. The Devil has been the Church's best friend, but he is doomed, and as their fraternal bond cannot be broken, he will drag it down to irretrievable perdition.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

# THE TEN PLAGUES.

By G. W. FOOTE.



If a man who had never read the Bible before wished to amuse himself during a spare hour among its pages, we should recommend him to try the first fourteen chapters of Exodus. A more entertaining narrative was never penned. Even the fascinating Arabian Nights affords nothing better, provided we read it with the eyes of common sense, and without that prejudice which so oftens blinds us to the absurdities of "God's Word." At the end of the fourteenth chapter aforesaid, let the book be closed, and then let the reader ask himself whether he ever met with a more comical story.

Two hundred and fifteen years after the arrival of Israel in Egypt, God's chosen people had fallen into slavery. Yet they were exceedingly prolific, so that "the land was filled with them." Afraid of their growing numbers, Pharaoh "spake to the Hebrew midwives" and told them to kill all their male children at birth and leave only the daughters alive. This injunction the midwives very properly disobeyed. Had they obeyed Pharaoh, the Jewish race would have been extinguished, and Judaism and Christianity never heard of.

But the comical fact as to these midwives is that there were only two of them, Shipprah and Puah. What a busy pair they must have been! What patterns of ubiquitous industry! When the Jews quitted Egypt they mustered six hundred thousand men, besides women and children. Now, supposing all these were collected together in one city, its size would equal that of London. How could two midwives possibly attend to all the confinements among such a population? And how much more difficult would their task be if the population were scattered over a wide area, as was undoubtedly the case with the Jews! Words fails us to praise the miraculous activity of these two ladies. Like the peace of God, it passes all understanding.

One of the male children born under the iron rule of Pharaoh was Moses, the son of Amram and Jochebed. The incidents of his eventful life will be fully recorded in our series of "Bible Heroes." Suffice it here to say that he was adopted and brought up by Pharaoh's daughter; that he became skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians; that he privily slew an Egyptian who had maltreated a Hebrew, and was obliged therefore to flee to the land of Midian, where he married Zipporah, a daughter of Jethro the priest. At this time Moses was getting on to his eightieth year. Nowadays a man of that age sees only the grave before him, and has pretty nearly closed his account with the world. But in those days it was different. At the age of

eighty Moses was just beginning his career. He was indeed a very astonishing old boy.

One day Moses was keeping his father-in-law's flock near Mount Horeb, when lo! a strange vision greeted his eyes. The "angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush," which burned without consuming. By "angel" we are to understand a vision or appearance only, for the being within the bush was God Almighty himself; and throughout the rest of the narrative the word "angel" gives place to Lord or God. Moses approached this wonderful sight; but the Lord called out to him, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Thereupon Moses hid his face "for he was afraid to look upon God." Could anything be more ludicrous! Fancy God, the infinite spirit of the universe, secreting himself in a bush and setting it on fire, just to make a little display for the benefit of Moses! Our wonder, however, is presently lessened; for this God turns out to be only Jehovah "The Lord God of the Hebrews," a mere local deity, who cared only for his own people, and was quite ready to slaughter any number of the inhabitants of adjacent countries, besides being bitterly jealous of their gods. He had heard the cries of his people and had determined to rescue them from bondage. He had also resolved to give Pharaoh and the Egyptians a taste of his quality, so that they might be forced to admit his superiority to their gods. "I will let them know," said he to Moses, "who I am, and you shall be my agent. We'll confound their impudence before we've done with them. But don't let us be in a hurry, for the little drama I have devised requires a good deal of time. You go to Egypt and ask Pharaoh to let my people go. But don't suppose that he will consent. That wouldn't suit my plans at all. I have decided to set you two playing at the little game of "pull Moses, pull Pharaoh," and I shall harden his heart against your demands so that there may be a fierce tussel. But don't be afraid. I am on your side, and just at the end of the game I'll join in and pull Pharaoh clean over. And mind you tell him all along that my power, not yours, works all the wonders I mean you to perform, for you are only my instrument, and I want all the glory myself. Play fair, Moses, play fair!"

Moses was not unwilling to engage in this enterprise, but like a prudent Jew he required certain assurances of success. He therefore first raised an objection as to his own insignificance—"Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" To which God replied, "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." Moses, however, required a much less remote token than this; so he again objected that nobody would believe him. Thereupon the Lord bade him cast his rod on the ground, and lo! it became a serpent. Moses very naturally fled before it, till the

Lord told him not to run away but to take it by the tail. He did so, and it became again a rod in his hand. Then the Lord bade him put his hand in his bosom, and on taking it out he found it was "leprous as snow." Again he put it in his bosom, and when he plucked it out once more it was sound and well. "There," said the Lord, "those signs will do in Egypt. When you show them nobody will doubt you." Moses still objected that he was very slow of speech, and frankly desired the Lord to send some one else. The Lord grew angry at this persistent reluctance; yet he restrained himself, and informed Moses that his brother Aaron, who was a good speaker, should accompany him. The prudent prophet seems to have been at length satisfied. At any rate he made no further objection, but after a little conversation with the Lord, who was very talkative, he set forth on his journey to Egypt.

Singular to relate, the Lord met Moses at an inn on the road, and sought to kill him. What a strange God, to be sure! Why did he want to kill his own messenger? And why, if he wanted to kill him, did he not succeed in doing it? Truly the ways of God are past finding out. The only reason discoverable for this queer conduct is that Moses' boy was uncircumcised. Zipporah, his wife, took a sharp stone and performed the rite of circumcision herself, casting the amputated morsel at the feet of the boy's father, with the remark that he was "a bloody husband." The Lord's anger was thereby appeased, and the text naively says that he then let Moses go.

Prompted by the Lord, Aaron went out into the wilderness to meet Moses, and they soon appeared together before "all the elders of the children of Israel," who readily believed in their mission when they heard Aaron's account of the Lord's conversation with Moses, and saw the wonderful signs. Afterwards the two brothers visited Pharaoh, but God had hardened his heart; so he denied all knowledge of the Lord, and refused to let Israel go. On the contrary, he commanded the taskmasters to be even more rigorous with them, and, instead of giving them straw to make bricks, as theretofore, to make them gather straw for themselves. And when they complained, Pharaoh replied that they were an idle lot, and only wanted to go out and sacrifice to the Lord in order to avoid work. Whereupon they remonstrated with Moses for his interference, and he, in turn, remonstrated with God in very plain and disrespectful language. "Nonsense!" said the Lord, "now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh."

Again Pharaoh was visited by the two brothers, who this time commenced to work the oracle. Aaron cast down his rod, and it became a serpent. But the magicians of Egypt, who were present by the invitation of the king, were in nowise astonished. "Oh," said they, "is that all you can do?" Then every man of them threw down his rod, and it also became a serpent. That was indeed an age of miracles! The magicians of Egypt wrought this wonder without any help from the Lord, and solely "with

their enchantments." Here then was a pretty fix! So far neither side had any advantage. But, presently, Aaron's serpent—which thus proved itself a truly Jewish one—created a diversion by swallowing all the others up. We must suppose that it afterwards disgorged them, or else that Aaron's rod was exceedingly stout when he got it back.

Pharaoh's heart remained obdurate, notwithstanding this sign, and he still refused to let the people go. And then the plagues commenced.

The first was a plague of blood. Aaron stretched forth his rod, and *all* the waters of Egypt, the streams, the rivers, the ponds, and the pools became blood. Even the water in vessels of stone and wood was ensanguined. The fish all died, and the river stank; and "there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt." This was a good start, but the magicians of Egypt beat it hollow; for after Aaron had turned *all* the water of Egypt into blood, they turned *all* the *rest* into blood. No wonder that Pharaoh's heart remained hardened! He quietly walked into his house and let the subject drop.

Seven days later Moses went again to Pharaoh and said, "Thus saith the Lord, let my people go." And Pharaoh said, "I won't." "Won't you?" replied Moses, "we shall see." Forthwith Aaron brandished his rod over the streams, rivers, and ponds, and brought on the second plague in the shape of frogs, which swarmed all over the land. They entered the houses, penetrated to the bed-rooms, mounted the beds, slipped into the kneading-troughs, and even got into the ovens, although one would expect frogs to give such hot places a very wide berth. What a squelching of frogs there must have been! The Egyptians could not have stood absolutely still, and the land was covered with them. Again the magicians, "with their enchantments," followed suit, and brought up frogs too. Yet, as the land was already covered with frogs, it is difficult to see how the new comers found room, unless they got on the backs of the others, and went hopping about in couples. Pharaoh now relented. He called for Moses, and said, "Intreat your Lord to take away these nasty frogs, and I will let the people go." "That will I," said Moses, "and you shall know that there is none like unto the Lord our God." The next day the frogs died out of the houses, villages, and fields, and were gathered into heaps, so that again "the land stank." But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite he hardened his heart again, "as the Lord had said."

The third act of this tragi-comedy was decisive in one sense, for in it the magicians of Egypt were obliged to retire from the competition. Aaron stretched forth his rod again and smote the dust of the earth, all of which instantly became *lice*, in man and in beast. Before this dirty miracle the magicians of Egypt shrank dismayed. They made a feeble and altogether unsuccessful attempt to imitate Aaron's performance, and then drew back, declining to continue the contest. The lice settled them.

"This," said they, "is the finger of God." When they saw the lice they knew that the Lord was shaking himself and meant business. But Pharaoh still refused to knuckle under. Even against the force of this supreme wonder his heart was steeled.

So the fourth plague came. A grievous swarm of flies descended on Egypt, so that "the land was corrupted" by reason of them. But not a single fly crosses over into "the land of Goshen" where the Jews dwelt. Thereupon Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and told them he was willing to let their people go and sacrifice to the Lord for three days, but not outside Egypt. Moses reiterated his demand for a three days' journey into the wilderness. Whereto Pharaoh replied that they might go, but "not too far." Moses then undertook to banish the flies. And he was as good as his word; for he made such a clean sweep of them that "not one remained." This precious narrative always runs to extremes. Egypt without a fly in it would be in a very abnormal condition. At ordinary times the land is infested with flies; and large numbers of the people suffer from diseased eyes. in consequence of these insects incessantly fastening on the sores caused by the irritating sand which fills the air. It was absurd for this Hebrew story-teller to scotch the last fly; he should have left sufficient to maintain the character of the country.

Again Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and when the flies were banished he refused to "let the people go." So the fifth plague came. A "very grievous murrain," which spared the cattle of Israel, broke out on the cattle of Egypt, and with such virulence that they all died. Pharaoh found on inquiry that there was "not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead," yet for all that his heart was hardened and he would not let the people go.

So the sixth plague came. Aaron took "handfuls of ashes of the furnace," which Moses sprinkled towards heaven, and "it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast." Even the magicians were afflicted. Now the reader will bear in mind that all the cattle of Egypt were killed by the fifth plague. What beasts, then, were these tortured with boils? Were they dead carcasses, or were they live cattle miraculously created in the interim? From the serpent of Eden to Jonah's whale, the animals of the Bible are a queer lot.

Pharaoh's heart remaining still hardened, God commanded Moses to make a special appeal to him, and to get up early in the morning for that purpose. So Moses stood before Pharaoh and said "thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, let my people go, that they may serve me. If you refuse I shall plague you and your people worse than ever, and so teach you that there is none like me in all the earth. You had better cave in at once." But Pharaoh would not harken. He tacitly declared that the Lord God of the Hebrews might go to Jericho.

So the seventh plague come. A fierce hail, accompanied by fire that ran along the ground, smote all that was in the field, both man and beast. It smote also every herb of the field and

brake *every* tree of the field. Only those were saved who "feared the Lord" and stayed indoors with their servants and cattle. Fortunately the wheat and the rice were spared, as they were not grown up; or there would have been a famine in Egypt compared with which the seven years of scarcity in Joseph's time had sunk into insignificance. Pharaoh now relented and repented. "I have sinned this time," he said, "the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." And Moses, seeing that the king had recognised Jehovah as the true cock of the theological walk, procured a cessation of the thunder and the hail. But lo! when Pharaoh perceived this, he hardened his heart again, and "sinned yet more."

So the eighth plague came. After a day and night of east wind, a prodigious swarm of locusts went up over the land of Egypt, covering the face of the whole earth, and darkening the ground. They "did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had spared." But we were told that the hail smote *every* herb, and brake *every* tree. What then was left for the locusts to eat? The writer of this narrative had a very short memory, or else a stupendous power of belief.

Again Pharaoh confessed that he had sinned. The locusts were cleared away, and so effectually that "not one remained." But "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" for the eighth time, and he refused to let the people go. Whereupon Moses brought darkness over the land of Egypt, a thick darkness that might be felt. This thick darkness lasted in Egypt for three days, during which time the people "saw not one another, neither rose any from his place." We presume, therefore, that they all starved for that time. Poor devils! What had they done to be treated thus? All the children of Israel, however, had light in their dwellings. Why then did they not avail themselves of such a fine opportunity to escape? It was a splendid chance, yet they let it slip. Perhaps Moses did not give the word, and they were like a flock of sheep without him. Perhaps they wished to stay and see the rest of the fun. For more was coming, although it was anything but fun to the poor Egyptians. To them indeed it was an awful tragedy such as we lack words to describe.

Moses commanded the Jews to take a male lamb for each household, to kill it, and to daub its blood over the two side-posts and on the upper door-posts of their houses. The flesh they were to eat in the night, roasted with bitter herbs, and unleavened bread, as the inauguration of the passover. The Lord meant to pass through the land in the dark, and slay all the firstborn in Egypt; and lest he should make some mistake he required the Jews' houses to be marked with blood so that he might distinguish them. We should expect God to dispense with such "aids to memory." What followed must be told in the language of Scripture: "At midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh



that sat on the throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead." The reader's imagination will picture the horror of the scene. That "great cry in Egypt" arose from a people who were the first victims of God's hatred of all who stood in the way of his chosen "set of leprous slaves." And in this case the tragedy was the more awful, and the more inexcusably atrocious, because God deliberately planned it. He could easily have softened Pharaoh's heart, but he chose to harden it. He could have brought his people out of Egypt in peace, but he preferred that they should start amidst wailings of agony, and leave behind them a track of blood.

Yet in the tragedy there is a touch of comedy. Those beasts that were first killed by the murrian and afterwards plagued by the boil, at last lose their firstborn by the tenth plague. Besides, there is a touch of the ludicrous in the statement that *every* house had one dead. All the firstborn of such a large population could not have been present at that time. Some might have left Egypt for purposes of trade, and others would certainly have been cut off before by death. It is an interesting question, too, what the Lord did when the firstborn happened to be twins.

Pharaoh and the Egyptians were now anxious to get rid of the Jews. So God's people departed in haste. They took good care, however, not to go empty-handed. They "borrowed" of the Egyptians, without the remotest intention of ever paying them back, jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and raiment. In fact they "spoiled the Egyptians." In recent times the modern Egyptians have wiped off that old score by spoiling a few Jewish money-lenders.

God led his people past instead of through the land of the Philistines, lest they should be frightened by war, and wish to return to Egypt. He does not seem to have known their character, considering the delight with which they subsequently warred against their enemies, and the joy they took in wholesale massacre. Moses carried off the bones of Joseph, which must have been rather stale by that time. And God went before the huge host of six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children, and a mixed multitude of followers; by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, until at length they found themselves encamped before the Red Sea.

In the meanwhile God had again hardened Pharaoh's heart, for the express purpose of killing some more Egyptians and getting more honor to himself. The Israelites soon heard that Pharaoh was pursuing them with an army, and they remembered his dreadful war chariots. They found themselves between the devil and the deep sea. Whereupon they murmured against

Moses for bringing them out into the wilderness to die. But he, disregarding them, stretched forth his miraculous rod over the sea, and lo! the waters parted, forming a wall on either side of a safe passage, through which the Jews travelled with dry feet. Pharaoh and his host, however, attempting the same feat, were overwhelmed by the down-rushing sea-ramparts, and all drowned. There remained, says *Exodus*, not so much as one of them.

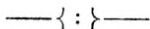
We have heard a different account of this affair. A negro preacher once explained that the Red Sea just at that time, was "a little bit frozen over," and the Jews carrying only what they had borrowed "frum the Gyptians," crossed the ice safely; but when Pharaoh came with his thundering war-chariots, the ice broke, and "dey all was drown'd." But a nigger in the audience objected that the Red Sea is "in de quator," and is never frozen over. "War did you larn dat?" asked the preacher. "In de jografy," was the reply. "Ah," was the ready retort, "dat's war you made de mistake; dis was a very long time ago, and dere was no jografy and no quator den." That nigger preacher's explanation seems quite as good as the one given by "Moses."

We leave the Jews with their Lord God on the safe side of the Red Sea, where Moses heads the men in singing a joyful song of praise, and Miriam the prophetess heads the women with timbrel and with dance. Jehovah has ended his plaguing of the Egyptians, after more than decimating them. He has covered his name with terrible splendor, and proved "that there is none like him" to a world which is very happy to be assured of the fact. Two such monsters would make earth a hell. Reader! did you ever meet with a more extraordinary story than this of the Ten Plagues; and can you regard the book which contains it as Go d's Wor?

PRICE ONE PENNY.

# JONAH AND THE WHALE.

By G. W. FOOTE.



WE have often wondered whether Shakespeare had the story of Jonah in his mind when he wrote that brief dialogue between Hamlet and Polonius, which immediately precedes the famous closet-scene in the Master's greatest play—

*Hamlet.*—Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

*Polonius.*—By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

*Hamlet.*—Methinks it is like a weasel.

*Polonius.*—It is backed like a weasel.

*Hamlet.*—Or like a whale?

*Polonius.*—Very like a whale.

Having, however, no means whereby to decide this question, we must content ourselves with broaching it, and leave the reader to form his own conclusion. Yet we cannot refrain from expressing our opinion that the story of the strange adventures of the prophet Jonah is "very like a whale."

In another of Shakespeare's plays, namely "The Tempest," we find a phrase which exactly applies to the romance of Jonah. When Trinculo discovers Caliban lying on the ground, he proceeds to investigate the monster. "What," quoth he, "have we here? a man or a fish? dead or alive? A fish: he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-like smell." Now this is a most admirable description of the Book of Jonah. It has "a very ancient and fish-like smell." In fact, it is about the fishiest of all the fishy stories ever told.

Sailors' "yarns" have become proverbial for their audacious and delicious disregard of truth, and the Book of Jonah is "briny" from beginning to end. It contains only forty-eight verses, but its brevity is no defect. On the contrary, that is one of its greatest charms. The mind takes in the whole story at once, and enjoys it undiluted; as it were a goblet of the fine generous wine of romance. Varying the expression, the Book of Jonah may be called the perfect cameo of Bible fiction.

When the Book of Jonah was written no one precisely knows, nor is it discoverable who wrote it. According to Matthew Arnold some unknown man of genius gave to Christendom the fourth gospel, and with sublime self-abnegation allowed his name to perish. A similar remark must be made concerning the unknown author who gave to the world this racy story of Jonah and the whale. We heartily wish his name had been preserved for remembrance and praise.

Our marginal Bibles date the Book of Jonah B.C. *cir.* 862. Other authorities give the more recent date of B.C. 830 as that of the events recorded in it. This chronology will suggest an important reflection later on.

The wonderful story of Jonah and the whale begins in this wise:—"Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

Who Amittai was, and whether man or woman, is a problem still unsolved; but it is reasonable to suppose the name was that of Jonah's father, as the ancient Jews paid no superfluous attentions to women, and generally traced descent from the paternal stem alone. Amittai belonged to a place called Gathhepher, "the village of the Cow's tail," or, as otherwise interpreted, "the Heifer's trough." Jonah's tomb is said to have been long shown on a rocky hill near the town; but whether the old gentleman was ever buried there no man can say. The word Jonah is said to mean a dove, and is by some derived from an Arabic root, signifying to be weak or gentle. Another interpretation, by Gesenius, is a feeble, gentle bird. This refractory prophet was singularly ill-named. If his cognomen was bestowed on him by his parents, they must have been greatly deceived as to his character. The proverb says it is a wise son that knows his own father; and with the history of Jonah before us, we may add that it is a wise father who rightly knows his own son.

The solicitude of "the Lord God of the Hebrews" for the welfare of the Ninevites is to the sceptical mind an extraordinary phenomenon. It is one of the very few cases in which he shows the slightest concern for any other people than the Jews. His ordinary practice was to slaughter them wholesale by pestilence or the sword; and it is therefore very refreshing to meet with such an instance of his merciful care. For once he remembers that the rest of Adam's posterity are his children, and possess a claim on his attention.

Jonah, however, did not share this benign sentiment; and disrelishing the missionary enterprise assigned him, he "rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." Jehovah does not seem to have been omnipresent then; that attribute attaches to him only since the beginning of the Christian era, when he assumed universal sway. Long before the time of Jonah, another man, the first ever born in this world, namely Cain, also "went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the Land of Nod;" probably so called because the Lord was not quite awake in that locality. No one knows where Nod was situated, nor can the most learned archaeologists denote the actual position of Tarshish. These two places would be well worth study. A careful examination of them would to some extent reveal what went on in those parts of the world to which God's presence did not extend; and we should be able to compare their geological and other records with those of the rest of the world. No doubt some striking differences would be perceptible.

Jonah determined to voyage by the Joppa and Tarshish line. So he went to the former port and embarked in one of the Company's ships, after paying his fare like a man.

Having a perfectly untroubled conscience, and no apprehension of his coming troubles, Jonah no doubt felt highly elated at having done the Lord so neatly. Perhaps it was this elation of spirits which safe-guarded him from sea-sickness. At any rate he went "down into the sides of the ship," and there slept the sleep of the just. So profound was his slumber, that it was quite unbroken by the horrible tempest which ensued. The Lord had his eye on Jonah, for the prophet had not yet reached the safe refuge of Tarshish; and he "sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was likely to be broken." The mariners "cast forth the wares that were in the ship" to lighten her, and toiled hard to keep afloat; but their efforts were apparently fruitless, and nothing lay before them but the certain prospect of a watery grave. The reader will be able to imagine the tumult of the scene; the dash of ravening waves, the fierce howling of the wind, the creaking of masts and the straining of cordage, the rolling and pitching of the good ship and the shifting of her cargo, the captain's hoarse shouts of command and the sailors' loud replies, alternated with frenzied appeals to their gods for help. Yet amidst all the uproar Jonah still slept, as though the vessel were gaily skimming the waters before a pleasant breeze.

Let us pause here to interpose a question. Did the "great wind sent out into the sea" by the Lord confine its attentions to the immediate vicinity of Jonah's ship, or did it cause a general tempest and perhaps send some other vessels to Davy Jones's locker? As no restrictions are mentioned, we presume that the tempest was general, and that the Lord's wind, like the Lord's rain referred to by Jesus, fell alike upon the just and the unjust. This circumstance very naturally heightens our previous conception of his righteousness.

That the Lord, or some other supernatural power, caused the tempest, the mariners of Jonah's ship and their captain never once doubted. Living as they did, and as we do not, under a miraculous dispensation, they attributed every unusual, and especially every unpleasant, occurrence to the agency of a god. The idea of predicting storms, with which the civilised world is now familiar, they would doubtless have regarded as blasphemous and absurd. It is, therefore, by no means wonderful that every man on board (except Jonah, who was fast asleep) "called unto his god." Ignorant of what god was afflicting them, they appealed impartially all round, in the hope of hitting the right one. But the circle of their deities did not include the one which sent the wind; so the tempest continued to prevail, despite their prayers.

In this extremity a happy thought occurred to the "ship-master." It struck him that the strange passenger down below might know something about the tempest, and that his god might have caused it. Forthwith there dawned within him a recollection of words which Jonah had uttered on embarking. Had he not told them "that he fled from the

presence of the Lord?" "Dear me," the captain probably said to himself, "what a fool I was not to think of this before. That chap down below is the occasion of all these troubles; I'll go and hunt him up, confound him!" Thereupon he doubtless slapped his thigh, as is the wont of sailors when they solve a difficulty or hit on a brilliant idea; after which he descended "into the sides of the ship," whither Jonah had gone. There he found the prophet slumbering as peacefully as a weanling child, with a smile of satisfaction playing over his Hebrew features. We can imagine the captain's profound disgust in presence of this scene. He and his men had been toiling and praying, and alas! pitching the cargo overboard, in order to save their skins; and all the while the occasion of their trouble had been lying fast asleep! Preserving an outward decorum, however, he accosted Jonah in very mild terms. "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" said he, "Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."

What exquisite simplicity! It reminds us of the childlike and bland Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, when he opposed Mr. Bradlaugh's entry to the House of Commons. That honorable champion of the Almighty objected to Mr. Bradlaugh on the ground that he acknowledged no God, and was thus vastly different from the other members of the House, all of whom "believed in some kind of deity or other." You must have a god to be a legislator it seems, even if that god is, as the Americans say, only a little tin Jesus. So the captain of this tempest-tost ship desired Jonah to call upon his god. He made no inquiry into the character of the god, any more than did Sir Henry Drummond Wolff on a later occasion. It was enough to know that Jonah had "some kind of deity or other." Any god would do.

Now comes the most remarkable episode in this wonderful story. The captain and the crew were aware that Jonah had "fled from the presence of the Lord," because "he had told them;" they had, therefore, every reason to believe that Jonah's god had caused the tempest. Yet, curiously enough, instead of at once proceeding on this belief, "they said, every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us." This wholly superfluous procedure may, perhaps, be attributed to their exceptional love of justice. They wished to make assurance doubly sure before they "went for" Jonah. And with sweet simplicity they had recourse to the casting of lots, in which their wills would be inoperative, and the whole responsibility of deciding be thrown on the gods, who alone possessed the requisite information.

The lot of course fell upon Jonah. Any other result would have spoilt the story. "Then," continues our narrative, "said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us? What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?"

And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you."

We are almost dumb with astonishment before this act of self-sacrifice on the part of Jonah, for which his previous history left us quite unprepared. Who would have thought him capable of such disinterested conduct? His unselfishness was assuredly heroic, and may even be called sublime. No doubt the captain and crew of the ship were as much astonished as we are, and their opinion of Jonah went up several hundred per cent. They resolved to make a last supreme effort before turning him into fish-bait. But all their gallant endeavors were discovered to be futile and a mere waste of time. So the men, more in sorrow than in anger, finally took Jonah up and threw him overboard. They had done their best for him, and now, finding that they could do no more except at too great a risk, they sadly left him to do the rest for himself.

Immediately, we are told, "the sea ceased from her raging." Jonah was oil upon the troubled waters. What an invaluable recipe does this furnish us against the dangers of the deep sea! The surest method of allaying a storm is to throw a prophet overboard. Every ship should carry a missionary in case of need. It would, indeed, be well if the law made this compulsory. The cost of maintaining the missionary would be more than covered by the saving effected in insurance. Here is a splendid field for Christian self-sacrifice! Hundreds of gentlemen who are now engaged in very doubtful labor among the heathen, might engage in this new enterprise with the absolute certainty of a beneficent result; for poor ungodly mariners would thus be spared a hasty dispatch from this world without time to repent and obtain forgiveness, and be allowed ample leisure to secure salvation.

When the men saw that "the sea ceased from her raging" on Jonah's being cast into her depths, "they feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows." To the sceptical mind it would seem that they had much more reason to "fear" the Lord during the continuance of the tempest than after it had subsided. It also seems strange that they should have the means wherewith to offer a sacrifice. Perhaps they had a billy-goat on board, and made him do duty, in default of anything better. Or failing even a billy-goat, as the Lord God of the Hebrews could only be propitiated by the shedding of blood, they perhaps caught and immolated a stray rat. The nature of their "vows" is not

recorded, but it is not unreasonable to assume that they swore never again to take on board a passenger fleeing "from the presence of the Lord."

Meanwhile, what had become of poor Jonah? Most men would be effectually settled if thrown overboard in a storm. But there are some people who were not born to be drowned, and Jonah was one of them. He was destined to another fate. The Lord, it appears, "had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah," and the feat was of course duly performed. Our narrative does not describe the character of this "great fish," but light is cast on the subject by another passage of Scripture. In the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew, and the fortieth verse, Jesus is represented as saying, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The great fish was then a whale. Jesus said so, and there can be no higher authority. Sharks and such ravenous fish have an unpleasant habit of "chawing" their victims pretty considerably before swallowing them; so, on the whole, we prefer to believe that it was a whale. Yet the Levant is a curious place for a whale to be lurking in. The creature must have been miraculously led there to go through its appointed performance. It must also have been "prepared," to use the language of the Bible, in a very remarkable way, for the gullet of a whale is not large enough to allow of the passage of an object exceeding the size of an ordinary herring. Swallowing Jonah must have been a tough job after the utmost preparation. With a frightfully distended throat, however, the whale did its best, and by dint of hard striving at last got him down. Jonah could never afterwards say to that hospitable fish, "I was a stranger and ye took me not in."

Having properly taken Jonah in out of the wet, the poor whale doubtless surmised that its troubles had ended. But alas they had only just begun! Swallowing a prophet is one thing; digesting him is another. For three days and nights the whale struggled desperately to digest Jonah, and for three days and nights Jonah obstinately refused to be digested. Never in the entire course of its life had it experienced such a difficulty. During the whole of that period, too, Jonah carried on a kind of prayer meeting, and the strange rumbling in its belly must have greatly added to the poor animal's discomfort. At last it grew heartily sick of Jonah, and vomited him up on dry land. We have no doubt that it swam away into deep waters, a sadder but a wiser whale; and that ever afterwards, instead of bolting its food, it narrowly scrutinised every morsel before swallowing it, to make sure it wasn't another prophet. According to its experience, prophets were decidedly the most unprofitable articles of consumption.

We are of course aware that the narrative states that "the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land." But this we conceive to be a mere pleasantry on the part of the unknown author. The idea of the Lord whispering into a



whale's ear is ineffably ludicrous: besides the whale had a very natural inclination to rid itself of Jonah, and needed no divine prompting.

Jonah's prayer "unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly" is very amusing. There is not a sentence in it which bears any reference to the prophet's circumstances. It is a kind of Psalm, after the manner of those ascribed to David. Our belief is that the author found it floating about, and thinking it would do for Jonah, inserted it in his narrative, without even taking the trouble to furbish it into decent keeping with the situation.

The word of the Lord came unto Jonah a second time, and presuming no more to disobey, he went to Nineveh. It is to be supposed, however, that he first well-lined his poor stomach, for both he and the whale had fasted three days and nights, and must have been sadly in want of victuals.

Nineveh, according to our author, was a stupendous city of "three days' journey." This means its diameter and not its circumference, for we are told that Jonah "entered into the city a day's journey." If we allow twenty miles as a moderate day's walk, Nineveh was sixty miles through from wall to wall, or about twenty times as large as London; and if densely populated like our metropolis, it must have contained more than eighty million inhabitants. This is too great a stretch even for a sailor's yarn. Our author did not take pains to clear his narrative of discrepancy. In his last verse he informs us that the city contained "more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left." If this number is correct Nineveh was a large place, but its dimensions were very much less than those stated in the Book of Jonah.

Jonah obeyed the Lord this time and began to preach. "Yet forty days," cried he, "and Ninevah shall be overthrown." How the prophet made himself understood is an open question. Either the Lord taught him their language, or he miraculously enabled them to understand Hebrew. Further, they worshipped Baal, and Jonah preached to them in the name of his foreign God. According to ancient, and to a large extent modern custom, we should expect them in such a case to kill the presumptuous prophet, or at least to shut him up as a madman. Yet they did nothing of the kind. On the contrary, "the people of Ninevah believed God." Even the king was converted. He covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. He also decreed that neither man nor beast in the city should eat or drink anything; but, said he, "let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way." What an enormous consumption of sackcloth there must have been! The merchants who sold it did a surprising business, and no doubt quotations went up immensely. We wonder, indeed, how they managed to supply such a sudden and universal demand. And what a sight was presented by the whole popu-

lation of the city! Men, women, and children, high and low, rich and poor, were all arrayed in the same dingy garments. Even the horses, cows, pigs and sheep, were similarly attired. What a queer figure they must have cut! And what an astonishing chorus of prayer ascended to heaven! According to the text, the beasts had to "cry mightily" as well as the men. Since the confusion of tongues at Babel, neither history nor tradition records such a frightful hubbub.

Their supplications prevailed. God "saw their works, that they had turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." Immutable God changes his mind, infallible God repents!

God spared Nineveh, but only for a brief while, for it was destroyed a few years later by Arbaces the Mede. The merciful respite was thus not of long continuance. Yet it "displeased Jonah exceedingly." He had been suspicious from the first, and he only fulfilled God's mission under constraint. And now his worst suspicions were confirmed. After he had told the Ninevites that their city would be overthrown in forty days, God had relented, and utterly ruined Jonah's reputation as a prophet. So he made himself a booth outside the city, and sat in its shadow, to watch what would happen, with a deep feeling, which he plainly expressed to the Almighty, that now his reputation was gone he might as well die. The Lord considerably "prepared a gourd," which grew up over Jonah's head to protect him from the heat; at which the sulky prophet was "exceedingly glad," although it would naturally be thought that the booth would afford ample protection. He, however, soon found himself sold; for the Lord prepared a worm to destroy the gourd, and when the sun arose he sent "a vehement east wind" which beat upon poor Jonah's head, and made him so faint that he once more asked God to despatch him out of his misery. Whereupon the Lord said coaxingly, "Doest thou well to be angry?" And Jonah pettishly answered, "Yes, I do." Then the Lord, with a wonderful access of pathos, altogether foreign to his general character, twitted Jonah with having pity for the gourd and none for the inhabitants of "that great city." With this the story concludes. We are unable to say whether the poor prophet, so wretchedly sold, ever recovered from his spleen, or whether it shortened his days and brought him to an untimely grave.

The Book of Jonah is as true as Gospel, for Jesus endorsed it. The Bible contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So without expressing any sceptical sentiments, we will end by repeating Byron's words, "Truth is strange—stranger than fiction."

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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# THE WANDERING JEWS.

By G. W. FOOTE.

THE Middle Ages had a legend of the Wandering Jew. This person was supposed to have been doomed, for the crime of mocking Jesus at the crucifixion, to wander over the earth until his second coming. No one believes this now. The true Wandering Jews were those slaves whom Jehovah rescued from Egyptian bondage, with a promise that he would lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey, but whom he compelled to roam the deserts instead for forty years, until all of them except two had perished. Of all the multitude who escaped from Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb entered the promised land. Even Moses had to die in sight of it.

These poor Wandering Jews demand our pity. They were guilty of many crimes against humanity, but they scarcely deserved such treatment as they received. Their God was worse than they. He was quick-tempered, unreasonable, cruel, revengeful, and dishonest. Few of his promises to them were performed. They worshipped a bankrupt deity. The land of promise was a Tantalus cup ever held to their lips, and ever mocking them when they essayed to drink. God was their greatest enemy instead of their best friend. Their tortuous path across the wilderness was marked by a track of bleaching bones. All the evils which imagination can conceive fell on their devoted heads. Bitten by serpents, visited by plagues, cursed with famine and drought, swallowed by earthquake, slain by war, and robbed by priests, they found Jehovah a harder despot than Pharaoh. Death was to them a happy release, and only the grave a shelter from the savagery of God.

Commentators explain that the Jews who left Egypt were unfit for the promised land. If so, they were unfit to be the chosen people of God. Why were they not allowed to remain in Egypt until they grew better, or why was not some other nation selected to inherit Canaan?

At the end of our romance of "The Ten Plagues" we left the Jews on the safe side of the Red Sea. We must now ask a few questions which we had no space for then.

How, in a period of two hundred and fifteen years, did the seventy males of Jacob's house multiply into a nation of over two millions? Experience does not warrant belief in such a rapid increase. The Jewish chroniclers were fond of drawing the long bow. In the book of Judges, for instance, we are told that the Gileadites, under Jephthah, slew 42,000 Ephraimites; and that the Benjamites slew 40,000 Israelites, after which the Israelites killed 43,100 Benjamites, all of these being "men of valor" that "drew the sword." The book of Samuel says that

the Philistines had 30,000 war chariots, and that they slew 30,000 footmen of Israel. The second book of Chronicles says that Pekah, king of Israel, slew of Judah in one day 120,000 "sons of valor," and carried away 200,000 captives; that Abijah's force consisted of 400,000, and Jeroboam's of 800,000, 500,000 of whom were killed! At the battle of Waterloo the total number of men killed on our side was 4,172. The statistics of slaughter in the Bible were clearly developed from the inner consciousness of the Jewish scribes; and no doubt the same holds good with respect to the statistics of the flight from Egypt.

This view is corroborated by a singular statement in the third chapter of Numbers. We are there informed that when the census was taken "All the first-born males, from a month old and upwards of those that were numbered, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and three score and thirteen." Now as there were about 900,000 males altogether, it follows that every Jewish mother must have had on an average *forty-two sons*, to say nothing of daughters! Such extraordinary fecundity is unknown to the rest of the world, except in the region of romance. The Jews bragged a great deal about Jehovah, and they appear to have obtained some compensation by bragging a great deal about themselves.

How did the Jews manage to quit Egypt in one night? There were 600,000 men on foot, besides women and children, not to mention "the mixed multitude that went up also with them." The entire population must have numbered more than two millions, and some commentators estimate it at nearly three. They had to come in from all parts of Goshen to Rameses, bringing with them the sick and infirm, the very old and the very young. Among such a large population there could not have been less than two hundred births a day. Many of the Jewish women, therefore, must have been just confined. How could they and their new-born children have started off in such a summary manner? Many more women must have been at the point of confinement. How could these have been hurried off at all? Yet we are told that not a single person was left behind!

How were the flocks and herds driven out in such haste? There were about two million sheep and two hundred thousand oxen. The sheep alone would have required grazing land as extensive as the whole county of Bedford, besides what would have been needed for the oxen. Is it credible that all these animals were collected together from such a wide area, and driven out of Egypt in one night? Yet we are told that not a single hoof was left behind!

How did the huge multitude of people march? If they travelled fifty men abreast, as is supposed to have been the practice in the Hebrew armies, the able-bodied warriors alone would have filled up the road for about *seven miles*, and the whole multitude would have formed a dense column *twenty-two*

miles long. The front rank would have been two days' journey in advance of the rear.

How did the sheep and cattle march? How was it possible for them to keep pace with their human fellow travellers? They would naturally not march in a compact array, and the vast drove must therefore have spread widely and lengthened out for miles.

What did the drove live upon during the journey from Rameses to Succoth, and from Succoth to Etham, and from Etham to the Red Sea? Such grass as there was, even if the sheep and cattle went before the men, women, and children, could not have been of much avail; for what was not eaten by the front ranks must have been trodden under foot at once, and rendered useless to those that followed. After they "encamped by the Red Sea," on the third day, there was no vegetation at all. The journey was over a desert, the surface of which was composed of hard gravel intermixed with pebbles. After crossing the Red Sea, their road lay over a desert region, covered with sand, gravel, and stone, for about nine miles; after which they entered a boundless desert plain, called *El Ati*, white and painfully glaring to the eye, and beyond this the ground was broken by sand-hills. How were the two million sheep and two hundred thousand oxen provisioned during this journey?

What did the Jews themselves live on? The desert afforded them no sustenance until God miraculously sent manna. They must, therefore, have taken a month's provisions for every man, woman, and child. How could they possibly have provided themselves with so much food on so short a notice? And how could they have carried it, seeing that they were already burdened with kneading-troughs and other necessaries for domestic use, besides the treasures they "borrowed" of the Egyptians?

How did they provide themselves with tents? Allowing ten persons for each tent, they must have required two hundred thousand. Were these carefully got ready in expectation? In the land of Goshen they lived in houses with "lintels" and "side-posts." And how were the tents carried? The Jews themselves were already well loaded. Of course the oxen remain; but, as Coleso observes, they were not trained to carry goods on their backs, and were sure to prove refractory under such a burden.

Whence did the Jews obtain their arms? According to Exodus (xiii., 18) "the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt." The Hebrew word which is rendered "harnessed" appears to mean "armed" or "in battle array" in all the other passages where it occurs, and is so translated. Some commentators, scenting a difficulty in this rendering, urge that the true meaning is "by five in a rank." But if 600,000 men marched out of Egypt "five in a rank," they must have formed a column sixty-eight miles long, and it would have taken several days to start them all off, whereas they went out altogether "that self-same day." Besides, the Jews had arms in the desert, and how could they have possessed them there unless they

obtained them in Egypt? If they went out of Egypt "armed," why did they cry out "sore afraid" when Pharaoh pursued them?

According to Herodotus, the Egyptian army, which formed a distinct caste, never exceeded 160,000 men. Why were the Jews so appalled by less than a third of their own number? Must we suppose, with Kalisch, that their bondage in Egypt had crushed all valor and manhood out of their breasts? Josephus gives a different explanation. He says that the day after Pharaoh's host was drowned in the Red Sea, "Moses gathered together the weapons of the Egyptians, which were brought to the camp of the Hebrews by the current of the sea and the force of the wind assisting it. And he conjectured that this also happened by Divine Providence, that so they might not be destitute of weapons." But, as Colenso observes, though body-armor *might* have been obtained in this way, swords, spears and shields *could not* in any number. The Bible, too, says nothing about such an occurrence. We must therefore assume that 600,000 well-armed Jews were such utter cowards that they could not strike a blow for their wives and children and their own liberty against the smaller army of Pharaoh, but could only whimper and sigh after their old bondage. Yet a month later they fought bravely with the Amalekites, and ever afterwards they were as eager for battle as any Irishman at Donnybrook fair. How can this difference be accounted for? Could a nation of hereditary cowards become stubborn warriors in the short space of a month?

Let us now follow the Wandering Jews through the Desert, which they should have crossed in a week or two, but which they travelled up and down for forty years. People who want to make an expeditious journey had better do without a divine guide.

Coming to Marah, they found only bitter water to drink, at which they began to murmur. But the Lord showed Moses a certain tree, which when cast into the water made it sweet. It must have been a wonderful tree to sweeten water for two millions of people. Bitter water, also, quenches thirst more readily than sweet, and it stimulates the appetite, which would be highly desirable under a fierce relaxing sun.

A month after they left Egypt they came to the wilderness of Sin. There they began to murmur again. Finding themselves without food, they remembered "the flesh pots" of Egypt, and reproached Moses with having brought them into the desert to die of hunger. Both Moses and the Lord seem to have thought it unreasonable on their part to ask for something to eat. Oliver Twist was stared at when he asked for more, but the Jews surprised God by asking for something to begin with. Yet reflecting, perhaps, that they were after all unable to live without food, the Lord rained down manna from heaven. After the dew evaporated in the morning, they found this heavenly diet lying on the ground. It was "like a coriander seed, white; and the

taste of it was like wafers made with honey." No doubt the angels subsist on it in paradise. Moses preserved a pot of it for the instruction of future generations. The pot has, however, not been discovered up to the present day. Some future explorers may light upon it "in the fulness of time," and so help to prove the historical character of the Pentateuch.

The manna, as might be expected, had some peculiarities. No matter how much or how little he gathered, every man found on measuring that he had exactly an omer of it. Although it fell regularly every week day, none fell on Sunday. A double quantity had, therefore, to be gathered on Saturday. It melted in the sun, but could nevertheless be baked and seethed. Any of it left overnight stank in the morning and bred worms.

For forty years "the children of Israel did eat manna." But more than once their gorge rose against it. Manna for breakfast, manna for lunch, manna for dinner, manna for tea, and manna for supper, was a little more than they could stand. The monotony of their diet became intolerable. Accordingly, we read in the twentieth-first chapter of *Numbers*, that they complained of it and asked for a slight change in the bill of fare. "There is no bread," said they, "neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light food." This small request so incensed the Lord that he sent a lot of fiery serpents among them, which bit them so that "much people of Israel died." Like *Oliver Twist*, the Jews quickly repented their presumption. They humbled themselves before Moses, and he interceded with God for them. The prophet then made a brass serpent and set it on a pole, and on looking at it all who had been bitten recovered.

On another occasion, as we read in the eleventh of *Numbers*, they were guilty of a similar offence. This time it was the more surprising, as God had just burnt a lot of them up with raging fire for "complaining." They remembered "the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick." "Now," said they, "there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes. Who shall give us flesh to eat?" The Egyptian bill of fare was certainly enough to make their mouths water, and it proves that if Pharaoh made them work hard he did not starve them, as Jehovah very nearly succeeded in doing. They were so affected by their recollection of the luscious victuals they enjoyed in Egypt, that they actually cried with sorrow at their loss. Moses heard them weeping, "every man in the door of his tent." This put the Lord in a very bad temper; and Moses, who seems to have been much less irascible than Jehovah, "also was displeased." God determined to give them a surfeit. "Ye shall," said he, "not eat flesh one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and be loathsome unto you." Thereupon the Lord sent a wind which brought quails from the sea. They were so plentiful that they fell in heaps two cubits high for about twenty miles around the camp. That worthy commentator,

the Rev. Alexander Cruden, says that the miracle of this occurrence consisted, not in the great number of quails, but in their being "brought so seasonably" to the Jewish camp. The quantity did not trouble his credulous mind. "Some authors," says he, "affirm that in those eastern and southern countries, quails are innumerable, so that in one part of Italy within the compass of five miles, there were taken about an hundred thousand of them every day for a month altogether; and that sometimes they fly so thick over the sea, that being weary they fall into ships, sometimes in such numbers, that they sink them with their weight." The good man's easy reliance on "some authors," and his ready acceptance of such fables, show what credulity is engendered by belief in the Bible.

The Jews gathered quails for two days and a night, and joyfully carried them home. But "while the flesh was yet between their teeth," the Lord smote them with a very great plague, so that multitudes of them died. Poor devils! They were always in hot water.

How the sheep and cattle were provisioned the Bible does not inform us. There was scarcely a nibble of grass to be had in the desert, and as they could not very well have lived on sand and pebbles, they must have been supported miraculously. Perhaps the authors of the Pentateuch forgot all about this.

Not only were the Jews, like their flocks and herds, miraculously supported; they were also miraculously found in clothes. For forty years their garments and shoes did not wear out. How was this miracle wrought? When matter rubs against matter, particles are lost by abrasion. Did the Lord stop this process, or did he collect all the particles that were worn off during the day, and replace them by night on the soles of shoes, on the elbows of coats, and on the knees of pantaloons? If the clothes never wore out, it is fair to suppose that they remained absolutely unchanged. Imagine a toddling urchin, two years old at the exodus from Egypt, wearing the same rig when he grew up to manhood! Justin, however, says that the clothes grew with their growth. Some Jewish rabbis hold that angels acted as tailors in the wilderness, and so the garments were all kept straight. But Augustine, Chrysostom, and other Fathers abide by the literal interpretation that, through the blessing of God, the clothes and shoes never wore out, so that those who grew to manhood were able to hand them over, as good as new, to the rising generation. According to this theory, *everybody* must have had a poor fit, unless there was a transference of garments every twelve months or so.

The history of the Wandering Jews is full of miracles and wonders. It says that all the congregation of Israel, numbering over two millions, assembled at the door of the Tabernacle. As the whole width of the Tabernacle was eighteen feet, only nine men could have stood in front of it; and therefore the warriors of Israel alone, to say nothing of the rest of the population, if we allow eighteen inches between each rank of nine men, would



have formed a column nearly *twenty miles* long! We find also that Moses, and Joshua after him, address not only the whole congregation of Israel, including men, women, and children, but the "mixed multitude" of strangers as well. Their voices were distinctly heard by a crowded mass of people as large as the entire population of London. They must have had stentorian lungs, or the people must have had a wonderful sense of hearing.

When the Jews were encamped, according to Scott's estimate, they lived in a sort of "moveable city, *twelve miles square*," nearly as large as London. The people had to go outside this vast camp every day to bring in a supply of water and fuel, after cutting the latter down where they could find it! All their rubbish had to be carried out in like manner, for Jehovah used sometimes to take a walk among them, and he was highly displeased at seeing dirt. Every man, woman, and child, including the old, the sick, and the infirm, had to go outside the camp to attend to the necessities of nature! All the refuse of their multitudinous sacrifices had to be lugged out of the camp by the three priests, Aaron, Eleazer, and Ithamar. Colenso reckons that the sacrifices alone, allowing less than three minutes for each, would have occupied them incessantly during the whole twenty-four hours of every day. The pigeons brought to them daily as sin offerings must have numbered about 264, and as these had to be consumed by the three priests, each of them had to eat 88 pigeons a day, besides heaps of roast beef and other victuals!

Soon after the first fall of manna, the Jews murmured again because they had no water. Whereupon Moses smote a rock with his magical rod, and water gushed from it. The precious fluid came just in time to refresh them for their fight with the Amalekites. These people were very obstinate foes, and it required a miracle to defeat them. Moses ascended a hill and held up his hand. While he did so the Israelites prevailed, but when he let down his hand the Amalekites prevailed. To ensure victory, Aaron and Hur stood on either side of him, and held up his hands until the sun set. By this means Joshua discomfited the Amalekites with great slaughter. Moses built an altar to celebrate the event, and God swore that he would "have war with Amalek from generation to generation." As Jehovah's vengeance was so lasting, it is no wonder that his worshippers carried on their wars ever afterwards on the most hellish principles.

In the thirty-first chapter of *Numbers* we read that 12,000 Israelites warred against Midian. The brag of the chronicler is evident in this number or in those which follow. This little army polished off all the kings of Midian, burnt all their cities and castles, slew 48,000 men, and carried off 100,000 captives, besides 675,000 sheep, 72,000 oxen, and 61,000 asses. What prodigious spoil there was in those days! Of the captives Moses ordered 48,000 women and 20,000 boys to be massacred in cold blood; while the remaining 32,000 "women that had not known

man by lying with him" were reserved for another fate. The Lord's share of these was thirty-two! They were of course handed over to the priests as his representatives. Parsons, who rail against the immorality of scepticism, say that this is all true.

These Midianites were a tough lot; for although they were *all killed* on this occasion, and their cities and castles burnt, we find them a powerful nation again in the sixth of *Judges*, and able to prevail against the Jews for seven years.

Another people badly punished by the Jews were the inhabitants of Bashan. All their cities were destroyed to the number of sixty. Their king, Og, was a gigantic fellow, and slept on an iron bed twelve feet long. The cities of Heshbon were destroyed in the same way. All the men, women, and children, were slaughtered. Not one was spared.

We shall hereafter follow the Jews under Joshua. For the present we must content ourselves with a last reference to their wanderings under Moses. While they were encamped round Mount Sinai, their leader received an invitation to go up and visit God who had been staying there for six days. They had much to talk about, and the interview lasted forty days and forty nights. At the end of it Moses descended, carrying with him the Ten Commandments, written by the finger of God on two tables of stone. In his absence the Wandering Jews had given him up as lost, and had induced Aaron to make them a god, in the shape of a golden calf, to go before them. This image they were worshipping as Moses approached the camp, and his anger waxed so hot that he threw down the tables and broke all the Ten Commandments at once. He then burnt the calf in fire and ground it to powder, mixed it with water and made them drink it. He also sent the Levites among them, who put three thousand men to the edge of the sword. God wanted to destroy them altogether, but Moses held him back. "Let me alone," said the Lord. "No, no," said Moses, "just think what the Egyptians will say; they'll laugh at you after all as a poor sort of a god; and remember, too, that you are bound by an oath to multiply your people and to let them inherit the land of promise." So the Lord cooled down, and wrote out the Decalogue again on two fresh tables of stone. This Decalogue is supposed to be the foundation of morality. But long before the time of Moses moral laws were known and observed in Egypt, in India, and among all the peoples that ever lived. Moral laws are the permanent conditions of social health, and the fundamental ones must be observed wherever any form of society exists. Their ground and guarantee are to be found in human nature, and do not depend on a fabulous episode in the history of the Wandering Jews.

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# THE TOWER OF BABEL.

By G. W. FOOTE.

THE Bible, it is frequently asserted, was never meant to teach us science, but to instruct us in religion and morality; and therefore we must not look to it for a faithful account of what happened in the external world, but only for a record of the inner experiences of mankind. Astronomy will inform us how the heavenly bodies came into existence, and by what laws their motions are governed; Geology will acquaint us with the way in which the earth's crust was formed, and with the length of time occupied by the various stages of the process; and Biology will tell us all about the origin and development of living things. God has given us reason, by exercising which we may gather knowledge and establish sciences, so as to explain the past, illustrate the present, and predict the future; and as reason is sufficient for all this, there is no need of a divine revelation in such matters. But as reason is insufficient to teach the will of God and the laws of morality, a divine revelation of these is necessary, and the Bible contains it.

This plausible contention cannot, however, be maintained. The Bible is not silent with respect to astronomy, geology, or biology. It makes frequent and precise statements concerning them, and in nearly every instance it contradicts scientific truth, as we have amply proved in previous numbers of this series.

The eleventh chapter of Genesis gives an explanation of the diversity of languages on the earth. It does this in the truest spirit of romance. Philologists like Max Müller and Whitney must regard the story of the Tower of Babel, and the confusion of tongues, as a capital joke. A great many parsons may still believe it, but they are not expected to know much.

One fact alone is enough to put the philology of Genesis out of court. The native languages of America are all closely related to each other, but they have no affinity with any language of the Old World. It is therefore clear that they could not have been imported into the New World by emigrants from the plains of Central Asia. The Genesaic theory is thus proved to be not of universal application, and consequently invalid.

Let us come to the Bible story. Some time after the Flood, and before the birth of Abraham, "the whole earth was of one language and one speech;" or, as Colenso translates the original, "one of lip, and one of language." This primitive tongue must have been Hebrew. God spoke it in Eden when he conversed with our first parents, and probably it is spoken in heaven to this day. For all we know it may be spoken in hell too. It probably is, for the Devil and his angels lived in heaven before they were turned into hell, and we may conclude that they took their native

language with them. It was spoken by Adam when he named his wife in Paradise; by Eve, after the expulsion when she gave names to her sons, Cain and Seth; by Lamech, shortly before the Flood, when he explained the name of Noah; and indeed, as Colenso observes, "it is obvious that the names of the whole series of Patriarchs from Adam to Noah, and from Noah onwards, are in almost every instance pure Hebrew names." Delitzsch, however, thinks it comparatively more probable that the Syriac or Nabatæan tongue, preserved after the dispersion at Babylon, was the one originally spoken. Yet he dismisses the possibility of demonstrating it. He supposes that the names of Adam and the other patriarchs have been altered, but not so as to lose any of their original meaning; in other words, that they have been, by God's grace, translated with perfect accuracy from the primeval speech. But Colenso very justly remarks that the original documents do not allude to a process of translation, and that we have no right to assume it. He also adds that "if the authority of Scripture is sufficient to prove the fact of a primeval language, it must also prove that this language was Hebrew."

Yet the Bible is wrong, for Hebrew could not have been the primitive speech. It is only a Semitic dialect, a branch of the Semitic stem. Sanscrit is another stem, equally ancient; and according to Max Müller and Bunsen, both are modifications of an earlier and simpler language. Neither has the least affinity with Chinese, which again, like them, differs radically from the native dialects of America. As Hosea Biglow sings,

"John P. Robinson, he

Says they didn't know everything down in Judee."

And most certainly they did not know the true origin and development of the various languages spoken by the nations of the earth.

The people who dwelt on the earth after the Deluge, and all spoke one language, journeyed from the east, found a plain in the land of Shinar, and dwelt there. Shinar is another name for Babylon. After dwelling there no one knows exactly how long, "they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar." The writer of this story was very fond of short cuts. It took men a long time to learn the art of making bricks; and the idea of their suddenly saying to each other "let us make brick," and at once proceeding to do so, is a wild absurdity.

Having made a lot of bricks, they naturally wished to do something with them. So "they said, Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." How could making a name, for the information of nobody but themselves, prevent their dispersion? And how could they resolve to build a "city," when they had never seen one, and had no knowledge of what it was like? Cities are not built

n this manner. "Rome wasn't built in a day" is a proverb which applies to all other places as well. London, Paris, and Rome, are the growth of centuries, and the same must have been true of ancient capitals.

The reason assigned by Scripture for the work of these primitive builders is plainly inadequate. A more probable reason is that they mistrusted God's promise never again to destroy the earth with a flood, and therefore determined to build a high tower, so that, if another deluge came, they might ascend above the waters, or, if need be, step clean into heaven itself. Their lack of faith is not surprising. We find the same characteristic on the part of believers in our own day. They believe in God's promises only so far as it suits their interest and convenience. Scripture says, "Whoso giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord." Yet there are thousands of rich Christians who seem to mistrust the security.

How high did these primitive builders think heaven was? According to Colenso, they said, "Come, let us build for us a city, and a tower *with its head in heaven.*" Did they really think they would ever succeed in building so high? Perhaps they did, for their Natural Philosophy was extremely limited. They doubtless imagined the blue vault of heaven as a solid thing, in which were stuck the sun, moon, and stars, and no higher than the sailing clouds.

Their simple ignorance is intelligible, but how can we explain the ignorance of God? Their project alarmed him. He actually "came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded." Heaven was too distant for him to see from with accuracy, and telescopes were not then invented. A close inspection led him to believe that his ambitious children would succeed in their enterprise. They thought they might build into heaven, and he thought so too. What was to be done? If they once got into heaven, it might be very difficult to turn them out again. It took several days' hard fighting to expel Satan and the rebellious angels on a previous occasion, and these new comers might be still more obstinate. In this dangerous extremity, "the Lord said [unto whom is unknown], Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

Why did the Lord resolve to take all this trouble? Had he forgotten the law of gravitation and the principles of architecture? Was he, who made the heaven and the earth, ignorant of the distance between them? He had only to let the people go on building, and they would eventually confound themselves; for, after reaching a certain height, the tower would tumble about their ears. Gravitation would defeat the cohesion of mortar. Why did not God leave them alone? Why did he take so much unnecessary trouble? The answer is that this "Lord" was only "Jehovah" of the Jews, a tribal god, who naturally knew no

more about the facts and laws of science than his worshippers who made him.

The Lord carried out his resolution. He "confounded their language," so that no man could understand his neighbors. Probably this judgment was executed in the night; and when they awoke in the morning, instead of using the old familiar tongue, one man spoke Chinese, another Sanscrit, another Coptic, another American, another Dutch, another Double Dutch, and so on to the end of the chapter.

According to the Bible, this is the true philology. No language on the earth is more than four thousand years old, and every one was miraculously originated at Babel. Is there a single philologist living who believes this? We do not know one.

The result of this confusion of tongues was that the people "left off to build the city," and were "scattered abroad on the face of all the earth." But why did they disperse? Their common weakness should have kept them together. Society is founded upon our wants. Our necessity, and not our self-sufficiency, causes association and mutual helpfulness. Had these people kept company for a short time, they would have understood each other again. A few common words would have come into general use, and the building of the tower might have been resumed.

How was their language "confounded"? Did God destroy their verbal memory? Did he paralyse a part of their brain, so that, although they remembered the words, they could not speak them? Did he affect the organs of articulation, so that the sounds of the primeval language could not be reproduced? Will some theologian kindly explain this mystery? Language is not a gift, but a growth. Different tribes and nations have had different experiences, different wants, and different surroundings, and the result is a difference in their languages, as well as in their religious ideas, political organisations, and social customs.

Before we leave this portion of the subject, we beg to introduce Milton again. In the last Book of "Paradise Lost" he adds from his fertile imagination to the Bible story, and supplies a few deficiencies about which the mind is naturally curious. He makes the Archangel Michael tell poor Adam and Eve, as part of his panoramic description of future times, that a mighty hunter shall arise, claiming dominion over his fellows, and gather under him a band of adherents. This is clearly Nimrod. Milton separates him and his subjects from the rest of mankind, and represents them as the people who settled on "the plain in the land of Shinar."

According to our great poet, therefore, the confusion of tongues applied only to them, and the other inhabitants of the earth retained the primeval language in all its original purity. This detachment, says Michael—

Marching from Eden towards the west, shall find  
The plain, wherein a black bituminous gurge,

Boils out from underground, the mouth of Hell :  
 Of brick, and of that stuff they cast to build  
 A city and a tower, whose top may reach to Heaven ;  
 And get themselves a name, lest, far dispersed  
 In foreign lands, their memory be lost,  
 Regardless whether good or evil fame.  
 But God, who oft descends to visit men  
 Unseen, and through their habitations walks  
 To mark their doings, them beholding soon,  
 Comes down to see their city, ere the tower  
 Obstruct Heav'n-tow'rs, and in derision sets  
 Upon their tongue a various spirit to rase  
 Quite out their native language, and instead  
 To sow a jangling noise of words unknown.  
 Forthwith a hideous gabble rises loud  
 Among the builders ; each to other calls  
 Not understood, till hoarse, and all in rage,  
 As mock'd they storm : great laughter was in heaven,  
 And looking down, to see the hubbub strange  
 And hear the din ; thus was the building left  
 Ridiculous, and the work Confusion named.

If the tower of Babel was built over the mouth of Hell it would be wise to explore its site and make proper excavations, so as to settle the geography and physical character of the bottomless pit. The churches are sadly in want of a little information about hell, and here is an opportunity for them to acquire it. We hope the explorers will all be selected for their extreme piety, so that they may be as fire-proof as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and happily escape cremation.

Because the Lord "did there confound their language" the place was "called Babel." The Hebrew root, *balal*, to confound, is not, however, that from which the word "Babel" is derived. It is a compound of "Bel," and may mean the "House of Bel," "Court of Bel," or "Gate of Bel." Some, including Professor Rawlinson, suppose it be a compound of "El" or "Il," in which case "Bab-El" means the "Gate of God."

It is evident that the story of the Tower of Babel was borrowed by the Jehovist author of this part of Genesis from the tradition of the famous unfinished Temple of Belus, one of the wonders of antiquity. *Birs Nimroud* is thus described by Kalisch :—

"The hugh heap, in which bricks, stone, marble, and basalt, are irregularly mixed, covers a surface of 49,000 feet ; while the chief mound is nearly 300 feet high, and from 200 to 400 feet in width, commanding an extensive view over a country of utter desolation. The tower consisted of seven distinct stages or square platforms, built of kiln-burnt bricks, each about twenty feet high, gradually diminishing in diameter. The upper part of the brick-work has a vitrefied appearance ; for it is supposed that the Babylonians, in order to render their edifices more durable, submitted them to the heat of the furnace ; and large fragments of

such vitrified and calcined materials are also intermixed with the rubbish at the base. This circumstance may have given rise to or at least countenanced, the legend of the destruction of the Tower by heavenly fire, still extensively adopted among the Arabians. The terraces were devoted to the planets, and were differently colored in accordance with the notions of Sabæan astrology—the lowest, Saturn's, *black*; the second, Jupiter's, *orange*; the third, Mars's, *red*; the fourth, the Sun's, *yellow*; the fifth, Venus's, *white*; the sixth, Mercury's, *blue*; the seventh, the Moon's, *green*. Merodach-adan-akhi is stated to have begun it B.C. 1100. It was finished five centuries afterwards by Nebuchadnezzar, who left a part of its history on two cylinders, which have lately been excavated on the spot, and thus deciphered by Rawlinson. 'The building, named the Planisphere, which was the wonder of Babylon, I have made and finished. With bricks, enriched with lapis lazuli, I have exalted its head. Behold now the building, named "The Stages of the Seven Spheres," which was the wonder of Borsippa, had been built by a former king. He had completed forty-two cubits of height; but he did not finish the head. From the lapse of time it became ruined. They had not taken care of the exit of the waters; so the rain and wet had penetrated into the brickwork. The casing of burnt brick lay scattered in heaps. Then Merodach, my great lord, inclined my heart to repair the building. I did not change its site, nor did I destroy its foundation-platform. But, in a fortunate month, and upon an auspicious day, I undertook the building of the raw-brick terrace and the burnt-brick casing of the Temple. I strengthened its foundation, and I placed a titular record on the part which I had rebuilt. I set my hand to build it up, and to exalt its summit. As it had been in ancient times, so I built up its structure. As it had been in former days, thus I exalted its head.'

Professor Rawlinson assigns B.C. 2300 as the date of the building of the Temple. But as Colenso remarks, his reasoning is very loose. His date, however, is *antecedent* to the supposed time of the building of Babel, and according to his own chronology the latter *may* have been a tradition of the former. Add to this that the ruins of *Birs Nimroud* are extant, while there is no vestige of the ruins of Babel. According to Kalisch's chronology; *Birs Nimroud* was built long after the supposed time of Moses and if he wrote the Pentateuch our position cannot be maintained. But he did not write the Pentateuch or any portion of it. The writer of the Jehovist portion of Genesis, which contains the story of the Tower of Babel, certainly did not flourish before the time of Solomon, about B.C. 1015—975. Here, then, is an interval of a century. That is a short period for the growth of a legend. Yet, as Colenso observes, "as the *tower* was apparently an observatory, and the fact of its being dedicated to the seven ancient planets shows that astronomical observations had made considerable progress among the Chaldeans at the time when it was built, the traditions connected with it may have



embodied stories of a much earlier date, to which the new building gave fresh currency."

The Temple of Jupiter Belus with its tower was partially destroyed by Xerxes B.C. 490; upon which, says Kalisch, "the fraudulent priests appropriated to themselves the lands and enormous revenues attached to it, and seem, from this reason, to have been averse to its restoration." A part of the edifice still existed more than five centuries later, and was mentioned by Pliny. But the other part was, in the time of Alexander the Great, a vast heap of ruins. He determined to rebuild it, but desisted from the enterprise, when he found that ten thousand workmen could not remove the rubbish in two months. Benjamin of Tudela described it in the twelfth century, after which, for more than six hundred years, it remained unnoticed and unknown. The ruins were rediscovered by Niebuhr in 1756; subsequent explorers more accurately described them; and they were thoroughly examined, and their monumental records deciphered, about thirty years ago.

The myth attaching to it is not unique. As Kalisch observes, "most of the ancient nations possessed myths concerning impious giants, who attempted to storm heaven, either to share it with the immortal gods, or to expel them from it." And even the orthodox Delitzsch allows that "the Mexicans have a legend of a tower-building, as well as of a Flood. Xelhua, one of the seven giants rescued in the flood, built the great pyramid of Cholula, in order to reach heaven, until the gods, angry at his audacity, threw fire upon the building, and broke it down, whereupon every separate family received a language of its own." To lessen the force of this, Delitzsch says that the Mexican legend has been much colored by its narrators, chiefly Dominicans and Jesuits; but he is obliged to admit that there is great significance in the fact that the Mexican terrace-pyramid closely resembles the construction of the Temple of Belus. No argument can vitiate the conclusion that as similar myths to that of Genesis abounded in ancient times, it is highly illogical to attach particular importance to any one of them. If one is historic, all are historic. We are justified in holding that the Jewish story of the Tower of Babel is only a modification of the older story of the Temple of Belus.

We will conclude this Romance by mentioning a few facts, not speculations, which are exceedingly curious, and which present grave difficulty to the orthodox believer.

According to the Bible, in Abraham's time, not four centuries after the Deluge, the descendants of Noah's three sons had multiplied into the four great kingdoms of *Shinar* (Babylon), *Elam*, *Egypt*, and *Gerar*, besides a multitude of smaller nations. Does any instructed man believe in the possibility of such multiplication? It is altogether incredible.

Some of these nations had reached a high degree of civilization. Indeed, the temples, tombs, pyramids, manners, customs, and arts of Egypt betoken a *full-grown* nation. The sculptures of the Fourth Dynasty, the earliest extant, and which must be

assigned to the date of about 3500 B.C., are almost as perfect as those of her Augustan age, two thousand years later. Professor Rawlinson seeks to obviate this difficulty by appealing to the version of the Seventy instead of to the Hebrew text, by which he obtains the remote antiquity of 3159 B.C., instead of 2348, for the Deluge. But this chronology does not reach within four hundred years of the civilisation denoted by the sculptures referred to! And there must have been milleniums of silent progress in Egypt before that period.

On the ancient monuments of Egypt the negro head, face, hair, form, and color, are the same as we observe in our own day. Consequently, the orthodox believer must hold that, in a few generations, the human family branched out into strongly marked varieties. History discountenances this assumption, and Biology plainly disproves it. Archdeacon Pratt supposes that Shem, Ham, and Japheth "had in them elements differing as widely as the Asiatic, the African, and the European, differ from each other." He forgets that they were brothers, sons of the same father and presumably of the same mother. Such extraordinary evolution throws Darwinism into the shade.

Noah lived fifty-eight years after the birth of Abraham. Shem lived a hundred and ten years after the birth of Isaac, and fifty years after the birth of Jacob. How was it that neither Abraham, Isaac, nor Jacob knew either of them. They were the most interesting and important men alive at the time. They had seen the world before the Flood. One of them had seen people who knew Adam. They had lived through the confusion of tongues at Babel, and were well acquainted with the whole history of the world. Yet they are never once mentioned in Scripture during all the centuries they survived their exit from the ark. Why is this? Noah before his death was the most venerable man existing. He was five hundred years older than any other man. He must have been an object of universal regard. Yet we have no record of the second half of his career; no account is given of his burial; no monument was erected to his memory. Who will explain this astounding neglect? The Bible is a strange book, and they are strange people who believe it.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## BALAAM'S ASS.

By G. W. FOOTE.

THE ass has figured extensively in romance. His long ears and peculiar bray are explained by a story which goes back to the Flood. On that occasion, it is said, the male donkey was inadvertently left outside the ark, but being a good swimmer, he nevertheless managed to preserve his life. After many desperate efforts he at last succeeded in calling out the patriarch's name, as nearly as the vocal organs of a jackass would allow. "No-ah, No-ah," cried the forlorn beast. Noah's attention was at last aroused, and on looking out of window to see who was calling, he perceived the poor jackass almost spent and faintly battling with the waves. Quickly opening the window, he caught Neddy by the two ears and hauled him in. This he did with such vigor that Neddy's aural appendages were considerably elongated; and ever since donkeys have had long ears, and brayed "No-ah, No-ah" at the approach of wet weather. For the sake of Christians who are not well acquainted with God's Word, we add that this story is not in the Bible.

Classical scholars and students of modern literature know how the ass has been treated by poets and romancers. The stolid animal has generally been made the subject of comedy. Drunken and impotent Silenus, in the Pagan mythology, joins in the processions of Bacchus on a sober ass, and the patient animal staggers beneath the heavy burden of a fat-paunched tipsy god. Apulius and Lucian transform the hero of their common story into an ass, and in that shape he encounters the most surprising experiences. Voltaire makes an ass play a wonderful part in his "Pucelle." And in all these cases it is worth noticing how the profane wits remember the ass's relation to Priapian mysteries, from his fabled interruption of the garden-god's attempt on the nymph Lotis downwards, and assign to him marvellous amatory adventures. Erasmus, in his "Praise of Folly," does not forget the ass, with whom he compares the majority of men for stupidity, obstinacy, and lubricity; nor is the noble animal forgotten by Rabelais, who cracks many a joke and points many a witticism at his expense.

Our own genial humorist, Charles Lamb, confesses however to a deep tenderness for Neddy, and dwells with delight on the protection which his thick hide affords against the cruel usage of man. He has, says Lamb, "a tegument impervious to ordinary stripes. The malice of a child or a weak hand can make feeble impressions on him. His back offers no mark to a puny foe-man. To a common whip or switch his hide presents an absolute insen-

sibility. You might as well pretend to scourge a schoolboy with a tough pair of leather breeches on." Lamb also quotes the following passage from a tract printed in 1595, entitled "The Noblesse of the Ass; a Work Rare, Learned, and Excellent.": "He refuseth no burden; he goes whither he is sent, without any contradiction. He lifts not his foote against any one; he bytes not; he is no fugitive, nor malicious affected. He doth all things in good sort, and to his liking that hath cause to employ him. If strokes be given him, he cares not for them." True, the ass is not much given to kicking or biting, but he has an awkward knack of quietly lying down when he is indisposed to work, and of rolling over with equal quietude if a rider happens to be on his back. But the old author is so enchanted with the "asse" that he does not stay to notice this scurvy trick. He even goes on to express his liking for the ass's bray, calling Neddy "a rare musitian," and saying that "to heare the musické of five or six voices chaunged to so many of asses is amongst them to heare a song of world without end."

Sterne, in his "Sentimental Journey," has a chapter entitled "The Dead Ass," wherein the animal is lifted into the sphere of pathos. And lastly, Coleridge has some very pious musings on an ass, wherein the animal is lifted into the sphere of religion.

Now, dear reader, you begin to see the drift of this long exordium, although my purpose was indeed twofold. First, I wished, after the example of my betters in literature, to give you a slight glimpse of the immense extent of my learning. Secondly, I wished to lead you through the various stages of literary treatment of the ass, from the comic to the pathetic, and finally to the religious, in order that you might approach in a proper frame of mind the consideration of Balaam's ass, who is the most remarkable of all the four-legged asses mentioned in the Bible. There were others. Asses were being sought by Saul, the son of Kish, when he found a kingdom of subjects instead. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass, and also apparently on a colt, having probably one leg over each. With the jawbone of an ass Samson slew a thousand Philistines; and if the rest of the animal accorded with that particular bone, he must have been a tough ass indeed. But all these are of little interest or importance beside the wonderful ass of the prophet Balaam, whose history is contained, with that of his master, in the twenty-second, twenty-third, and twenty-fourth chapters of the Book of Numbers.

Soon after the Wandering Jews in the desert were plagued by "fiery serpents" for asking Moses to give them a slight change in their monotonous bill of fare, they warred against the Amorites and pretty nearly exterminated them. Whereupon Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, grew "sore afraid." He called together the "elders of Midian" with those of Moab, and said that in his opinion the Jews would lick them all up as the ox licked up the grass of the field.

Against such a ferocious gang as the Jews, with a bloody God of Battles to help them, human valor promised little success; so Balak resolved to solicit supernatural aid. Accordingly he sent messengers unto Balaam the son of Beor, a renowned and potent soothsayer, desiring him to come and curse the people of Israel. The king had implicit confidence in Balaam. "Whom thou blessest," said he, "is blessed, and whom thou cursest is cursed." This great prophet must have wrought prodigious wonders in his time to gain so magnificent a reputation; and if the king's panegyric on him was true, he must have been a dangerous person to those who annoyed him and made him swear.

The "elders of Moab and the elders of Midian," who were Balak's messengers, went to Pethor, where Balaam resided. As the reader might expect, they did not go empty handed, but took with them "the rewards of divination." What these were we are not told. No doubt they were very handsome. The prophetic business requires large profits to compensate for the absence of quick returns; and in any case it is not to be supposed that a man who can do what no one else can, will begin work without a heavy retaining fee. We conclude that Balaam, like nearly every prophet mentioned in history, had a good eye for the main chance, and did not trust very much in the bounty of the gods. He was never hard up for bread and cheese while other people were hard up for divine assistance, and as that was an ignorant and credulous age, we presume that his larder was well-stocked. He must, indeed, have had a fine time, for he was the biggest pot in his own line of business in all that district.

Balaam knew his business well. It would never do for a prophet, a soothsayer, a wizard, or a diviner, to give prompt answers to his applicants, or even to make his answers plain when he does give them. That would render the profession cheap and rob it of mystery. So Balaam, therefore, said to the messengers, "Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me."

Now this reference to *the Lord* is very surprising. The Moabites worshipped Baal, and no doubt they had the utmost contempt for Jehovah. Yet Balaam, who was a prophet of their religion, tells them that he will consult the god of Israel on the subject of their visit! This is one of the self-contradictions with which the Bible abounds.

The next incident of the story is no less remarkable. God, the infinite spirit of the universe, paid Balaam a visit; and although he knows everything, past, present, and to come, he asked the prophet "What men are these with thee?" Balaam gave a straightforward reply, for he doubtless knew that prevarication and subterfuge were useless with God. Said he, "Balak the son of Zippor, King of Moab, has sent unto me, saying, Behold there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them and drive them out." The precision of

Balaam's language is admirable, and so is its accuracy. He neither desired to keep the Lord in suspense, nor to leave him in ignorance of necessary details. God's answer was equally brief and perspicuous: "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed."

This interview between God and Balaam, like the following ones, occurred in the night. The Lord seems to have been always afraid of daylight, or else to have had a peculiar fondness for the dark. Perhaps he thought that during the night there was less chance of the conversation being interrupted, and it is well known that the Lord loves privacy and does not like conversing with more than one at a time. He agrees with us that "two's company and three's none."

In the morning Balaam got out of bed and told Balak's messengers to return and say that the Lord would not let him come; and they at once set out for the capital.

Balak, however, was not to be so easily put off. He seems to have regarded the prophet's talk about the Lord's prohibition as "all my eye." "Perhaps," said he to himself, "my messengers were small fry in the sight of Balaam, and he is therefore displeased. My presents also may have been too small. I should have recollected that Balaam has a very exalted opinion of himself, and is renowned for his avarice. What a stupid I was to be sure. However, I'll try again. This time I'll send a deputation of big guns, and promise him great wealth and high position in the state. He can't refuse such a tempting offer." Straightway he "sent yet again princes, more and more honorable" than those who went before, and commanded them to urge Balaam to let nothing hinder him from coming.

Balaam slightly resented this treatment. He told the messengers that if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold, he could not go beyond the word of the Lord, to do more or less. Yet he apparently deemed it politic to make another trial. He was, of course, quite aware that God is unchangeable, but somehow he thought the Lord might alter his mind. So he bade the messengers to tarry there that night while he consulted God afresh.

Balaam's expectation was realised. The Lord did change his mind. "He came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." So the prophet rose up in the morning, saddled and mounted his wonderful ass, and went off with the princes of Moab.

Poor Balaam, however, did not reflect that as the Lord had changed his mind once he might change it twice, and the omission very nearly cost him his life. He was unfortunately ignorant of what happened to Moses on a similar occasion. After the Lord had dispatched the Jewish prophet to Egypt to rescue his people from bondage, he met him at an inn, where perhaps they both put up for the night, and sought to kill him. The same

thing happened now. No sooner had Balaam set out on his journey than "God's anger was kindled against him because he went." This Jehovah is a queer God and dreadfully hard to please. If you don't obey his orders you run the risk of being damned, and if you do you stand a good chance of being murdered. The only safe course is to get out of his way and have nothing to do with him.

The "angel of the Lord" stood in Balaam's path, with a drawn sword in his hand, ready to kill the prophet whose only crime was having done exactly what he was told. But neither Balaam nor his two servants saw him. The ass, however, had better eyesight. Being only an ass, and not a man, he had a greater aptitude for seeing angels. Not liking the look of this formidable stranger, Neddy bolted from the pathway into a field. Balaam, who saw no reason for such behavior except sheer perverseness, began to whack his ass and tried to turn him\* into the right road. Neddy succumbed to this forcible argument and jogged on again. The angel of the Lord had apparently, in the meantime, made himself invisible even to a jackass. His intention was ultimately to kill Balaam, but he delayed the fatal stroke in order to make the most of the comedy which he foresaw. Going a little in front, he "stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that." Neddy caught sight of the angel again, and being unable this time to bolt in the field, he lurched against the wall, and gave Balaam's foot a good scrunching. Still the prophet suspected nothing out of the common, for that was an ordinary trick of refractory asses. Poor Neddy, therefore, got another thrashing. Then the angel of the Lord went on further, and "stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left." Neddy estimated the certain penalty of refusing to proceed and the probable penalty of going forward. After comparing them he decided to stop where he was, and then quietly laid down. Balaam's anger was once more kindled by this stupid obstinacy, and he whacked the ass again with his staff.

Then the Lord intervened, and brought about the most extraordinary incident of this wonderful story. He "opened the mouth of the ass," and lo! instead of braying Neddy spoke. Without a note of preparation he began to upbraid his master in good Moabitish. "What have I done," said he, "that thou hast smitten me these three times."

Singular to relate, Balaam was not in the least astonished at hearing an ass speak. He took it as quite an ordinary occurrence. One is almost inclined to think that the prophet and his donkey had held many a conversation before. In the Bible no one ever is astonished at anything, however wonderful. When the serpent accosted Eve in the garden of Eden, she was not at all surprised,

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\* Balaam's ass was a "she," but the sex is immaterial, and as we commenced with the masculine gender we will continue with it.

but went on with the colloquy as though talking serpents were common things. If a dumb animal were nowadays to address a man with "How d'ye do?" he would certainly be very much startled; but when the same thing occurred in the old Bible days, the man at once replied, "Very well, thank you, how are you?"

Balaam promptly answered the ass's question. "Because," said he, "thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee." Then the ass rejoined, "Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee?" This was a poser. Balaam scratched his head and reflected, but at last he was obliged to say "Nay."

Neddy had so far the best of the argument. But Balaam had the practical argument of the stick left, and no doubt he was about to convince the donkey with it. All arguments, practical or otherwise, would however have left the dispute exactly where it stood. Neddy saw the angel, and that was enough for him. Balaam did not see the angel, but only Neddy's obstinate stupidity. In short, they reasoned from different premises, and could not therefore arrive at the same conclusion. They might have argued till doomsday had not the Lord again intervened. He "opened Balaam's eyes," so that he also "saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand." Then Balaam "bowed his head, and fell flat on his face," and there he and Neddy lay side by side, two asses together.

Now, dear reader, you will observe that the ass, being indeed an ass, saw the angel first, and that Balaam, who was a wise man, did not see the angel until his wits were disordered by the wonder of a talking donkey. Does not this bear out great Bacon's remark that "in all superstition, wise men follow fools"? And may we not say, that if asses did not see angels first, wise men would never see them after?

The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, while he remained flat on his face, "Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: and the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive." The moral of this is that asses stand the best chance of salvation, and that wise men run a frightful risk of damnation until they lose their wits.

Balaam recognised the awful mess he was in, and being by this time as limp as a wet rag, he made the most abject apology. "I have sinned," he said, "for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me." This strange reasoning shows still more clearly how the poor prophet had taken leave of his senses. He had not sinned at all, for he was strictly obeying God's commands; nor was it his fault that the angel remained so long invisible. When the Lord "opened his eyes," and made his vision like unto



the vision of an ass, he saw the angel plainly enough; and how could he possibly have done so before?

"I'll go back," added Balaam, thinking that if he sinned so greatly in going forward, he had better return home. But the angel of the Lord, who had intended to kill him for advancing, now told him to "go with the men." And Balaam went with them, keeping his weather eye open during the rest of the journey.

Balak was heartily glad to see Balaam. The prophet had been a long time coming, but better late than never. The next day they went "up into the high places of Baal," from which they could see "the utmost part of the people" of Israel. "There they are," said Balak, "confound them! leprous slaves out of Egypt, bent on stealing other people's lands, and sticking to all they can lay hands on; bloodthirsty vagabonds, who fight people with whom they have no quarrel, and kill men, women, and children when they are victorious. Now, Balaam, do your duty. Curse them, and lay it on thick."

Seven altars were built, and seven oxen and seven rams sacrificed on them. But all this good meat was wasted, for when Balaam "went to an high place," God met him, according to agreement, and told him what to say. And lo! when the prophet returned to the king, he blessed the Jews instead of cursing them.

"Hullo, Ballam, what's this?" cried the king. "I asked you to curse my enemies and you've gone and blessed them. What d'ye mean?" "True," answered Balaam, "but I told you that I could only speak what the Lord put into my mouth."

Balak appears to have been just as sceptical as Pharaoh about the God of the Jews. He attributed his disappointment to a freak of the prophet, and not being easily baffled he resolved to try again. So he took Balaam up another high place, and built seven fresh altars, and sacrificed on them seven more bullocks and rams; after which he repeated his invitation. Again Balaam went farther to consult the Lord, whom he found waiting for him, and received his instructions. And lo! when he returned to Balak he again blessed the Jews instead of cursing them.

Balak resolved to try again. He took Balaam to another high place, built seven more altars, and sacrificed seven more bullocks and seven more rams. But again the prophet blessed Israel, and a third time the king was sold. Then he gave it up, and Balaam and his ass went home.

What became of the ass is unknown. Perhaps he went into the prophetic business himself, and eventually retired on a very handsome fortune. Perhaps he went about as a preacher of the gospel as it was then understood; in which case, judging from the rule of success in later ages, we have no doubt that he attracted large audiences and delighted all who were fortunate enough to sit under him. And when he died all the two-legged asses in Moab probably wept and refused to be comforted.

Balaam's end was tragic. The thirteenth chapter of *Joshua*

informs us that he was eventually slain by the very people he had thrice blessed. After an account of one of the bloody wars of Jehovah's bandits we read that "Balaam also the son of Beor, the sooth-sayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them." The angel of the Lord spared him, but God's butchers cut his throat at last. On the whole he might as well have cursed the Jews up and down to Balak's satisfaction, and taken the handsome rewards which were offered him on such easy terms.

Here endeth the story of Balaam's Ass. I hope my reader still believes it, for if not, he will be reprobate while he lives and damned when he dies.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## GOD'S THIEVES IN CANAAN.

By G. W. FOOTE.

SOME years ago the righteous indignation of England was roused by the daily record of atrocities perpetrated in Bulgaria by the Turkish bashi-bazouks. Men were wantonly massacred, pregnant women ripped up, and maidens outraged by brutal lust. Our greatest statesman uttered a clarion-cry which pealed through the whole nation, and the friends of the Turk in high places shrank abashed and dismayed before the stern response of the people. Many clergymen attended public meetings, and denounced not only the Turks, but also their Mohammedanism. They alleged that the Koran sanctioned, even if it did not command, the horrors which had been wrought in Eastern Europe, and they declared that there was no hope for a country which derived its maxims of state from such an accursed book. Those denunciations did honor to their hearts, but very little to their heads. For every brutual injunction in the Koran, twenty might be found in the Bible. Before the clergy cry out against the Scriptures of Islam, they should purge their own of those horrid features which are an insult to man and a blasphemy against God. Mohammed gave savage counsels to his followers with respect to waging war, but these sink into insignificance beside the counsels given to the Jews by Moses in the name of God.

Bible romances are generally comic, but this one is infinitely tragic. The whole range of history affords no worse instances of cold-blooded cruelty than those which God's thieves, the Jews, perpetrated in Canaan, when they took forcible possession of cities they had not built and fields they had never ploughed. "How that red rain will make the harvest grow!" exclaims Byron of the blood shed at Waterloo; and surely the first harvests reaped by the Jews in Canaan must have been luxuriantly rich, for the ground had been drenched with the blood of the slain.

Before Moses died, according to the Bible, he delivered an elaborate code of laws to his people in the name of God. The portions referring to war are contained in the twentieth chapter of *Deuteronomy*. Here they stand in all their naked hideousness:—

"When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. And when the

Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword : But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself ; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth. But thou shalt utterly destroy them."

Such were the fiendish commands of Jehovah, the bloody maxims of inspired war. Let us see how the Jews carried them out.

During the lifetime of Moses they made a good beginning ! for in their war against Midian they slew 48,000 men, 48,000 women, and 20,000 boys, and took as spoil 32,000 virgins. But they did much better under Joshua.

After God had dispatched Moses and secretly buried him, so that nobody should ever discover his sepulchre, Joshua was appointed leader in his stead. He was "full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him." Then, as now, religious superiors transmitted holiness to their inferiors through the skull. God accepted the nomination of Moses and instructed Joshua in his duties. He told him to be above all "strong and very courageous," and to fight the enemy according to the law of Moses. Joshua was not the man to neglect such advice.

Joshua was soon ordered to cross the river Jordan and begin the holy war. But before doing so, he dispatched two spies to reconnoitre Jericho, the first place to be attacked. They reached the city by night, and of course required lodgings. Instinct led them to the house of Rahab, the harlot. She proved a very good friend ; for when messengers came from the king in the morning to inquire about them, she said that they had gone, and advised the messengers to go after them, which they did. Meanwhile she hid the spies under some flax on the roof of her house, and at night "let them down by a cord through the window, for she dwelt on the town wall." Before they left, however, she made a covenant with them. Like many other ladies of easy virtue, or no virtue at all, Rahab was piously inclined. She had conceived a great respect for Jehovah, and was assured that his people would overcome all their enemies. But she had also a great respect for her own skin ; so she made the two spies promise on behalf of the Jews that when they took Jericho they would spare her and all her relatives ; and they were to recognise her house by the "line of scarlet thread in the window." They got back safe to Joshua and told him it was all right ; the people were in a dreadful funk, and all the land would soon be theirs.

Joshua got up early the next morning and told the Jews that the Lord was going to do wonders. They wanted to get "on

the other side of Jordan," and the Lord meant to ferry them across in his own style. Twelve men were selected, one from each tribe, to follow the priests who bore the ark in front, and all the Jewish host came after them. As it was harvest time, the river had overflowed its banks. When the priests' feet "were dipped in the brim of the water," the river parted in twain; on one side the waters "stood and rose up upon an heap," while on the other side they "failed and were cut off." As no miracle was worked further up the river to stop the supplies, the "heap" must have been a pretty big one before the play ended. A clear passage having been made, the Jews all crossed on dry ground. They seem to have done this in less than a day, but three millions of people could not march past one spot in less than a week. Perhaps the Lord gave them a shove behind.

The twelve selected Jews, one from each tribe, took twelve big stones out of the bed of the river, which were "pitched in Gilgal" as a "memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." For ever is a long time and is not yet ended. Those stones should be there now. Why don't the clergy try to discover them? If brought to London and set up on the Thames embankment they would throw Cleopatra's needle into the shade.

When God had ferried the Jews across, and picked out the twelve big stones as aids to memory, the "heap" of water tumbled down and overflowed the banks of the river. Joshua and his people then encamped near Jericho, in readiness for greater wonders to come.

Three days afterwards the manna ceased. Jehovah's fighting cocks wanted a more invigorating diet. This time they did not ask for a change, but the Lord vouchsafed it spontaneously.

All the males, too, were circumcised by God's orders. This Jewish rite had been neglected during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, but it was now resumed. From the text it seems that Joshua circumcised all the males himself. As they numbered about a million and a half, it must have been a long job. Allowing a minute for each amputation, it would in the natural course of things have taken him about three years to do them all; but being divinely aided, he finished his task in a single day. Samson's jaw-bone was nothing to Joshua's knife.

Soon after Joshua, being near Jericho, like Balaam's ass saw an angel with a drawn sword in his hand. When he had made obeisance, by falling flat and taking off his shoes, he received from this heavenly messenger precise instructions as to the capture of the doomed city. The Lord's way of storming fortresses is unique in military literature. Said he to Joshua—"Ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and

when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him."

Did ever another general receive such extraordinary instructions from his commander-in-chief? God's soldiers need no cannon, or battering rams, or bomb-shells; all they require is a few rams' horns and good lungs for shouting.

God's orders were obeyed. Six days in succession did the Jews march round the walls of Jericho, no doubt to the great bewilderment of its inhabitants, who probably wondered why they didn't come on, and felt that there was something uncanny in this roundabout siege. On the seventh day they went round the city seven times. How tired they must have been! Jericho, being a capital city, could not have been less than several miles in circumference. The priests blew with the trumpets, the people shouted with a great shout, and the walls of Jericho fell flat—as flat as the simpletons who believe it.

A scene of horror ensued. The Jews "utterly destroyed all there was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword." Only Rahab and her relatives were spared. The silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, were put into the Lord's treasury—that is, handed over to the priests; and then the city was burnt with fire. God commanded this, and his chosen people executed it. Could Jericho have been treated worse if the Devil himself had planned the fight, and the vilest fiends from hell had conducted it?

Rahab the harlot, being saved with all her relatives, who were perhaps as bad as she, dwelt with the Jews ever afterwards. Whether she continued in her old profession we are unable to say. But it is certain that the Jews soon after grew very corrupt, and the Lord's anger was kindled against them. The first result of God's displeasure was that the Jews became demoralised as warriors. Three thousand of them, who went up against Ai, were routed, and thirty-six of them were slain. This seems a very small number, but, as we have already observed, the Jewish chroniclers were much given to bragging. Their losses were always very small, and the enemy's very great.

After this rebuff the Jews funked; their hearts "melted and became as water." Joshua rent his clothes, fell upon his face before the ark, and remained there until the evening. The elders of Israel did likewise, and they all put dust on their heads. To conclude the performance Joshua expostulated with God, asked him whether he had brought his people over Jordan only to betray them to their enemies, and expressed a hearty wish that they had never crossed the river at all.

The Lord told Joshua to get up, as it was no use lying there. Israel had sinned, and God had determined not to help them until they had purged themselves. Some one, in fact, had stolen a portion of the spoil of Jericho, all of which belonged to the

Lord, that is to the priests, who evidently helped to concoct this pretty story. Joshua forthwith proceeded to hunt the sinner out. His method was very singular. He resolved to go through the twelve tribes until the culprit was found. The tribe of Judah was examined first, and luckily in the very first family "Achan was taken," although we are not told how he was spotted. Achan confessed that he had appropriated of the spoil a "goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight," which he had hidden under his tent. His doom was swift and terrible; he was stoned to death, and his body burnt with fire. We may think his punishment severe, but we cannot deny his guilt. He, however, was not the only sufferer. Jehovah was not to be satisfied with a small quantity of blood. Achan's sons and daughters were stoned with him, and their bodies were burnt like his. His very oxen, asses, and sheep were served in the same manner. A great heap of stones was raised over their cinders, and then "the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger." Jehovah acted just like the savage old chieftain of a savage tribe. As irascible tempers do not improve with age, we presume that he is still as peppery as ever. Yet we are asked to love, venerate, and worship this brutal being, as the ideal of all that is merciful, just, and pure.

Immediately after Joshua sent thirty thousand men against Ai, which they took with great ease. All its inhabitants, from the oldest man to the youngest babe, were massacred. The city itself was burnt into a desolate heap. The King of Ai was reserved to furnish the Jews with a little extra sport, by way of dessert to the bloody feast. He was hanged on a tree until eventide, when his carcass was taken down and buried under "a heap of stones." Joshua "then built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal," who appears to have been mightily well pleased with the whole business.

Joshua's next exploit was indeed miraculous. He gathered all the Jews together, men, women, children, and even the strangers, and read to them all the laws of Moses, without omitting a single word. It must have been a long job, and Joshua's throat must have been rather dry at the end. But the greatest wonder is how he made himself heard to three millions of people at once. No other orator ever addressed so big an audience. Either their ears were very sharp, or his voice was terribly loud. The people in the front rank must have been nearly stunned with the sound. Joshua could outroar Bottom the weaver by two or three miles.

The people of Gibeon, by means of messengers who palmed themselves off on Joshua as strangers from a distant country, contrived to obtain a league whereby their lives were spared. When their craft was detected they were sentenced to become hewers of wood and drawers of water to the Jews; in other words, their slaves.

Adoni-zedec, king of Jerusalem; Hoham, king of Hebron;

Piram, king of Jarmuth; Japhia, king of Lachish; and Debir, king of Eglon; banded themselves together to punish Gibeon for making peace with the Jews. Joshua went with all his army to their relief. He fell upon the armies of the five kings, discomfited them with great slaughter, and chased them along the way to Beth-horon. As they fled the Lord joined in the hunt. He "cast down great stones from heaven upon them" and killed a huge number, even "more than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

When we read that Pan fought with the Greeks against the Persians at Marathon, we must regard it as a fable; but when we read that Jehovah fought with the Jews against the five kings at Gibeon, we must regard it as historical truth, and if we doubt it we shall be eternally damned.

Not only did the Lord join in the war-hunt, but Joshua wrought the greatest miracle on record by causing a stationary body to stand still. He stopped the sun from "going down" and lengthened out the day for about twelve hours, in order that the Jews might see to pursue and kill the flying foe. "The sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." What Joshua really stopped, if he stopped anything, was the earth, for its revolution, and not the motion of the sun, causes the phenomena of day and night. Science tells us that the arrest of the earth's motion would generate a frightful quantity of heat, enough to cause a general conflagration. Yet nothing of the kind happened. How is it, too, that no other ancient people has preserved any record of this marvellous occurrence? The Egyptians, for instance, carefully noted eclipses and such events, but they jotted down no memorandum of Joshua's supreme miracle. Why is this? How can Christians explain it?

When Jupiter personated Amphytrion, and visited his bride Alcmena, the amorous god lengthened out the night in order to prolong his enjoyment. Why may we not believe this? Is it not as credible, and quite as moral, as the Bible story of Jehovah's lengthening out the day to prolong a massacre? Were the Greeks any bigger liars than the Jews?

It has been suggested that Joshua was so elated with the victory that he drank more than was good for him, and got in such a state that in the evening he saw two moons instead of one. Nobody liked to contradict him, but the elders of Israel, to harmonise their leader's vision, declared that it comprised the sun and the moon, instead of two moons, which were clearly absurd. The court poet improved on this explanation, and composed the neat little poem which is partially preserved by the Jewish chronicler, who asks "Is not this written in the book of Jasher?" The waggish laureate Jasher is supposed by some profane speculators to have got up the whole miracle himself.

The five kings fled with their armies and "hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah." Joshua ordered the mouth to be closed



with big stones until the pursuit was ended. At last they were brought out and treated with great ignominy. Their necks were made footstools of by the captains of Israel, and they were afterwards hung on trees until the evening, when their carcasses were flung into the cave. After this highly civilised treatment of their captives, the Jews took all the capital cities of these five kings and slew all the inhabitants. Then they desolated the hills and vales. Joshua "left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded." Hazor and many other places were also treated in the same way, "there was not any left to breathe."

Jehovah was not, however, able to execute his intentions completely. The children of Judah could not drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem; nor could the children of Manasseh entirely drive out the Canaanites from their cities. After Joshua's death, as we read in the book of *Judges*, "the Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." Iron chariots were too strong for the Almighty! Yet he managed to take off the wheels of Pharaoh's chariots at the Red Sea. Why could he not do the same on this occasion? Were the linch-pins too tight or the wheels too heavy?

Joshua died at the ripe old age of a hundred and ten. Whatever else he may have been, he was certainly one of the gamest fighting cocks that ever lived. Jehovah never found a better instrument for his bloody purposes. They buried him at Timnath-serah. Joseph's old bones, which Moses brought out of Egypt, were buried at Shechem. Had they been kept much longer some Hebrew "old-clo' man" might have carried them off and made an honest penny by them.

After Joshua's death, the tribe of Judah fought against Adonibezek. When they caught him they cut off his thumbs and his big toes. He acknowledged the justice of his punishment, and admitted that God had served him just as he had himself served seventy kings, whose great toes he had cut off, and made them eat under his table. Kings must have been very plentiful in those days.

During Joshua's lifetime the Jews served God, and they kept pretty straight during the lifetime of the elders who had known him. But directly these died they went astray; "they forsook the Lord and worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth." God punished them by letting their enemies oppress them. "Nevertheless," says the story, "the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them; and they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so. . . . And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in

following other Gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way."

God's selection of the Jews as his favorite people does not seem to reflect much credit on his sagacity. All who came out of Egypt, except two persons, turned out so badly that they were pronounced unfit to enter the promised land, and doomed to die in the wilderness. The new generation who entered Canaan, after being circumcised to make them holy; after seeing the miracles of Jordan and the valley of Ajalon; after having gained a home by God's assistance in a land flowing with milk and honey; this very generation proved worse than their fathers. The original inhabitants of Canaan, whom they dispossessed, could hardly have surpassed them in sin and iniquity; and therefore the ruthless slaughter of their conquest was as unreasonable as it was inhuman. So much for "God's Thieves in Canaan."

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## CAIN AND ABEL.

By G. W. FOOTE.

GOD completed the immense labors described in the first chapter of Genesis by creating man "in his own image," after which he serenely contemplated "everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Yet the first woman deceived her husband, the first man was duped, and their first son was a murderer. God could not have looked very far ahead when he pronounced everything "very good." It is clear that the original pair of human beings were very badly made. As the Lord was obliged to take a rest on the seventh day, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he was pretty tired on the sixth, and scamped the work. All the sin and suffering in this world is the consequence of man having been the fag-end of creation. If the Lord had rested on the sixth day and created man on the seventh, how different things might have been! The Devil would probably have done no business in this world, and the population of hell would be no more now than it was six thousand years ago.

After leaving the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, having no fear of Malthus in their hearts, began to "multiply and replenish the earth." When their first child was born, Eve said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," poor Adam's share in the youngster's advent being quietly ignored. She christened him Cain, a name which comes from a Hebrew root signifying to *acquire*. Cain was regarded as an *acquisition*, and his mother was very proud of him. The time came when she wished he had never been born.

Some time after, but how long is unknown, Eve gave birth to a second son, called Abel. Josephus explains this name as meaning *grief*, but Hebrew scholars at present explain it as meaning *nothingness, vanity, frailty*. The etymology of Abel's name shows conclusively that the story is a myth. Why should Eve give her second boy so sinister a name? How could she have so clearly anticipated his sad fate? Cain's name has, too, another significance besides that of "acquisition," for, as Kalisch points out, it also belongs to the Hebrew verb to *strike*, and "signifies either the man of violence and the sire of murderers, or the ancestor of the inventors of iron instruments and of weapons of destruction."

Cain and Abel had to get their own living. Being born after the Fall, they were of course debarred from the felicities of Eden, and were compelled to earn their bread by the sweat of their

brows, in accordance with God's wide-reaching curse. Both, so to speak, were forced to deal in provisions. Abel went in for meat, and Cain for vegetables. This was an admirable division of labor, and they ought to have got on very well together; one finding beef and mutton for dinner, and the other potatoes and greens. They might even have paid each other handsome compliments across the table. Abel might have said, "My dear Cain, these vegetables are first-rate," and Cain might have replied, "My dear Abel, I never tasted a better cut."

Delitzsch, whose criticisms are huge jokes, frowns on this picture of fraternal peace. He opines that Cain and Abel were vegetarians, and never enjoyed a beef-steak or a mutton-chop. Abel kept only small domestic cattle, such as sheep and goats, whose woolly skin might be used to cover "their sinful nakedness." The utmost Delitzsch allows is that they perhaps drank milk, which, although animal nutriment, is not obtained through the destruction of animal life. But, as Coleenso observes, animals were slain for sacrifices, and they may have been killed also for eating. Besides, even a vegetable diet involves infinite destruction of minute animal life. On the whole we prefer to disregard Delitzsch in this matter, and to stand by our pleasant picture of the two first brothers at dinner.

Their admirable arrangement, however, brought mischief in the end. It was right enough so far as they were concerned, but it worked badly in relation to God. They liked a mixed diet, but the Lord was purely carnivorous and liked all meat. He devoured Abel's provisions with great relish, but turned up his nose at Cain's vegetables. The mealiest potatoes, the tenderest green peas, had no charm for him; and even the leeks, the garlic, the onions, and the cucumbers, which were afterwards so beloved by his Jewish favorites, were quite unattractive. In the language of Scripture, "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had no respect." Elsewhere in the Bible we read "God is no respecter of persons," but Scripture is full of contradictions, and such things present no difficulty to the spirit of faith, which, like hope, "believeth all things."

Why was Cain's offering slighted? The Bible does not tell us, but many reasons have been advanced by commentators. The Talmud supposes that Cain did not offer his *best* produce, but only the inferior kinds, thus giving God what he did not require himself, and treating the holy rite of sacrifice as a means of working off his refuse vegetables. Kalisch waives this theory, and thinks it probable that Cain's sin was primarily not against God, but against man. "The supposition," he says, "is obvious that envy and jealousy had long filled the heart of Cain, when

he contrasted his laborious and toilsome life with the pleasant and easy existence of his brother Abel. With incessant exertion, tormented by anxiety, and helplessly dependent on the uncertainty of the skies, he forced a scanty subsistence out of the womb of the repugnant soil; whilst his brother enjoyed a life of security and abundance, in the midst of rich valleys, beautiful hills, and charming rural scenes. And while he envied Abel's prosperity, he despised his idleness, which was indebted for the necessaries of life to the liberality of nature, rather than to personal exertions. This hatred and jealousy took root in Cain's heart. He beheld the happiness of his brother with the feelings of an enemy. The joy at the success of his own labors was embittered by the aspect of his brother's greater affluence. How could God look with delight upon an offering which the offerer himself did not regard with unalloyed satisfaction? How could he encourage by his applause a man whose heart was poisoned by the mean and miserable passion of envy?"

But all this is gratuitous and far-fetched. Cain was not afflicted with so laborious an occupation. Adam supported himself and Eve, and all Cain had to do was to provide himself, and perhaps Abel, with vegetables. Nor could Abel's occupation have been light, for flocks and herds require a good deal of attendance, and in those early days they needed vigilant protection against the ravages of wild beasts. Abel's task must have been quite as heavy as Cain's. Our opinion is that the Lord showed his usual caprice, hating whom he would and loving whom he would. Jehovah acted like the savage hero of Mr. Browning's "Caliban on Setebos," who sprawls on the shore watching a line of crabs make for the sea, and squashes the twentieth for mere variety and sport. If Jehovah is requested to explain his loves and hates, he answers with Shylock, "it is my whim." It was his whim to love Jacob and hate Esau, and it was no doubt his whim to accept Abel's offering and reject Cain's.

Mythologically the acceptance of Abel's offering and the rejection of Cain's are easily intelligible. The principle of sacrifice was deeply imbedded in Judaism. Without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin. Under the Levitical law the duties of the priesthood chiefly consisted in burning the sin offerings of the people. It is, therefore, not difficult to understand how the Jewish scribes who wrote or revised the Pentateuch after the Babylonish captivity should give this coloring to the narrative of Genesis; nor is it hard to conceive that for centuries before that date the popular tradition had already, under priestly direction, taken such a color, so as to give the oldest and deepest sanction to the doctrine of animal sacrifice.

It must also be noticed that Abel, who found favor with God, was "a keeper of sheep," while Cain, whose offering was con-

temned, was "a tiller of the ground." This accords with the strongest traditional instincts of the Jews. The Persian religion decidedly favors agriculture, which it regards as a kind of divine service. Brahminism and Buddhism countenance it still more decidedly, and even go to the length of absolutely prohibiting the slaughter of animals. The Jews, on the other hand, esteemed the pastoral life as the noblest, and the Hebrew historian very naturally represented it as protected and consecrated by the blessing of Jehovah, while agriculture was declared to have been imposed on man as a *punishment*. The nomadic origin of the Jews accounts for their antipathy to that pursuit, which survived and manifested itself long after they settled in Palestine, devoted themselves to the cultivation of the soil, and enacted agrarian laws. They always esteemed agriculturalists as inferior to shepherds; men of superior attainments in their histories and legends rose from pastoral life; and kings kept their flocks. David, the man after God's own heart, and the national hero of the Jews, was a shepherd, and the Lord came to him while he was keeping his father's sheep. Moses was keeping his father-in-law's sheep when God appeared to him in the burning bush at Mount Horeb; Jacob kept his uncle Laban's sheep when he fled from Esau; and Abraham, the father of the faithful, was rich in flocks and herds.

To recur to our story. Abel probably enjoyed the conspicuous mark of divine favors conferred on him. Cain, however, experienced very different feelings. He "was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Whereupon the Lord somewhat facetiously asked him what was the matter. "Why," said he, "art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." This was all very well, but as a matter of fact Cain's offering had already been *rejected*, and according to the Bible he had done nothing to deserve such harsh treatment.

The Lord's final words on this occasion read thus in our English Bible: "And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." These words are construed as applying to Cain's mastery over Abel, as the elder brother; but they seem quite unmeaning in that connexion; for Abel left no offspring, and the prophecy, if such it were, was never fulfilled. Kalisch throws light on this obscure passage. The Lord, he says, was referring not to Abel but to Cain's secret sin, and the passage should read "And to thee is *its* desire, but thou shalt rule over it."

Cain then "talked with Abel his brother." Gesenius supposes that he communicated to him the words of God, and treats this as the first step towards a reconciliation. However that may be, we hear nothing more of it, for the very next words relate the murder of the younger brother by the elder. "And it came to

pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."

This abrupt narrative certainly requires explanation. Kalisch seems to think that Cain went about his work, after the interview with God, in a better frame of mind; but while he toiled hard "in the field" he became incensed at the sight of Abel loafing under a fine umbrageous tree and calmly watching his flock. Forgetting the divine admonitions, and listening only to the voice of passion, he madly killed his only brother, and made himself the first murderer. The Talmud gives several legends about the hatred between the two brothers. One imputes the difference to Cain's avarice, another to his ambition, another to his innate sinfulness, and another to his envy and jealousy on account of Ab'l's wife. The last of all seems the truest; namely, that they differed "in their views regarding Providence, the moral government of the world, and the efficacy of virtuous deeds for happiness." This idea informs Byron's tragedy on the subject. In "Cain" the younger brother's offering is burnt up with supernatural fire, while the elder's altar remains unkindled; whereupon Cain inveighs against God's partiality, and denounces the bloody sacrifice which finds greater favor than his own peaceful tribute of fruit and flowers. He then advances to scatter the relics of Abel's offering from the altar, but is thwarted by his brother who resists the sacrilege. Abel is felled in the struggle, and Cain, who had no intention of killing him, finds himself an actual murderer before his brother's corpse.

We are bound to conclude that the first quarrel in the world, like nine-tenths of those that have occurred since, was about religion. Cain thought God should be worshipped in one way, Abel thought he should be worshipped in another; and they settled the question, after the manner of religious disputants in all ages, by the stronger knocking the weaker on the head. In religion there is no certitude on this side of the grave; if we are ever destined to know the truth on that subject, we must die to find it out. We may therefore argue fruitlessly until the day of judgment. The only effectual way of settling a religious problem is to settle your opponents.

After the murder the Lord paid Cain another visit, and asked him where Abel was. Cain replied that he was not his brother's keeper and didn't know. He does not appear to have thought God a particularly well-informed person. Then the Lord said that Abel's blood cried unto him from the ground. "And now," he continued, "art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be on the earth. And Cain said unto the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this

day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden."

Now let us examine this story. Why was Cain so solicitous about his safety? Why did he fear that everybody would try to kill him? He had slain his brother, and his father and mother were the only people in the world besides himself and perhaps his sisters. Kalisch suggests that he apprehended the future vengeance of mankind when the world grew more populous. But how, in that case, could a distinctive mark be any protection? It would publish his identity to all beholders. Besides, one would suppose that Cain, the first man ever born into the world, would always be well known without carrying about a brand like a special wine or a patent edible. And what was the mark? Kalisch thinks it was only a villainous expression. Others think it was the Mongolian type impressed upon the features of Cain, who became the founder of that great division of the human race. A negro preacher started a different theory. When the Lord called out in a loud voice, "Cain, where is thy brother Abel," Cain, who was a black man, like Adam, turned pale with fear, and never regained his original color. All his children were pale too; and that, said the preacher, "accounts for de white trash you see eberv war in dese days"

How did Cain manage to go "out from the presence of the Lord," who is everywhere? Satan does the same thing in the Book of Job, and Jonah tries to do it later on. Jehovah was clearly a local as well as a visible God, and not the infinite spirit of the universe.

Where was the land of Nod situated? East of Eden, says the Bible. But nobody knows where Eden was. As we pointed out in "The Creation Story," scores of different positions have been assigned to it. The only point of agreement among the commentators is that it was *somewhere*. All that can safely be affirmed, then, is that Nod was east of Somewhere. The name itself is very appropriate. No doubt the Lord was not quite awake in that locality, and hence we may explain how Cain managed to go "out from his presence."

In this strange land of Nod, Cain "knew his wife." Who was she? Probably his own sister, but the Bible does not tell us anything about her. Their first son was called Enoch. Cain then "builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch." But this is directly opposed to the curse, "a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."



Delitzsch notices this, and, as usual, seeks to explain it away. Cain, he says, "in this way set himself against the divine curse, in order to feel it inwardly so much the more, as outwardly he seems to have overcome it." To which we reply—first, that there is no evidence that Cain felt the curse "more inwardly" after he built the city; and, secondly, the idea of a man successfully setting himself against an omnipotent curse is a trifle too absurd for credence or criticism.

Now Adam and Eve, when Cain fled after the murder of Abel, were left childless, or at least without a son. But it was necessary that they should have another, in order that God's chosen people, the Jews, might be derived from a purer stock than Cain's. Accordingly we read that Adam, in his hundred and thirtieth year, "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth." Why was not Cain begotten in the same way? Had he been so, the cradle of the world might not have been defiled with the blood of fratricide. Seth being "the image" of Adam, and Adam "the image" of God, Seth and the Almighty were of course very much alike. He was pious, and from him were descended the pious patriarchs, including Noah, from whom was descended Abraham the founder of the Jewish race. God's chosen people came of a good stock, although they turned out such a bad lot.

From Seth to Noah there are *ten* Patriarchs before the flood. This is clearly mythological. The Hindus believed in *ten* great saints, the offspring of Manu, and in *ten* different personifications of Vishnu. The Egyptians had *ten* mighty heroes, the Chaldeans *ten* kings before the Flood, the Assyrians *ten* kings from Ham to Ninyas, and as many from Japhet to Aram; and Plato enumerates *ten* sons of Neptune, as the rulers of his imaginary Island of Atlantis, submerged by the Deluge.

Cain's descendants were of course drowned by the Flood, but they did a great deal more for the world than the descendants of pious Seth, who seems to have done little else than trust in God. The Cainites laid the basis of civilisation. One of them Jabal, founded *cattle-keeping*; his brother, Jubal, invented *musical instruments*; and their half-brother Tubal-cain first practised *smithery*. Seth's descendants had nothing but piety. Even their morals were no better than those of the Cainites; for at the Flood only eight of them were found worthy of preservation, and they were a poor lot. Noah got beastly drunk after the waters subsided, and one of his three sons brought a curse on all his offspring. What then must we think of the rest?

Tuch excellently explains the mythological significance of the story of Cain and Abel and Seth. "There lies," he says, "in this myth the perfectly correct reminiscence, that in the East *ancient* nations lived, under whom in very early times culture and civilisation extended, but at the same time the assertion,

that these could not prejudice the renown of the Western-Asiatics, since the prerogatives, which their descent from the first-born would secure to them, were done away through God's Curse, which lighted on their ancestor Cain. Thus the East is cut off from the following history, and the thread fastened on, which carries us on in Genesis, right across through the nations to the only chosen people of Israel." The entire history of the world before the Flood is dismissed in five chapters, and that from the Flood to Abraham in two more. After that the mighty antique civilisations are never noticed except so far as they affect the history of the Jews. The ages of the Patriarchs also dwindle down from nine centuries in the beginning to almost the normal longevity in the semi-historical period. Could anything more conclusively prove the mythical character of the narrative?

One of the Patriarchs descended from Seth, namely Enoch, which singularly enough is also the name of Cain's eldest son, never died. We read that "he was not, for God took him." It is about time that the Lord took the whole lot out of his Word, and gave us a little ancient *history* instead. We want a *revised* Bible in the fullest sense of the word. The old book needs to be completely rewritten. How thankful we should all be if the Lord inspired *another* "Moses" to rectify the errors and supplement the deficiencies of the first, and to give us scientific truth instead of fanciful myths about the early history of our race! But the Lord never inspires anybody to do a useful piece of work, and our Darwins will therefore have to go on with their slow and laborious task of making out a history of mankind from the multitudinous and scattered traces that still survive the decay of time.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## L O T ' S      W I F E .

By G. W. FOOTE.

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LOT and his family were a queer lot. Their history is one of the strangest in the whole Bible. They dwelt amongst a people whose debauchery has become a byword, and in a city which has given a name to the vilest of unnatural crimes. Lot, his wife, and their two unmarried daughters, were the only persons preserved from the terrible fate which Jehovah, in one of his periodic fits of anger, inflicted upon the famous Cities of the Plain. They witnessed a signal instance of his ancient method of dealing with his disobedient children. In the New Testament, God promises the wicked and the unbelievers everlasting fire after they are dead; in the Old Testament, he drowns them or burns them up in this world. Lot and his family saw the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by "brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;" and they, four persons in all, just half the number that survived the Flood a few centuries before, were the only ones that escaped. God specially spared them. Yet Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt for looking back as she fled from the doomed city, and the old man himself soon after got drunk and committed incest with his daughters. From this crime sprang Moab and Ammon, the founders of two nations who became for many centuries the most implacable enemies of God's chosen people.

Why did the Lord spare these four persons? Why did he not profit by the lesson of the Flood? The eight persons rescued from drowning in that great catastrophe were infected with original sin, and the consequence was that the world peopled from their stock was a great deal worse than the antediluvian world. It would clearly have been better to destroy all and start absolutely afresh. The eight rescued persons were apparently just as bad as those who were drowned. So with the four persons spared at the destruction of Sodom. The people of that city could hardly have been much worse than Lot and his children. The Lord appears to have been as stupid in his mercy as he was brutal in his wrath.

Lot was Abraham's nephew, and evidently came of a bad stock. The uncle's evil career will be sketched in our series of "Bible Heroes." For the present we content ourselves with the remark that no good could reasonably be expected from such a family. Lot's father was Haran, a son of Terah, and brother to Abraham. He "died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees." A city was called by his name in the land

of Canaan, and Terah and the family dwelt there after they left Ur, until the patriarch died and Abraham was called out from his kindred to found a new house. The "father of the faithful" took his orphaned nephew with him. Lot accompanied his uncle on the journey to Egypt, where Abraham passed his wife off as his sister, and showed his natural bent by lying right and left.

Soon afterwards we learn that Abraham and Lot had grown very rich, the former "in cattle, in silver, and in gold," and the latter in "flocks, and herds, and tents." Indeed "their substance was so great that they could not dwell together, and there was strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdmen of Lot's cattle." Whereupon Abraham said, "Don't let us quarrel within the family, but let us part. You can go where you like. If you go to the right I'll go to the left, and if you go to the left I'll go to the right." It was necessary to separate Lot from the fortunes of Abraham, in order that God's dealings with the latter might be uninterrupted and his family kept distinct; and so the Hebrew chronicler very naturally separates them here, in a manner which reflects great credit on Abraham, and exhibits him in a most amiable light.

Cunning Lot took full advantage of the offer. He "lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord." So they parted, and Lot "pitched his tent towards Sodom," whose inhabitants, says our naive story, "were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Commentators explain that Lot's approach to such a detestable sink of iniquity indicated the native corruption of his heart, or at least a sad lack of horror at the sins which made the place stink in the nostrils of God.

In the next chapter we find Lot living in Sodom, although we are not told when he moved there. Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal "king of nations," made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the "king of Bela, which is Zoar." A great battle was fought in the vale of Siddim, which is alleged to be now covered by the Dead Sea. The four kings were victorious over the five. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and the victors spoiled their cities, taking with them many captives, among whom was "Lot, Abram's brother's son." How Abraham went out with a handful of men, defeated the triumphant forces of the allied kings, and rescued his nephew, is a pretty little story which we reserve for our life of that patriarch. All the other captives were rescued also, and Lot, returning with his friends, continued to dwell in Sodom as before.

We hear no more of him for a considerable time. During the interval Abraham has a child by Hagar. Ishmael, with the rest of the patriarch's household, is circumcised. And finally the Lord visits Abraham again to tell him that, notwithstanding their

advanced ages, he and Sarah shall yet have a son. What happened during the interview properly belongs to the life of Abraham, but we shall here consider so much of it as relates to the fortunes of Lot.

The Lord complained that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was "very grievous," and said that the great cry of it had reached him in heaven. Being much concerned about their "goings on," he had resolved to drop down and see for himself if they were really as bad as he suspected. "If not," said he, "I will know." In the Old Testament, God, who knows everything, is always seeking information.

Abraham surmised that the Lord meant to play the devil with the Sodomites, and he was anxious about Lot who dwelt with them. So he began a parley. "Now, my Lord," said Abraham, "you surely don't mean to destroy indiscriminately; you, the judge of all the earth, must act on the square. Suppose there are fifty righteous men in Sodom, won't you, just for their sake, spare the place?" Knowing that there were nothing like fifty righteous men in Sodom, the Lord promptly acceded to Abraham's request; so promptly indeed that Abraham smelt a rat, and determined to drive a closer bargain. So he asked the Lord to knock off five. "Very well," was the reply, "if I find forty-five righteous men I'll spare the city." Abraham was still suspicious. He knew that Jehovah loved a bit of destruction, and was not easily moved when he had once made up his mind to indulge himself. So he returned to the charge. "I beg pardon," said he, "for troubling you so, but do you mind knocking off another ten, and making thirty of it?" "Not at all," answered the Lord, "we'll say thirty." Abraham felt there was something wrong. This amiable readiness to oblige thoroughly perplexed him. If the Lord had haggled over the thirty, he would have known that there was about that number of righteous men in the place; but in the actual condition of affairs, he felt that he had considerably overshot the mark. The game was very dangerous, but he decided to renew it. "My Lord," he began, "I'm a dreadful bore, but I'm not quite satisfied with our contract and should like to re-open it. I don't wish to be importunate, but you will knock off another ten?" "With all my heart," replied the Lord, "we'll say twenty." Still dissatisfied, Abraham resolved on a final effort. "My good Lord," said he, "this is really the last time of asking. I promise to bother you no more. Will you knock off another ten?" "All right," was the reply, "anything to oblige. We'll say ten altogether. If there are so many righteous men in Sodom I'll spare it. Good afternoon, Abraham, good afternoon." And the Lord was off. Abraham ruefully watched the retreating figure, perfectly assured that the Lord had got the best of the bargain, and that he himself had been duped, worsted, and befooled.

God did not go to Sodom himself, but sent two angels to

inspect it. They reached its gate in the evening, and found Lot sitting there. In eastern towns the places before the gate are the appointed localities for meetings; and in ancient times they were used for still more extensive purposes. There the judge pronounced his decisions, and even kings held there occasionally their courts of justice; there buying and selling went on; the people assembled there to see each other and hear the news; and almost all public affairs were transacted there, from religious worship to the smallest details of civil life. It is not surprising, therefore, that Lot should be sitting in the gate when the two strangers arrived at the city. Some commentators have even conjectured that he went out to meet them; but others object that this is contradictory to the narrative, which does not exhibit Lot as recognising the angels, and that it implies "too ideal a notion of his virtue." Some have supposed that Lot had attained to the dignity of a judge, and that he was sitting to act in that capacity on this occasion; but later circumstances refute this supposition; for, in the quarrel which ensued, the people of Sodom reproached him as "a stranger" who set himself up as a judge of their conduct.

Lot advanced to the strangers, greeted them with a profound bow, addressed them as "my lords," and asked them to stay over night at his house, where he would wash their feet, give them something to eat, and find them a bed. They declined his frank hospitality, and said they meant to pass the night in the streets. Kalisch observes, as though he knew all about their motives, that "it was their intention to try his character, and to give him an opportunity of showing whether his generosity was merely a momentary emotion, or had become a settled feature in his character." He also dismisses the idea that they wished to remain in the streets or to study "the moral state of the Sodomites," as they required no such knowledge, for "they were not only the angels of God, but God himself acted in them." But Kalisch should bear in mind that God told Abraham he was going on purpose to "see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it"; and that, as the angels could not know more than God, it was after all necessary that they should make inquiries. Lot, however, "pressed upon them greatly," and at last they entered his house. He then "made them a *feast*," which seems to have consisted of nothing but unleavened bread. Perhaps the angels, who had dined heavily with Abraham on veal, butter, and milk, were afraid of bad dreams, and only wanted a light supper before going to roost.

They were, not however, destined to enjoy a good night's sleep. Before they "lay down," the men of Sodom "compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter. And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in unto thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them."

We are reluctant to criticise this dirty story, but duty compels us. God's Word is full of disgusting narratives, and if we scrupled to examine them we should have to leave the book alone. We have no love of filth, and if the Bible were not held up as a divine work we should never condescend to notice its beastly tales of fornication, adultery, sodomy, and incest.

Why did *all* the men of Sodom, both old and young, flock to Lot's house? Is it likely that *every* male in the city, past the age of puberty, should burn with unnatural lust at one and the same time? Did they suppose that *all* of them could abuse the two strangers? The story is as silly as it is nasty.

For a parallel to Lot's answer to the demand of his neighbors we must go to the nineteenth chapter of *Judges*, where the men of Gibeah clamor for the Levite as the men of Sodom clamor for the two angels, and where his host offers them instead his own daughter as well as the Levite's concubine. A woman's honor was a very trivial thing to God's chosen people. In itself it counted as next to nothing. The man's right of possession gave it all its importance and worth.

Lot went out and shut the door after him. Then he rebuked his neighbors for desiring to do "so wickedly," and immediately made them an offer which he seems to have thought perfectly fair and square. "Behold, now," he said, "I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof." The laws of hospitality are sacred, and Lot did well to maintain them; but he had no right to sacrifice to them a still more sacred law. Instead of strenuously opposing the committal of one crime, he proposes another as heinous.

The Sodomites scorned his offer. They had a *penchant* for a different pleasure. Ravishing virgins was not in their line. So they reviled Lot for setting himself up as a judge amongst them, called him "fellow," threatened to deal worse with him than with the strangers, and actually pressed so sore upon him that they "came near to break the door."

Then the strangers manifested their power. They "put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great; so that they wearied themselves to find the door." However blind they were surely they might have found the door by feeling for it. Kalisch makes this episode more reasonable by substituting "blind confusion" for "blindness."

The angels continued to act promptly. They informed Lot that they intended to destroy the place because of its sin, and told him to gather all his family together and leave at once. Lot spoke to his "sons-in-law, which married his daughters," but they appear to have thought him daft. Early in the morning "the angels hastened Lot" who still lingered. They laid hold

of his hand, his wife's, and his two unmarried daughters', led them outside the city, and said, "Escape now for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains lest thou be consumed." Lot did not relish this prospect of a hard climb. He therefore asked the angels to let him flee unto the city of Zoar, because it was near and "a little one." That is what the servant girl said to her mistress when she confessed to an illegitimate child, "please 'm, it's only a very little one." She thought that a small illegitimate baby wasn't as bad as a big illegitimate baby, and Lot thought that a little wicked city wasn't as bad as a big wicked city.

Lot's request was granted, and he was told to look sharp. He made good speed, and reached Zoar when "the sun was risen."

"Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." It is a mistake to suppose that brimstone and fire are characteristic of hell, for the Lord evidently keeps a large stock of those commodities in heaven. Nor must it be supposed that Lot was spared because he was righteous. He was spared because the Lord "was merciful unto him." His virtues, Kalisch remarks, were not sufficient for his salvation, which he owed to "the piety of Abraham." Abraham may have had "piety" enough to save a Lot, but he had scarcely "virtue" enough to save a mouse.

Kalisch says that "about the situation of Zoar there remains little doubt." He identifies it with "the considerable ruins found in Wady Kerek, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea." But he has no such assurance as to the situation of Sodom. He deprecates De Saulcy's assumption, that Sodom is traceable in the heap of stones found near the Salt Mountain, Udsun; and adds—"We may hope rather than expect, that authentic ruins of the four destroyed towns will ever be discovered. Biblical historians and prophets already speak of them as localities utterly and tracelessly swept away; and the remark of Josephus, that 'shadows' of them still existed in his time, is vague and doubtful."

In the South of Palestine there is an extraordinary lake of mysterious origin. It is about thirty-nine miles long, and from eight to twelve miles broad. It is fed by the river Jordan, and drained by the evaporation due to a fierce and terrible sun. Its water is clear and inodorous, but nauseous like a solution of alum; it causes painful itching and even ulceration on the lips, and if brought near a wound, or any diseased part, produces a most excruciating sensation. It contains hydrochloric and sulphuric acid, and one-fourth of its weight is salt. No fishes live in it; and according to tradition, which however is not true, birds that happen to fly over its surface die. Near it is said to grow the Apple of Sodom, beautiful in appearance, but containing only ashes. This lake is appropriately called the Dead Sea.



The natives say that at low water they glimpse fragments of buildings and pillars rising out of the bottom of the lake. But this is only a fancy. Yet beneath the waters of the Dead Sea are thought to lie the Cities of the Plain. The northern part of the lake is very deep, the southern part very shallow. The bottom consists of two separate plains, one elevated, the other depressed. The latter is by some held to be the original bottom of the lake, and the former to have been caused by the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But this also is only a fancy. The bitumen, which is found in such large quantities in and near the lake, is a symptom and remnant of the volcanic nature of the region. Several lines of earthquake are traced from it in a north-eastern direction; and it is conjectured that the three lakes, Merom, Tiberias, and Asphaltites, together with the river Jordan, are the remaining traces of the huge gulf once filled by the Dead Sea before the land was lifted by a geological catastrophe. Volcanic action has caused all the remarkable phenomena of the district, which was of immemorial antiquity thousands of years ago; and the story of the Cities of the Plain is only one of the legends which ancient peoples associated with every striking aspect of nature.

Let us recur to Lot. His sons, his married daughters, and their husbands, perished in the deluge of brimstone and fire. He and his two unmarried daughters fled to Zoar as fast as their legs could carry them. But his wife was less fortunate. She ran behind Lot, and with the natural curiosity of her sex she looked back on the doomed city. For this violation of the angels' orders she was turned into "a pillar of salt." Some commentators try to blink this unpleasant fact by artful translations; such as "she fell into a salt-brook," or "she was covered with a salt crust," or she was "*like* a pillar of salt." Josephus pretended to have seen this old woman of salt, but others have been less lucky, although many travellers and pilgrims have searched for it as for a sacred relic. But let us not despair Lot's wife may yet be discovered and exhibited in the British Museum.

What became of Lot and his daughters? Fearing to dwell in Zoar, they left it and "dwelt in a cave." The damsels, who had heard their father offer them to the promiscuous embrace of a lustful crowd, could not be expected to be very scrupulous in their conduct. They were alone, without husbands to make them mothers, and to be childless was a calamity and a reproach; so they put their heads together and devised a nasty scheme. Two nights successively they made their father blind drunk, and got him to commit incest with them. This is very beastly and very absurd. Lot was *old*; he was so drunk that he knew nothing of what happened; yet he got two virgins with child! The porter in "Macbeth" would have laughed at such a ridiculous story.

These improper females were by no means ashamed of their

action ; on the contrary, they boasted of their bastards ; and the historian does not utter a word in condemnation of their crime.

Lot was the father of his own grandchildren ; his daughters were the mothers of their own brothers ; and his other children were destroyed by heavenly brimstone and fire. Were they not, as we said at the outset, a queer lot ? But the queerest lot was Lot's wife. Whatever may be said of the rest of the family, no one can say that she was not worth her salt, for the Lord thought she was worth enough to make a pillar. Let us hope that the old lady will some day be discovered, and that her pillar of salt may yet, to the confusion of sceptics, stand as a veritable pillar in the house of God, and there defy the attacks of all the infidel Samsons, world without end. Amen.

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BY

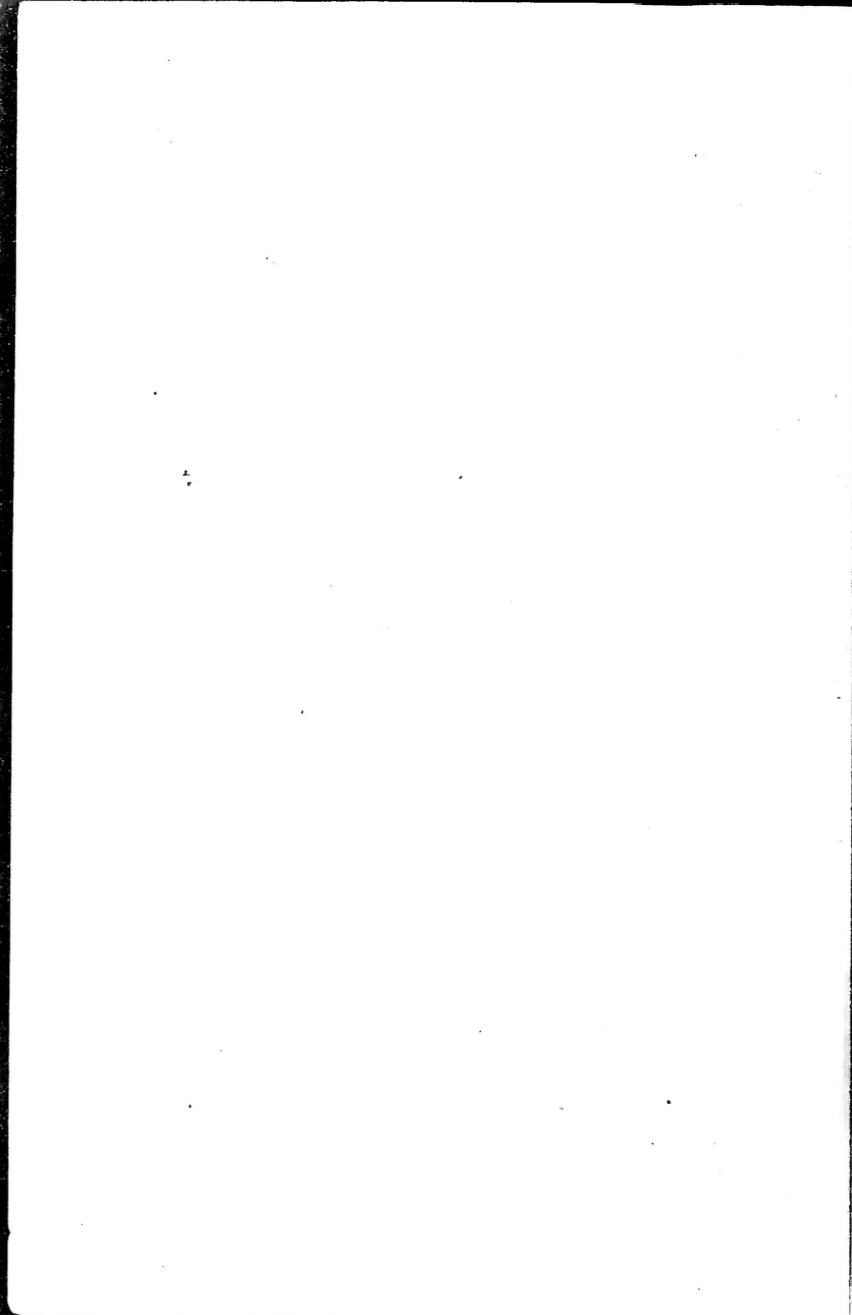
G. W. FOOTE.

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## DANIEL AND THE LIONS.

By G. W. FOOTE.

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DANIEL is a very important character in the Bible. He plays the chief part among the Jews during the Babylonish captivity. His history perhaps is not very instructive, but it is certainly entertaining. As for "The Book of Daniel," it has been the cause of much waste of learning and good paper. Nearly all the prophetic rubbish ever written has been based upon it. It evidently inspired the book of "Revelation," and is thus responsible for most of the works on that puzzling subject which "either finds a man cracked or leaves him so."

Daniel was one of the children brought away from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. The mighty king meant to have these Jew boys well fed and well taught, so that at the end of three years they might "stand before him." Daniel received the new name of Belteshazzar, but as that is a huge mouthful we shall drop it, and call him by his original name. Three other lads of the same tribe of Judah were his companions. They are better known by their Chaldean names—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. As they grew up all four proved uncommon men. Daniel could not be eaten by lions, and the others were incombustible.

Nebuchadnezzar ordered them meat and wine, but they would not "defile" themselves with these, as they were vegetarians and teetotallers. By special favor of the prince of the eunuchs, they were allowed to live on pulse and water, which made them fat and fair. Daniel, however, appears to have relinquished his dietary principles in after years, for we find him saying that when he "mourned three full weeks" in the reign of Cyrus, he "ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth." Probably his stomach and his mind were carnal together, and he only recurred to vegetarianism in his fits of piety.

The four children became skilful and learned and wise. Daniel in particular "had understanding in all visions and dreams." That is, he told people what was in their heads better than they knew it themselves, and explained the meaning of all the curious ideas that haunted their skulls at night. No doubt he could predict what would happen if a man dreamt about a dog, an old lady about a cat, or a young one about a mouse. Probably he

edited an astrologer's almanack, or a "Book of Fate," a copy of which may yet be brought to light. Daniel was the most knowing Jew, but his three friends also were excellent, and the king "found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm."

We shall presently give a specimen of Daniel's skill in that line, but before doing so, we mean to go to the "apocryphal" "History of Susanna," which Protestantism has wrested from the beginning of the "Book of Daniel." In the course of this Romance we shall refer to two other "apocryphal" books—"Bel and the Dragon" and the "Song of the Three Holy Children," which are quite as good history as *Daniel*, and much better fun.

In the "History of Susanna" Daniel is described as "a young youth," but he turns out an "old file." What "a young youth" exactly means we are unable to say. It cannot mean a person "born young," for Daniel seems to have come into the world with his wisdom teeth already cut. Yet it must mean something. We shall strenuously and earnestly pray for enlightenment on this point, so that in our next edition we may be able to give the precise character of "a young youth." We may also be able to state how the young may become youths, and how youths may become young.

Daniel the "young youth," to use Shakespeare's words, "came to judgment." Two elders lusted after Susanna, the wife of Joacim, "a very fair woman and one that feared the Lord." They secreted themselves in the garden, rushed out upon her when she was alone in her bath, and threatened that if she did not yield to their desires they would declare that they had detected her in an intrigue with a young man. But her virtue was impregnable to their seductions. That scamp, Lord Byron, says of sweet Donna Julia :

Wedded she was some years, and to a man  
Of fifty, and such husbands are in plenty ;  
And yet, I think, instead of such a ONE  
'Twere better to have TWO of five-and-twenty.

How shocking ! But there is perhaps some truth in the French wit's remark that Susanna's virtue might have run more risk from one young man than two old ones.

These disreputable elders were as bad as their word. They lied about poor Susanna, and being pious they were of course believed. She was condemned to death. But just at the critical moment young Daniel intervened. Taking the elders separately, he asked each under what tree he saw the paramours "companying together." One said a mastick tree, and the other an holm. This discrepancy convinced everybody of their falsehood, and they were put to death instead of poor Susanna. "From

that day forth," says the story, "Daniel was had in great reputation in the sight of the people." If so, he earned it very cheaply. The two elders must have been fools as great as they were rogues if they could not rebut his little argument. There was really nothing in it. They might have answered that a difference on such a minor point did not vitiate their testimony as to the main facts. The Jews were thankful for very small mercies in the shape of wisdom, and anybody with half a head could get a big reputation in those days.

Nebuchadnezzar "dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him." Perhaps the poor monarch was overburdened with the cares of empire. Perhaps he drank bad wine or ate pork for supper. This happened "in the second year of his reign." But there is clearly a mistake in the date; for Daniel and his friends had been fed and taught by his orders for *three years* before he "communed with them," and these bad dreams plagued him after that. This, however, is a mere nicety of criticism. No pious mind will stumble over such a trifling difficulty.

Nebuchadnezzar called in all the magicians, astrologers, and soothsayers, and bade them explain his dream. They answered, "Tell us the dream, and we will interpret it." "Nay," he rejoined, "I can't do that, the thing is gone from me; you must interpret the dream, and find it out too. If you succeed I'll reward you handsomely, but if you fail I'll just cut you into mince-meat. The trembling wizards protested that this was absurd, and that no king had ever asked the like before. "So much the worse for you," roared Nebuchadnezzar; "what use are you if you can't do this? Don't I clothe you, house you, and feed you on the fat of the land? You know I do; and I tell you plainly I want something for my money. If you can read the future, you can also read the past. So just tell me my dream straight, or I'll hang you all as a set of liars and thieves."

Here was a pretty pass! Those "wise men" were flummuxed. Whichever way they turned the prospect was black with despair. Wise men! They were great simpletons. As the king had forgotten his dream, why did they not invent one, and unanimously swear that was it? Our modern wizards would have obliged him, and saved their own bacon, in less than five minutes.

Nebuchadnezzar grew furious and ordered all the "wise men" to be slain. Daniel and his friends were among the crew. But before the royal decree could be executed the four young Jews put their heads together, and the "young youth" went to the king and told him his dream and its interpretation. The Lord God of Israel helped him at the pinch, and revealed to him what all the gods of Babylon could not or would not reveal to the other mystery-men. Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and

worshipped Daniel; told him that his God was a God of gods, yards taller than all the rest; gave him many great gifts, and made him "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men." "Good!" thought Daniel, "this business pays." Neither were his three friends neglected; they were "set over the affairs of the province of Babylon."

Nebuchadnezzar's dream was about a great image, and soon afterwards he tried to realise it. He made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits broad, and set it up in the plain of Dura. But this colossus could not have been solid gold. We have no doubt it was a gilded affair, like the statue of Prince Albert in Kensington Gardens, which we owe to the wifely affection and exquisite taste of our noble queen; all glitter and dazzle outside and worthless within, after the fashion of most monarchs in this priest-ridden and king-deluded world.

Having set up his big toy, Nebuchadnezzar gave a monster concert, and invited all the nobs and swells. All the various peoples of Babylon—natives, immigrants and captives—flocked out to see the show; and at the herald's proclamation, everybody fell down and "worshipped the golden image."

Nebuchadnezzar was delighted. He was not only a great king but he had actually made a god. Yet his pleasure was soon damped by "certain Chaldeans" who came and informed him that three scurvy Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—would neither serve his gods nor worship his image. Full of rage and fury, he had the trio brought before him, and told them that if they would not serve "*his* gods" and worship "*his* image" he would roast them alive. "And," said he, "I should just like to see the God that will deliver you out of my hands." They replied that they had a God of their own, a first-class Jewish God, warranted sound in every respect, and they meant to stick to him. "Very well," said he, "then into the oven you go."

What silliness! Only a short time before the king praised Daniel's God as the mightiest and the best, and now he condemns three Jews for worshipping him! Either Nebuchadnezzar or the scribe who wrote this romance must have had a very short memory.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were bound in full dress, and flung into a "burning fiery furnace" made seven times hotter than usual. According to the "Song of the Three Children," rosin, pitch, tow, and small wood were used as fuel; and the flames streamed forth forty-nine cubits so that lots of the Chaldeans were burnt. Our "Book of Daniel" says that "the flame slew those men who took up" the three Jews. But to the intended victims it was rare fun. They were incombustible and fireproof. Flames had no terror for them. Even in Hell



they would just have gone up and warmed their hands at the fireplace.

The Apocryphal book states that the angel of the Lord came down to keep them company, and blew the flames away with "a moist whistling wind;" and they all four sang a song of praise to God forty-one verses in length. Nebuchadnezzar was astonished. He had cast in three men bound, and lo! four walked about loose, the last being "like the son of God." He shouted to them to come forth, and it was found that not a hair of their heads nor a thread of their clothes was singed. Then Nebuchadnezzar said "blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; there's no God like him; and if any persons speak amiss against him I'll cut them in pieces and make their houses a dunghill." It will thus be seen that belief in the Jew God did not tame the king's ferocity nor make him tolerant. Belief in the Jew God never had that effect on anybody, and never will.

Nebuchadnezzar the king, whose wits appear to have been disposed to wool-gathering, dreamed again. He assembled once more the magicians, the astrologers and the soothsayers; but although this time he told them his dream, they could not interpret it. Why did he not send straight for Daniel? Because the man who wrote this story was a Jew, and his object was to show how the Lord's prophet could succeed after all the "wise men" of Babylon had failed.

"But at the last," of course, "Daniel came in," and he explained the king's dream. The idea that a dream was not prophetic never crossed their minds. God's servants, like their superstitious neighbors, never doubted that the future lay folded up in night-visions. The only thing doubtful was how to interpret them.

The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was that he should be driven from men and dwell with the beasts of the field, eating grass with them, until he recognised and humbled himself before the most High. And all this came to pass. At the end of twelve months, as the king gloried in his greatness, a voice from heaven announced that his kingdom had departed from him; and the same hour "he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Now we take it that poor Nebuchadnezzar simply went mad, and wandered about like other oriental lunatics, playing all sorts of pranks. This view is borne out by his own statement soon after—"Mine understanding returned unto me." He was crazed like our George III.; and the Jews, when they returned from captivity in Babylon, made out that their God turned him loose as a punishment for his pride.

Nebuchadnezzar recovered and died in the purple. He was succeeded by Belshazzar, who also brought misery on himself by insulting the Jew God. One night, at a great feast which he gave to a thousand of his lords, he ordered out the golden and silver vessels that his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. This awful sacrilege was swiftly punished. A supernatural hand wrote on the wall of the banquet chamber the mystic words—Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. Dreadfully alarmed, the king called for the "wise men" to explain the writing, but they could not understand it. Of course not; else what was the use of the great Jewish wizard? Daniel solved the riddle. His explanation was not flattering to Belshazzar. It was that he had been weighed and found wanting, and that God had given his kingdom to the Medes and Persians. And "in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom." What a wonderful prophecy! But it appears very simple when we know that it came *after* the event. The "Book of Daniel" was concocted by Jewish scribes at a much later period, in order to glorify themselves at the expense of their old captors, and to exalt the majesty of their own God.

Change of empire did not affect Daniel. He might have sung

"For kings may come and kings may go  
But I go on for ever."

Darius set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first. This preference rankled in their hearts, and they resolved to "burke" him by some means. Accordingly they devised a nice little scheme to ruin him. But they reckoned without their host, or rather without the Lord of hosts.

They got the king to sign a decree, "according to the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not," that whoever should ask a petition of any god or man, save of the king, for thirty days, should be cast into the den of lions. Then they went and caught Daniel on his marrow-bones supplicating his god, and reported it to the king, at the same time demanding that he should be lawfully punished. Darius was sore displeased; he was fond of Daniel; and he labored to save him until sunset. But his efforts were all in vain. Like Shylock, the statesman of Babylon "stood for law" and would have it. So Daniel was cast into the den of lions. Poor Daniel! But wait awhile. Heroes don't die in that fashion.

While Daniel and the lions are settling matters, let us state that the apocryphal "History of Bel and the Dragon" gives a different account of the enmity of these Chaldeans. Daniel, it appears, had played the devil with their god Bel and his priests. Bel the idol had "spent upon him every day twelve great

measures of fine flour, and forty sheep, and six vessels of wine." The king (who is *Cyrus* here) one day asked Daniel why he did not worship Bel, who was a living god, for see, said the king, "how much he eateth and drinketh every day." Daniel answered that the provisions were really consumed by the seventy priests and their families. Then the king determined to test the question. The meat and wine were set in the temple and the door was sealed. But the priests had "a privy entrance" under the table, and they laughed to themselves. Daniel, however, soon made them laugh on the other side of their mouths; for he strewed ashes over the floor, and in the morning the footsteps of men, women, and children betrayed the fraud. The king slew the priests, and Daniel demolished Bel and his temple.

That was bad enough. But Daniel did still worse. He undertook to slay without sword or staff a great dragon which the Babylonians worshipped. Taking pitch and fat and hair he "did seethe them together, and made lumps thereof; this he put in the dragon's mouth, and so the dragon burst in sunder"—we suppose with disappointment and spite. This was more than the Babylonians could stand. They told the king he was become a Jew, and threatened to destroy him and his house if he did not hand Daniel over. The king, being afraid, let them have their way; and they "cast him into the lion's den, where he was six days." During all that time, the lions were starved in order that they might devour the meddling Jew.

But if the lions starved, Daniel didn't. There was a prophet in Jewry, called Habbacuc, who was carrying some pottage out to his reapers in the field, when an angel of the Lord appeared and told him to take it to Babylon and give it to Daniel. "Babylon!" said Habbacuc, "I never saw it, and I don't know where the den is." Whereupon the angel caught him by the hair and sailed off with him to Babylon. What a comfortable way to travel! We should just like to see some modern prophet, say Mr. Spurgeon, do a thousand miles in that style. What would the angel have done if Habbacuc had been bald? And how did the half-scalped prophet get the pottage into the den? If the lions respected Daniel, they might show *him* less courtesy; and while Daniel was dining off the pottage they might dine off Habbacuc. However, it was done, and Daniel cleaned out the bowl. Then the angel lugged Habbacuc back to Jewry, no doubt clasping the bowl, which was very likely used afterwards for collections instead of Habbacuc's hat.

"Bel and the Dragon" says that the king came on the seventh day to bewail Daniel, and found him still alive and flourishing. But our Bible says that he went the very next morning. The Lord had saved him by shutting the lions' mouths; not with good meat, but with lockjaw. These poor animals were the real victims. Imagine their disgust when they prowled around the

nice well-fed prophet and couldn't open their teeth for a bite! Daniel was fished or forked out; and as the king thought the lions wanted feeding, he threw in Daniel's accusers. Perhaps they deserved it, but their wives and children were thrown in too; and, although Daniel was such a pious fellow, he never observed anything improper in this treatment of innocent people.

To finish the pretty drama, the king "wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth (what a stretch!) commanding them to "tremble and fear before the God of Daniel," as though he ran a god of his own. Neither God's prophets nor heathen kings ever thought the people had any *rights*. They just ordered them about like dogs, one day commanding them to worship this god, and the next day another, until the people didn't care a cent which it was.

After these adventures, Daniel, who was so good at interpreting dreams, took to dreaming himself. "The visions of my head," he says, "troubled me." The fact is he was old and in his dotage, like nearly all the learned divines who have wasted their time over his fancies. Once he "fainted and was sick certain days." Another time he was in a deep sleep on his face, and a mysterious hand plucked him up and set him on all-fours. He was evidently graduating fast for a lunatic asylum, and we have no doubt that he died as insane as any prophet could wish to be.

What became of his incombustible friends we are not told, so all are free to guess. For our part, we believe they went into the stoking business down below, as they were well able to stand the heat; and if any Christian denies this we defy him to disprove it.

Here endeth the true story of Daniel and the Lions. Let us pray!

*PRICE ONE PENNY.*

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
BIBLE ROMANCES.—XIV.

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## THE JEW JUDGES.

By G. W. FOOTE.

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THE Jews were never a happy family. They were nearly always fighting other people or each other. Whenever their chroniclers say "there was peace in the land" for a few years, they seem to regard it as an extraordinary occurrence. But the Lord is largely to blame for this. He selected the Jews from among all the peoples of the world, and had extensive and almost exclusive dealings with them. Yet he never managed to civilise them, although he could easily have done so; for the power which produced the universe out of nothing was surely capable of reforming a few of the inhabitants of this little world. The natural consequence of this neglect was that when the Lord sent them his only begotten and dearly beloved son, they crucified him right away.

After the death of that wonderful fighting-cock, Joshua, the chosen people forsook the Lord and worshipped other gods. They knew that he was very jealous, and that he was able to torture and kill them if he liked, yet they were utterly careless whether they pleased him or not. The Bible explains this by saying that they were stubborn and stiff-necked. That is, they were jackasses, who might have taken lessons in sensible behavior from Balaam's "moke." Why then did not the Lord choose a wiser nation?

The Jews "forsook the Lord and worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth." Baal was identical with Bel of the Babylonians and with Moloch, although in the course of time he improved and became, as Soury says, "no longer the god of destruction and death in nature, but the father of life, the supreme dispenser of light and heat, the principle and cause of the renewing which yearly clothes the earth with luxuriant vegetation." This Baal is evidently the sun. Ashtaroth was the feminine deity, better known as Astarte. She was the goddess of voluptuousness and fecundity, as Baal was of virility and strength. Their worship included the most incredible lasciviousness, and it is not wonderful that an amorous people like the Jews should turn their backs on the stern Iahveh, and court the softer deities of Syria. Their bacchic strains at midnight in the sacred groves were better than the horrid shrieks of human sacrifice, and the fever of lust was less awful than the rage of murder.

But if the Lord thought otherwise, why did he not take precautions against their natural tendency? He clearly foresaw all the mischief, for he purposely left in the promised land "five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in Mount Lebanon;" in order that his chosen people might in the first place be tempted, and in the second place be punished when they went astray. These were left "to prove Israel, whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord," as well as "to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof." This strikes the carnal mind as simply infamous. Why did not the Lord give them entire possession, so that they might have lived in peace with their neighbors, and in pious obedience to him? The only answer is that he loved war and bloodshed, and looked forward to plenty of fine sport in that line.

The children of Israel, we are told, intermarried with the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. This displeased the Lord. He wanted to keep a pure stock, like a good breeder. He knew that crossing would make them too human for his purpose. He objected to the spoiling of Abraham's blood, which, like that of Pope's hero, "had rolled through rascals ever since the flood."

But Israel did still worse. They "served Baalim and the groves." This was an unpardonable sin. The Lord hated competition. He knew there was little chance for him in the open god-market, where people paid their money and took their choice, and he was resolved to retain the Jews by hook or by crook so that he might boast of having a people of his own. He had brought them out of Egypt with a high hand, had helped them to overcome all their enemies, had worked any number of miracles for them, and had actually sent them down vast quantities of "angels' food" from his celestial larder. And now they disowned him altogether. What god could be expected to stand such scurvy treatment?

So "the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years."

What a neat phrase! The Lord *sold* them. That does not mean that he took money from the king of Mesopotamia and handed them over like a flock of sheep at so much a head. It means that the Lord, who had promised to preserve them a mighty nation, and to let them live for ever on the fat of the land, allowed the foreigner to oppress them and make them half-starved slaves; thus *selling* them meanly and detestably, as the gods always have sold those who were weak and foolish enough to trust them.

After eight years of bondage, the Jews were delivered by

Othniel, the son of Kenaz, whom the Lord "raised up" for the purpose. The spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and the land had rest forty years.

But the good men of Israel went wrong again after his death, and the Lord "strengthened Eglon the king of Moab" against them. He "went and smote Israel, and possessed himself of the city of palm trees" devoted to the worship of Baal and Ash-taroath. And the unfortunate Jews served him eighteen years.

In their distress they cried unto the Lord, who heard their prayers, and raised them up another deliverer in "Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left handed." Ehud was *left handed* in more senses than one. He "delivered" Israel by assassination. After preparing a big two-edged dagger, which he concealed under his clothes, he paid a visit to the king. Under pretence of offering a present, and of having some secret news to communicate, he obtained a private interview, and stabbed poor Eglon, who was a very fat man, in the stomach, so that the dagger stopped in and his bowels came out. This little performance being safely completed, Ehud made off. He then gathered the Israelites together and fell on the soldiers of Moab, all of whom were put to death. They were ten thousand in all, and "not a man escaped."

What a pretty story! Ten thousand Moabitish soldiers had sufficed to keep in subjection for eighteen years a people numbering more than three millions and with at least six hundred thousand men of arms! It could not be done even now when trained soldiers with rifles have such immense advantage over undisciplined and ill-armed multitudes; and how much less could it have been done when the weapons and methods of warfare were rude, when men fought mostly hand to hand, and one man was just as good as another.

Ehud assassinated Eglon for ruling over the Jews, and as the Lord raised him up "a deliverer," while the narrative seems to approve his conduct, we must conclude that in those days the Lord sanctioned such an act. Assassination of obstructive monarchs is, therefore, according to Scripture, a virtuous deed. How do the clergy reconcile this with their talk about Free-thought brandishing the regicidal steel?

After the disembowelling of poor fat-bellied Eglon "the land had rest fourscore years." So the third chapter of Judges should have ended. But some later Jewish scribe has tacked on another verse about "Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad." Like the peace of God, this passes all understanding. The Philistines must have taken a long time to kill, unless they stood in single file for the Jewish warrior to spear them one by one. Shamgar was a tough fellow, his ox goad was tough, the whole story is tough, and it requires a very tough throat to swallow it.

After the death of Ehud "the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord," who once more "sold them" to Jabin, King of Canaan. This monarch "mightily oppressed them," for he had nine hundred chariots of iron. How many soldiers he had we are not told. But unless they were a vast host, it is difficult to understand how he could mightily oppress a nation as populous as Scotland is now, and nearly as populous as England was in the reign of Elizabeth. Our surprise at Jabin's mighty oppression of Israel is increased when we read that his iron chariots, his army, and his great captain Sisera, were all overcome by Barak and ten thousand Jews!

It was a woman that stirred Israel up to fight. She was called Deborah. Her husband was one Lapidoth. No doubt he was merely a necessary appendage to his wife who ruled the roost. Deborah was a prophetess, and she "judged Israel at that time."

She "dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in Mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment." This is very significant. Deborah was clearly a Sibyl, who told fortunes and revealed the secrets of futurity. People who practise that business now are sent to jail, but in ancient times they were honored and trusted. This Jewish prophetess uttered her oracles under a palm-tree, the reason being that groves were dedicated to religious worship, and the rustling of tree-tops was deemed the whispered revelations of divinity. There can be little doubt that Deborah kept a sacred grove, and that her oracles were nothing but wind.

At her instigation Barak, the son of Abinoam, collected ten thousand men to fight Jabin; and Sisera gathered together all his iron chariots and all his warriors to put down the impudent rebel. But the Lord fought for Israel, as Pan fought for the Greeks at Marathon, and the result was that the Canaanites were utterly discomfited. Every man of them fell under the swords of the Jews, except Sisera himself, who alighted from his chariot and fled.

There was a Kenite called Heber, of the children of Hahab the father-in-law of Moses, who had a wife named Jael. This woman was a crafty wretch, and she settled Sisera's hash with all the cunning of her kind. She invited him into her tent, gave him some milk to drink, covered him up with a mantle, and advised him to go to sleep. "My husband and your king Jabin," said she, "are very good friends, and I will shelter you from the Jews. If they come and ask after you, I'll say you are not here, and I'll stand in the door of the tent to keep anybody from looking in. Now, my dear sir, you may sleep in safety. Trust to me, and I'll see that all is right. Shut your eyes and have a good nap." Poor Sisera did so. And when he was sound asleep the treacherous cat took a big hammer and a long ten-penny nail and fastened his head to the floor.



Then she went out to meet Barak. "Good day," said she, "you seem very eager, whom are you looking for?" "Why Sisera, to be sure; has he passed this way?" "Oh dear no, he's in my tent, sound asleep: just come and see." So they went in, and there lay Sisera in the sleep of death.

That is how the Lord fights. With him all is fair in war. He smiles on assassination and treachery between allies. His prophetess Deborah and his general Barak sang a long duet over their victory, in which they said "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be." *Blessed*, forsooth! A woman who violates the sacred laws of hospitality, inveigles a hunted man into her tent, pretends old friendship for him, lulls him into a false security with her deceit, and then treacherously murders him, is a fit mate for the Devil.

Jabin was soon disposed of after the murder of Sisera, and Israel had rest another forty years. But they went wrong again, and the Lord "delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years."

Now if the reader will turn to the thirty-first chapter of Numbers he will find that the Midianites were utterly destroyed by the Jews under Moses. Their cities were burnt; all the males, the married women and the children were slain; and the young virgins reserved for a worse fate. Yet here are the Midianites again, stronger than ever, and able to oppress the Jews for seven years!

These fatherless and motherless Midianites, who apparently sprang from the ground or dropped down from the skies, played the very devil with the Jews, stealing their harvests, and driving them into dens and caves, so that they once more "cried unto the Lord" for help.

Then the Lord sent down an angel, who took up his residence under an oak tree. Having secured lodgings, he visited Gideon the son of Joash, whom he found threshing wheat on the sly to cheat the Midianites. He accosted him very abruptly but very cunningly, calling him a "mighty man of valour," and saying "the Lord is with thee." Now Gideon, although he was hiding himself from the enemy, took the personal compliment with the greatest complacency. But he scouted the idea of the Lord being with the Jews. "Nay, nay," said he, "that's a trifle too thin. How can the Lord be with us while he leaves us in this mess? The Lord indeed! Where is he? What has become of him? Our fathers used to talk about his miracles. We have never seen one. No doubt it was all a joke." Then the angel "looked upon him," as much as to say "Oh Gideon, Gideon!" And opening his holy lips he said "thou shalt save Israel from the Midianites." "Come, now," said Gideon, "that's a good one. What's the use of talking such nonsense to a poor fellow like me?" "Nay," answered the angel, "I'm not joking; you shall

do it." But Gideon, like every other Jew, was a canny person, and he required a sign to warrant the angel's statement. He put some flesh and unleavened cakes on a rock, and drenched them with broth; whereupon the angel brought fire up out of the rock which burnt them up. That settled it. He *was* an angel.

But before Gideon would assault the Midianites he demanded another sign. He laid a fleece of wool on the ground, and in the morning it was wet with dew while all the ground was dry. That miracle, however, did not suffice him. So the next night he spread the fleece again, and in the morning it was dry while all the ground was wet.

That fleece ought to have been preserved like the blood of Saint Januarius in the bottle at Naples. And just as the congealed blood liquefies once a year under the hand of the priests, we have no doubt the fleece would still exhibit its miraculous character. Unfortunately it is lost. The priests fleece their pious sheep, but they never show them anything so wonderful as Gideon's fleece.

Gideon gathered together a decent little army, but this displeased the Lord. "No," said he, "that won't do. If you defeat the Midianites with such an army, the Jews will boast that they have won the victory themselves. Now I want the glory myself, and I mean to let everybody see that I am running this campaign. So please send away a lot of your men." Obedient Gideon dismissed twenty-two thousand, and retained only ten thousand. "That's still too many," said the Lord; "just take them down to the water to drink; those who stoop down to drink you may send home, but those who lap the water like a dog you may keep." Only three hundred passed in this examination.

Gideon and the doggish three hundred went up against the Midianitish army, which was exceedingly numerous, like grasshoppers or the sand by the sea shore. Each of them carried a lamp in a pitcher. When they drew near the enemy they broke the pitchers and flourished the lamps in their left hand, while with their right hands they blew their trumpets. The Midianites were scared and thrown into great disorder. They fought each other by mistake and then fled, the Jews pursuing them with great slaughter, and bringing back to Gideon as trophies of victory the heads of two princes. Jehovah's prize-fighters were not very refined. Imagine the French beating the Germans and bringing the heads of Bismarck and Moltke to Paris! Even the French "infidels" would scarcely do that, but God's favorites thought it a glorious part of war, and he never taught them better.

Having killed 100,000 Midianites, Gideon went on with his three hundred men, defeated another army of fifteen thousand, and despoiled two cities. Is it not strange that men of such

prowess could be oppressed repeatedly, and for years together, by their neighbors?

The Jews then desired Gideon to rule over them, but he knew them too well and declined the honor. He requested instead seven hundred shekels of gold and other precious spoil of war. With a portion of his treasure Gideon made an ephod, and put it in his own city, Ophrah; and "all Israel went a whoring after it." That is, they went after other gods as soon as they had got all they wanted from the Lord.

The land had now another rest of forty years! Why *forty* each time? Because that was a sacred number, and we are not reading history but romance.

Gideon lived to a good old age and left a numerous family. He had seventy sons and perhaps as many daughters. Like all God's favorites he was a thorough-going polygamist. He had "many wives" and at least one "concubine." No doubt with the wealth and the women he had a fine time.

As soon as he was dead, the Jews "went a whoring after Baalim." Abimelech, the son of Gideon by his concubine, put his seventy brothers to death and ruled over Israel for three years, until in one of his wars a woman broke his skull with a millstone and let daylight into his silly brains.

He was followed by Tola, who judged Israel twenty-three years; after whom came Jair, who judged for twenty-two years, and who had thirty sons who "rode on thirty ass colts." They and their sisters, with the old man and his wives, must have made a nice little tea-party.

When he died, the Jews "went it blind." They worshipped all the gods of all their neighbors with the utmost impartiality; which provoked the Lord so that he let the Philistines and the Ammonites oppress them until they repented, when he raised them up a deliverer in Jephthah the Gileadite, a great fighting man and the son of a harlot. Before going out to fight the Ammonites, he vowed that on his return he would offer up to the Lord as a burnt offering the first thing that came out of his own doors. The Ammonites were smitten with immense slaughter, and Jephthah returned to Mizpeh. His only daughter, who knew nothing of his vow, came out to meet him with dance and song. The pious father was very sorry, but he kept his promise to God, and after allowing his daughter two months to bewail her virginity, he "did with her according to his vow."

This tragedy being finished, Jephthah and the Gileadites quarreled and fought with their brethren of the tribe of Ephraim, and slew forty-two thousand of them. This man of blood judged Israel six years. He was succeeded by Ibzan, who judged for seven years; Elon, ten years; and Abdon, eight years. All recorded of them besides is that they had plenty of wives, children and donkeys. After these came Samson, the mighty,

the valiant, the wonderful, whose career we reserve for a separate number of this Series.

In the seventeenth chapter of Judges we come to the Levite, whose concubine was so horribly abused. He became priest to one Micah, a fellow who robbed his mother, got wealthy, set up gods for himself and kept his own parson. But the Danites stole the Levite and made him their priest. Clericals appear to have been scarce then. Now-a-days the market is glutted with them. This Levite had a concubine who played him false and left him. He fetched her back, and on his way home he stayed a night at Gibeah, which was inhabited by Benjamites. Just as in the case of Lot's visitors, the people come to the Levite's host and demanded his guest. The old man quietly refused, but offered them instead his own daughter (a maiden) and the Levite's concubine, whom they might abuse as much as they pleased. In the end, the poor concubine was thrust out to the lustful crowd, and so brutally treated by them that in the morning she lay dead at the door. Then the Levite cut her up into twelve pieces and sent one to each of the tribes of Israel, who assembled and, after severe loss to themselves, so punished the Benjamites that only six hundred out of twenty-six thousand escaped.

What a horrible story! Yet this record of unnatural passion, brutal lust, and awful bloodshed is part of God's Word, and is put into the hands of children to make them pure and kind and good!

The fugitive Benjamites had no wives, and it seemed that one tribe would utterly perish. But they soon received the gift of four hundred virgins who were spared in a religious massacre at Jabesh-gilead; and not long after they stole a lot of the daughters of Shiloh while they were merrymaking. The rape of the Sabines is of course mythical, but this is veritable history, and all who doubt it will be damned. The fact is, we have here a trace of that old system of wife-stealing so prevalent amongst savages. God's chosen people were ignorant, superstitious, idolatrous, lustful, and cruel; while their judges were no more than savage chieftains, whose noblest virtue was physical courage, and their highest happiness the possession of many wives and the procreation of many children. The Zulus are just as civilised as they were; yet how Christians would laugh if they were told that God had chosen the Zulus to be the recipients of his messages to the world, and the ultimate producers of the universal Messiah.

*PRICE ONE PENNY.*

# SAINT JOHN'S NIGHTMARE.

By G. W. FOOTE.

LET me hope, dear reader, that your head is strong and sound; for we now approach that great subject, the interpretation of the Apocalypse, which, as Bishop South said, generally finds a man cracked or leaves him so. It has occupied the attention of thousands of crazy enthusiasts, and ~~has~~ occasioned the writing of a whole library of books, which are a monument of learned imbecility. While the world has unconcernedly pursued its business and pleasure, a host of demented Christians have tried to foretell the course of events from a study of one of the maddest productions of the human brain. All their predictions have been falsified, but the prophets are never discouraged, and they begin their vaticinations with renewed confidence after every fresh exposure.

The Apocalypse forms a fit end to the Christian scriptures; *and* for as the book of Genesis commences the Bible by outraging science, the book of Revelation concludes it by defying common-sense. *215* No better title could be devised for it than Saint John's *and* Nightmare. It is the work of some early Jew-Christian, whose brain was addled with superstition, his heart inflamed by the sufferings of his co-religionists, and his imagination excited by the delusion of the immediate second coming of Christ.

There is a cause for everything, including lunacy. How came John to suffer from nightmare? The easiest supposition is that he ate a pork supper, but this is excluded by the fact that he was a Jew. A careful perusal of the Apocalypse discovers the correct answer. John had imitated, and even excelled, a curious feat of the prophet Ezekiel. That heady Jew, in order to qualify himself for the business of prophecy, ate a roll; and John, for the same purpose, ate a loaf. This language must, however, be taken figuratively. Ezekiel's roll was of parchment, and John's loaf was a book of the same material. In both cases the food was "in the mouth sweet as honey;" but in John's case he himself says "as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter;" and we should judge that Ezekiel's luncheon had much the same effect, as he certainly behaved like a man with a bad-bellyache. *colic* Now a parchment book is a pretty tough meal, enough to cause indigestion in the stoutest stomach, and so we ~~can~~ understand the origin of Saint John's Nightmare. *8*

The authorship of Revelation has been much discussed. Luther deemed it to be "neither apostolical nor prophetic." A thousand years before, Dionysius of Alexandria, a disciple of

Origen, mentions that some objected to the whole work as without sense or reason, and as displaying such dense ignorance, that an apostle, or even one in the Church, could not have written it; and they assigned it to Cerinthus, who held the doctrine of the reign of Christ on earth. It was not in the catalogue of the Council of Laodicea. Nor was it the only work of the kind; for the Ante-Nicene library gives apocryphal Revelations of Moses, Esdras, Paul, and John the Theologian; while Tischendorf, in his *Prolegomena*, gives an abstract of the Revelations of Peter, Bartholomew, Mary, and Daniel. There was also a Revelation of Thomas, now known only by the decree of Pope Gelasius ranking it as apocryphal.

One half of Luther's dictum is open to question. Our Apocalypse may be apostolic after all. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest fathers, evidently refers to it as the work of "John, one of the apostles of Christ." But the word apostle was employed very loosely in that age, and it is possible that the real author of Revelation was Presbyter John. However that may be, it is certainly one of the earliest pieces of Christian literature extant; and it affords a good idea of the mental state of true believers in the infancy of the faith. The author of "Supernatural Religion" considers it the only apostolic book we have. He ascribes it to John, the brother of James; and no one can deny that it breathes the very spirit of those Sons of Thunder, who asked Jesus to call down fire from heaven to destroy the unbelieving Samaritans.

Whether Apostle John or Presbyter John, the author was assuredly a Jew. He is very wroth with men who have the impudence to "say they are Jews and are not." His view of angels, spirits, and demons is Jewish. His doctrine of the millennium, as Gfrörer has shown, was held by many of the Rabbins. His grammar is execrable, and his style, as Davidson remarks, is "so thoroughly Hebraistic as to neglect the usual rules of Greek." His elegant Jewish idioms, borrowed from the worst parts of the prophets, are another proof that he was one of the "chosen people." He makes God Almighty, for instance, tell the Church of Laodicea "because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will *spue thee out of my mouth*." No Greek would have written in that style.

Another proof is the writer's evident hostility to the movement for converting the Gentiles. Rénan and the author of "Supernatural Religion," both agree that Paul is referred to in the passage about those who say they are *apostles*, and are not, but are liars. Let us further notice that the sealed elect are all of the twelve tribes of Israel; that the heavenly city is called the New Jerusalem; that the twenty-four elders make up the number of the Jewish Sanhedrim; that the outer court of the temple of God in the New Jerusalem, like that of Herod's second temple, is "given unto the Gentiles;" that only Jews eat of the fruit of the tree of life, while the other nations drink

a decoction of the leaves; that the ark of the covenant is seen in the heavenly temple; that those who were victorious over the Beast "sing the song of Moses;" and that the author ends his Nightmare with a fine piece of Jewish "cheek," promising the most diabolical plagues to anyone who should add to it, and eternal damnation to anyone who should take away a single word.

The "Speaker's Commentary" says that "the conception of the sanctity and symbolical dignity of numbers," ~~whether derived by the Jews from their "heathen neighbors" or not,~~ is "reflected from the pages of the Old Testament." We find it on almost every page of Revelation. Numbers Three, Four and Forty are duly honored, but the greatest regard is shown to the most sacred number Seven. There are *seven* spirits before the throne and *seven* lamps burning there, *seven* golden candlesticks, *seven* churches, *seven* stars in the Son of Man's right hand, the book of fate is sealed with *seven* seals, the Lamb has *seven* horns and *seven* eyes, and *seven* angels pour out *seven* golden vials full of the wrath of God. What Professor Moses Stuart well calls the "numerosity" of the book is conspicuous throughout, and the very number of the Beast is a crowning proof of its Jewish origin.

There yet remains the fact that a great deal of the language and imagery of Revelation is borrowed from Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and, above all, from the book of Enoch. As in dreams we have usually a kaleidoscope of our waking experiences, so in Saint John's Nightmare there is a jumble of recollections. Almost everything is second-hand. The only original image is that of the Sixth Seal, and even its conclusion is marred by an obvious plagiarism from Jesus. The four beasts in the fourth chapter are accurately stolen from Ezekiel, being simply the great prophet's cherubim in a new position. We have already referred to the eating of the roll. The fine exclamation over the fall of Babylon, who "made all the nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication," is a slight spoiling of one of the superbest verses in Jeremiah; while the title, "Mother of Harlots," is clearly adopted from the older prophets who were extremely fond of such language.

John purloins pretty freely also from the book of Enoch, which was written during the century before Christ, and became so quickly accepted that the author of the Epistle of Jude actually quotes it as the work of old translated Enoch the "seventh from Adam." Many of the New Testament writers are indebted to this remarkable book, which anticipates some of the doctrines and maxims ascribed to Jesus, and more than foreshadows the dogma of the Trinity. But no other writer drew from it so extensively as John. He transcribed whole passages with the most unblushing licence. His oft-quoted phrase, "King of kings, Lord of lords," is taken from Enoch. His theory of the Jewish saints in heaven not having been

"polluted with women" is derived from the same source, as well as the "ten thousand times ten thousand" before the throne. Enoch also furnished him with the lake of brimstone, the last judgment, the tree of life whose fruit is given to the elect, the book of life, the living fountains, the new heaven and earth, the great white throne, and the "Ancient of Days, whose head was like white wool." If John paid back to Enoch, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel, all he stole from them, he would be completely bankrupt, and his remaining assets would not redeem him from the lowest poverty.

The date of Saint John's Nightmare is difficult to fix. Lardner placed it at the year 95-96, but more recent critics shift it back nearly twenty years. Davidson thinks the book was composed about 68-69, and it bears internal evidence of having been written soon after the death of Nero, and either when the fall of Jerusalem was imminent or directly after it occurred.

Now let us examine the book as it stands. John, like all primitive Christians, believed in the immediate second coming of Jesus, who has not been seen or heard of yet. The end of the world was drawing near, and John was commissioned to show the "things which must shortly come to pass." His exordium ends with the significant words "for the time is at hand."

This craze has periodically afflicted the Christian world. Paul believed in the speedy return of the crucified Savior, no less than John. The early Church, knowing that the Son of Man was coming like a thief in the night, lived in daily expectation of his appearance through the clouds. Gradually, however, the belief declined; but even in the third century there was a fierce controversy about the millennium; Nepos, an Egyptian bishop, writing a treatise in support of the idea, and Origen opposing it with the greatest warmth. Six hundred years later the doctrine revived, and all Christendom expected that the world would come to an end with the tenth century. But the world continued to roll along as before, and never troubled itself about prophets and fools. Since then the madness has broken out from time to time, but it is now dying away like many other pestilent disorders of the great Age of Faith. Dr. Cumming foretold the end of the world several times, but the event never came off, and he went to his grave a discredited prophet. We have still a pious charlatan who plays the old game, although he has often been found out. He wrote an elaborate treatise to prove that the late Louis Napoleon was the destined Antichrist. A few months ago he proved from Saint John's Nightmare that Gambetta was the forerunner of Antichrist, who was clearly Prince Jerome. He has now a fresh interpretation quite as true as the rest; hundreds crowd to see him cast the political horoscope; and he edits a religious journal, which boasts of a hundred thousand readers—mostly fools.

John's Revelation is addressed to the "seven churches which



are in Asia." He does not appear to have thought that Christianity would ever extend beyond those limits. Now Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, were very closely situated. What a small conquest in forty years by a God-supported creed! It is almost as though the approaching dissolution of all things were addressed "to the seven churches which are in Highgate, Epping, Woolwich, Brompton, Richmond, Hammersmith, and Kilburn."

John's Nightmare happened "on the Lord's day." The first thing he heard was a tremendous voice like a trumpet, and the first thing he saw was seven golden candlesticks. If John had lived in the nineteenth century he would have seen gasaliers or electric burners. In the midst of the candlesticks was a person like the Son of Man, dressed in a kind of nightshirt, with feet like burning brass, flaming eyes, and a fine woolly head of hair. He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword with his teeth, and his voice was like the falls of Niagara. This was God the Son in a new character. Poor John was horribly frightened, but the Lord reassured him, and explained that the seven candlesticks were the seven churches, and the seven stars their seven angels.

Before this heavenly visitor had spoken two minutes he called Paul a liar, said that some pretended Jews were of the synagogue of the Devil, and twice declared his hatred of the Nicolaitanes. These people were a Christian sect accounted heretical by John. Irenæus traces its origin to Nicolaus, one of the seven deacons mentioned in the sixth of Acts. Tertullian says it was a sect of Gnostics. If his surmise be correct, it shows that Gnosticism probably existed before Christianity. Orthodox John hated all heretics, and of course he made God hate them too.

When the Lord had ended his message to the seven churches, John saw a door opened in heaven, whether front or back he does not say. Then a voice like a trumpet called him up, and he went up. God Almighty, like a big stone of jasper and sardine, sat on a throne, which was arched by a green rainbow. Round the throne were seated twenty-four elders (the exact number of the Jewish Sanhedrim), dressed in white and wearing golden crowns. Prowling round the throne as a body-guard were four wonderful beasts with eyes in their heads and eyes in their posteriors, and six wings apiece. The description of these animals is borrowed almost word for word from Ezekiel's account of the cherubim. They were a strange collection of pets, and they justify Heine's witticism about all the menagerie of the Apocalypse. If Barnum could only purchase one of them for his show, he would return Jumbo to the Zoological Gardens, and countermand his order to the King of Siam for a white elephant. If he could also secure Mother Eve's serpent, Balaam's ass, and Jonah's whale, he might reckon on making a million a year as long as the show lasted.

These beasts lead a very monotonous life. They sing day and

night, without any rest, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." After their song, the twenty-four elders fall down and sing, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." And this concert goes on for ever and ever. How sick the elders and the elderly beasts must be of the dreary performance! And unless the Lord is infinitely vain, he must be as sick as they!

John next saw Jesus Christ, in the form of a slain lamb, with seven horns and seven eyes, take a book out of God's hand and loose its seven seals. Later on we read of the marriage supper of this juvenile sheep, but the author does not record whether the lamb himself was served up with mint-sauce.

Four horses appeared on the breaking of as many seals. The second, third, and fourth were red, black, and pale, signifying slaughter, famine, and death. The first was white, signifying the purity of the Gospel, and its rider went forth conquering and to conquer. This exactly resembles the Kalki avatar of Vishnu. Whatever John's faults were, he was certainly a good borrower.

When the fifth seal was broken John saw "under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God;" and when the sixth was broken, the sun turned black and the moon red, the stars tumbled down on the earth, the sky rolled up, and all the human race ran and hid themselves in rocks and dens. In fact, it was what the Yankees call an almighty smash.

Then four angels kept the four winds from blowing, and another angel sealed a hundred and forty-four thousand elect, who were all Jews and all virgins "not defiled with women." Considering the profligacy of the Jews at that time, we should have thought it impossible to find so many. But truth is always strange, stranger than fiction. The primitive Christians were evidently Essenean Jews; they contemned marriage, and regarded virginity as the highest virtue. These elect Jews surrounded the elders and the beasts, and only they could learn the song. All the Gentiles who were saved had back seats, and as the French say, they "assisted" at the performance.

We must pass over the extraordinary locusts, with men's faces, women's hair, and lion's teeth, who came out of the bottomless pit; the great army of two hundred million horsemen; and come to the woman who gave birth to a man-child that was pursued by a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and a tail that whisked down a third part of the stars. What a tail! The woman, we take it, means Judaism; the man-child, Christianity; and the dragon, the Devil. This eminent personage was to league with the Beast, oppress the saints, set up a universal kingdom, blaspheme God, and gather all the kings and armies of the world to the great battle of Armageddon, where they were

*joined in the church*

to be defeated by Jesus Christ and the hosts of heaven. This battle has not been fought yet, but as Armageddon is the valley of Megiddon mentioned by Zeckariah, the reader will know *where* to expect it; although as to *when* it may be looked for we have no information.

The Devil is to be chained in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, during which time those who have not worshipped the Beast are to reign with Christ, and everybody will be happy and wise and good. Why doesn't the millennium come at once? When the thousand years are expired, the Devil is to be loosed again, and allowed to deceive the nations, until he is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone with the Beast and false prophet, and tormented day and night for ever. Poor Devil! *Then cometh judgment day.* The saved go to heaven and the damned to hell. Amen.

Who the Devil was we know, but who the devil was the Beast? Undoubtedly Nero, whose holocaust of Christians at Rome, for the suspected crime of burning the city, had filled the Church with hatred and dismay. Not daring to write Nero's name, any more than that of Rome, John put it between the lines. "There are," he says, "seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." The seven kings, we hold, meant seven Roman emperors; and the eighth, who had already reigned but was to reign again, meant Nero. Suetonius relates that, long after the tyrant's death, many believed that he was still alive, and would soon reappear and avenge himself on his enemies. Rénan calls the Nero fable "*cette idée mère de l'Apocalypse*"—the germ idea of the Apocalypse; and he is supported by Volckmar, Ewald, Réville, Scholten, Reuss, Krenkel, and a host of others.

The number of the Beast, too, was 666, and the letters of the tyrant's name in Hebrew (Cæsar Nero) just make it up. There have, of course, been thousands of people, from whose names the number of the Beast could be made up. Napoleon was one of them, and English Tories used to think him Antichrist. They now fancy it is Mr. Gladstone, whose name does just as well. John had neither of these in his mind. He meant Nero, who was to return, to regain his throne by the help of the Parthians, to set up as Antichrist, to persecute the faithful, and finally to be overthrown by Jesus Christ at the great battle of Armageddon.

Babylon unquestionably means Rome. There is no mistaking the seven-hilled city, or the great harlot, arrayed in purple and scarlet, and "drunk with the blood of the saints." But John's prophecies have not been fulfilled. He could see no farther through a millstone than his neighbors. Rome has not been "utterly burned with fire," nor are the voices of craftsmen and musicians dumb in her streets.

John's description of the New Jerusalem is very amusing. It is fifteen hundred miles in length, and the same in breadth and height—a heavenly cube. Hell is much larger, but that is natural, for the Christian scheme damns the many and saves the few. Why are the celestial mansions fifteen hundred miles high? We expect that when the city was laid out, no space was reserved for the angels to practise flying, and they were therefore provided with lofty domes, so that they might exercise their wings inside, on wet days as well as dry.

Had John been a Greek or a Roman, he would have imagined an artistic heaven, full of splendid architecture, noble statues, and glorious pictures. But being an unartistic Jew, he could imagine nothing but heaps of gold and precious stones. The same defect is still apparent in the "chosen people." Their women revel in showy dress, and their men delight in gold rings, gold studs, and gold watchchains big enough to cable the "Great Eastern."

The Jew comes out in another circumstance. The foundations of the New Jerusalem bear the names of the twelve Apostles; but the twelve gates, each a pearl, bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Bible is a Jew-book from beginning to end, and we civilised Europeans still go about in what Carlyle called Hebrew Old-Clothes.

We have no room to notice the many Protestant divines who have exercised their ingenuity in showing that Saint John really prophesied the iniquitous life and awful death of the Catholic Church; since we are fully persuaded that he could not look so far ahead, and that he expected a universal flare-up soon after his Nightmare was written. But we may observe that the Catholics have begun to round on the Protestants; and that Signor Pastorini, for instance, applies the sounding of the fifth trumpet to Luther who, renouncing his faith and vows, may be said to have fallen; and when he opened the door of hell there issued forth a thick smoke, or a strong spirit of seduction, which had been hatched in hell. May this noble game of tit-for-tat continue! It will be a glorious sight for the sceptic to behold the two great halves of Christendom proving each other's depravity from the silly Nightmare of Saint John. The sceptic cannot decide between them. He is obliged to act like Voltaire who, when he heard two old women vilifying each other, said—I believe them both.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

# A VIRGIN MOTHER.

By G. W. FOOTE.

THERE is nothing new under the sun, said the wise king. This observation is peculiarly true with respect to religion. Modern creeds are simply old ones in a new guise, and Christianity itself is a patchwork of cuttings from the religious wardrobe of antiquity.

Patchwork requires much labor and time, and Christianity was slowly constructed. Many of its essential features were unknown to the primitive Church. The apostolic writings, for instance, do not mention or allude to the subject of this romance. Neither Paul nor John knew anything of the miraculous birth of Jesus. The Gospels belong to a much later date. In the second century Christianity grew by incorporating to itself the most venerated dogmas of other superstitions. Our Gospels were written when the process was nearly completed, more than a hundred years after the death of Christ. The mighty river of every great system is formed gradually. Its nominal source is perhaps a trickling rill in some remote and well-nigh inaccessible region; as it runs it is joined by other streams, many of them larger than itself, until at last it gains the level ground, and flows on through a broad deep channel to the sea. The grand river, with ships on its bosom and cities on its banks, bears no proportion or resemblance to the mountain rill whence it derives its name. And so with Christianity, which is unlike its spring, the man Jesus. It has flowed through centuries, and received tribute from innumerable streams on either side; Egyptian myth, Greek philosophy, Essenean doctrine, and Oriental legend. Its likeness to its founder is little else than in name.

The Immaculate Conception was borrowed from the mythology of Egypt. No deity was more idolised by the multitude than the virgin mother of Horus. Juvenal remarked, at the end of the first century, that the Roman painters almost lived on the goddess Isis. "Such," says Sharpe,\* "was the popularity of that most winning form of worship, which is still continued there in the pictures of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms." The same author, after describing a representation of the birth of King Amunothph III., says that "In this picture we have the Annunciation, the Conception, the Birth, and the Adoration, as described in the first and second chapters of Luke's Gospel; and as we have historical assurance that the chapters in

\* "Egyptian Mythology," p. 86.

Matthew's Gospel, which contain the Miraculous Birth of Jesus, are an after addition not in the earliest manuscripts, it seems probable that these two poetical chapters in Luke may also be unhistorical, and borrowed from the Egyptian accounts of the miraculous birth of their kings.\*

We may observe that the drawing referred to was on one of the walls of the Temple of Luxor. The god Thoth announces to the maiden queen that she should "bring forth a son" who would be a ruler in the land. Then the gods Kneph and Athor take her by the hand, and place in her mouth the symbol of the child's life. Next come the midwives in attendance on her labor, and the nurses with the infant just born. Finally a number of sages pay adoration to the wonderful baby.

All this takes us back to the myth of Isis and Horus, and shows us how greatly it influenced the Egyptian mind. On the temple of the goddess at Sais there was the inscription, "The fruit which I have brought forth is the sun." Plutarch, in his *De Iside*, states that "This Isis is the chaste Minerva, who, without fearing to lose her title of virgin, says she is the mother of the sun." She was styled Our Lady, the Queen of Heaven, the Star of the Sea, the Governess, the Earth Mother, the Rose, the Mother of God, the Savior of Souls, the Intercessor, the Sanctifier, the Immaculate Virgin, and so forth. All these titles have been applied by Christians to the Virgin Mary.

Her symbol was the Sistrum. The bars across the opening signified virginity. "The goddesses," says Bonwick,† "to whom the instrument was dedicated, though always mothers, were ever virgins. The sistrum was, therefore, the symbol of the Celestial Mother." It is at least six thousand years old. The doctrine of the incarnation and immaculate conception were thus well established in Egypt some time before Adam dug potatoes in Eden, and millenniums before Jesus Christ was born or thought of.

The child Horus went through a career like that of Jesus. He had a miraculous birth, death and resurrection. He is usually depicted as an infant in his mother's arms. Bonwick observes that "the earliest representations of the Madonna have quite a Greco-Egyptian character, and there can be little doubt that Isis nursing Horus was the origin of them all."‡

Another notable point is that *black* Madonnas used to be common in Europe. Now there was a black Isis too, supposed to symbolise not only the Mother of the Gods, but the primeval darkness which preceded light, and gave birth to all things.

The glorified Horus carried his mother to heaven, as Ariadne was carried by Bacchus, and Alcmene by Hercules. Christianity very soon demanded the same honor for the mother of Jesus. The Collyridians and Marians distinctly deified her; while the Melchites, at the council of Nice, contended that the true Trinity

\* *Ibid*, p. 19. † "Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought," p. 215.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 142.

was the Father, the Virgin Mother Mary, and the Son Jesus. This heretical sect, which got suppressed, had a more intelligible notion of the Trinity than the Christians who triumphed. Father, mother, and son, we can all appreciate; but the three in one, who are neither one nor three and yet both, are so mysterious that, like the peace of God, they pass all understanding.

Bonwick says we have the best testimony that the worship of Isis was early transferred to the Virgin Mary. Higgins, however, thinks it was the Roman worship of Juno which Christianity borrowed. According to this learned writer,\* "The goddess Februata Juno became the Purificata Virgo Maria. The old Romans celebrated this festival in precisely the same way as the moderns—by processions with wax lights, etc., and on the same day, the second of February. The author of the *P'erenial Calendar* observes, that it is a remarkable coincidence that the festival of the miraculous conception of Juno Jugalis, the blessed Virgin, the Queen of Heaven, should fall on the very day the modern Romans have fixed the festival of the conception of the blessed Virgin Mary. Being merely a continuation of an ancient festival, there is nothing remarkable in it."

Probably the truth is that both Egypt and Rome contributed to the Christian mythology. The Madonna and Child were copied from Isis and Horus; and the festival of Juno was transferred to the Virgin Mary during that period when the Church stooped to conquer, and won over the multitudes of Paganism by appropriating nearly all its rites and celebrations.

Let us now glance at another aspect of the question. The gods of antiquity were a lustful crew. They were very fond of the fair daughters of men. Ovid and other poets give us a lively description of their doings. Many wonderful personages in the heroic age were born of ladies who conceived by holy ghosts. The illicit offspring of minor deities were very numerous. But the greatest rake of all was Jupiter. He who brandished the lightning and hurled the thunderbolt from Olympus, ruling both gods and men, frequently gave Juno the slip and came down on the spree. Lovely damsels and handsome spouses were his sport; and they were soon won, for he laughed at locks and bolts, and was always ready to eke out persuasion with force. In pursuing his amours he adopted many disguises. He courted Antiope as a satyr, Europa as a bull, and Leda as a swan, while Alcmenæ was betrayed by his assuming the form of her husband. How different from Jehovah, who hated women, and cared for nothing but orgies of blood! Yet the greatest misogynist has his moment of weakness. Jehovah yielded at last to the charms of Mary. He who never felt the tender passion in his lusty youth, eventually broke his own seventh commandment, and in his dotage carried on an amour with a carpenter's wife.

\* "Anacalypsis," vol. iii., p. 82.

We say he broke the seventh commandment, but true believers think differently. Sovereigns and deities were chartered liberties. It was once deemed a greater honor to be a king's mistress than a common man's wife, and the highest of all honors to be the mistress of a god. Many heroes boasted of their descent from such unions, and they were regarded as superior to their fellow men.

There was even a religious side to all this gallantry, and it was common to ascribe virginity to the young ladies who were impregnated by celestial lovers. The world was full of such notions. Fohi, in China, was miraculously conceived by a nymph who bathed in a river, and whose garments were touched by a lotus plant, the emblem of love. He became a founder of religion, a warrior, and a lawgiver. Codom was born on the shores of a lake, between Siam and Camboya, of a virgin who became pregnant by the sunbeams. She was translated to heaven, but the boy was found by a hermit, and grew up to be a great sage and worker of miracles. Archer, in Corea, was born in the same fashion. Huitzilipochtli, in Mexico, was given birth to by a woman who caught in her bosom a feather ball which descended from the heavens. In a legend of the Apaches, rain caused a supernatural conception; in Tahiti it was the shadow of a bread-tree leaf which Taaroa passed over Hina. The mother of the first Mandan chief conceived by eating the fat of a bison cow. Many other instances might be cited, but these may suffice.

In historical times we have Buddha miraculously conceived, and even in the most cultivated period of Athenian history a legend grew up that Plato was born supernaturally, the god Apollo having visited his mother as the Virgin Mary was visited by the Holy Ghost.

It is a singular fact that the early Christians never disputed the Pagan mythology. On the contrary, they appealed to it in support of their own superstitions. Justin Martyr, in his First Apology, addressed to Antoninus Pius, furnishes a striking illustration. "When," he wrote, "we say also that the Word, who is the first birth of God, was produced without sexual union, and that he, Jesus Christ, our teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter. For you know how many sons your esteemed writers ascribe to Jupiter. Mercury, the interpreting word and teacher of all; Æsculapius, who, though he was a great physician, was struck by a thunderbolt, and so ascended to heaven; and Bacchus, too, after he had been torn limb from limb; and Hercules, when he had committed himself to the flames to escape his toils; and the sons of Leda, the Dioscuri; and Perseus, son of Danæ; and Bellerophon, who, though sprung from mortals, rose to heaven on the horse Pegasus." In other words, Justin says: You have men born of gods, just like our Jesus Christ, and



though you revile us, we are really all in the same boat. The testimony of credulous writers like this is all Christians have to warrant the monstrous legends of their faith.

The date assigned for the birth of Jesus is another proof that the story is mythical. On the 25th of December the zodiacal sign of the celestial Virgin shows on the eastern horizon, the sun has then risen one degree above the solstitial point, and the year is just born. The Romans observed this day as a festival, and it was the birthday of all the great sun-gods of Egypt, Persia, India, and Greece.

Our first Gospel significantly relates that the star of the nativity was perceived by the worshippers of Ormuzd. Persian magi, or wise men from the east, first saw the portent of the Son of God's birth, and brought the news to King Herod. The Jews had not noticed the shining wonder. We have here a trace of astrology, or the superstition that events on earth are decided or heralded by the motions of the stars.

The same Gospel says that the wise men followed the star they had seen in the east, until it stood over the place where little Jesus was doing his first crow. What an absurdity! Following a star is ludicrous enough. It is like chasing the moon, a diversion affected by children and lunatics. But imagine a star resting over a particular chimney-stack! The writer of "Matthew" knew nothing of astronomy, or he would not have perpetrated such a silly blunder. The stars are so distant that a few hundred miles at this end make no difference in the angle of vision.

Of our four Gospels only two, Matthew and Luke, record the birth of Jesus. Both Mark and John are silent about it. They evidently thought the prophet of Nazareth was born in the usual way. No one during the life of Jesus ever hinted at his supernatural origin. His countrymen asked, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" and nobody answered that he was the son of the Holy Ghost.

Now Luke was confessedly not an authority on the subject. He merely undertook to write what the early Christians generally believed. Only the first Gospel remains, and that was never written by Matthew. According to primitive tradition Matthew *did* write a Gospel, but in *Hebrew*. Our Gospel of Matthew is in *Greek*. Its author, too, was evidently not a Jew. He utterly misunderstood Jewish idioms, and seven times in the first four chapters he drags in prophecies which any Jew would see had absolutely no relation to the matter in hand.

With respect to the birth of Jesus, these two Gospels differ on every point. Matthew omits the Annunciation, and says that Mary's pregnancy was revealed to Joseph in a dream. Luke lets the poor cuckold find it out himself. And while stating that angelic visitors appeared to shepherds who were watching their flocks, he never once refers to the star, or the wise men, or the jealousy of Herod, or the questions put to the priests and scribes,

or the journey into Egypt, or the massacre of the innocents. These two witnesses flatly contradict each other, and being both on the same side of the case, they must be ruled out of court.

They also stumble over the date of the baby god's birth. Both say it was in the reign of Herod the Great, but Luke fixes it at the time of the taxing, when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Now this gentleman was not appointed to the office till long after the death of Herod, and his census did not take place till about ten years after the time when Jesus is supposed to have been born. O Luke, Luke! You should have kept quiet over that little affair of the taxing, for it completely upsets your evidence. Out you go, arm in arm with Matthew, and don't appear in court again.

Our Gospels tell us very little about Mary, but there are two apocryphal Gospels that supply the deficiency. The first is the Gospel of the Birth of Mary, which was received as genuine and authentic by several of the early sects. The second is the Proto-evangelion, which was ascribed to James the brother of Jesus. It was frequently referred to by the Fathers, and it obtained a very general credit in the Christian world.

Mary, they say, was the daughter of a rich man named Joachim, sprung from the royal family of David. Her mother's name was Anna. She was born at Nazareth, and educated in the Temple at Jerusalem. Her origin was miraculous. Joachim and Anna for a long time had no children. She prayed hard to the Lord for a baby, and he skulked away from the gibes and jeers of his fellows into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days and forty nights. That was a poor preparation for becoming a father, but an angel came and set matters right. Joachim went home, and in due course little Mary came to light.

This wonderful maiden walked nine steps when she was nine months old. At the age of three years she was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem, where she mounted the stairs like a grown woman, and danced a jig to the admiration of all Israel. Her parents left her there to be brought up with the other virgins. As she grew in years she grew in grace. She enjoyed the conversation of angels, and received visitors from God every day.

The priests, however, seem to have mistrusted this chaste virgin, for at the age of fourteen they resolved to marry her to prevent mischief. Her blood was perhaps more like lava than ice. It may even be true, as some have suspected, that the priests had initiated her already into the mysteries of Venus, and were anxious to father the fruit of their pious labors on some simple layman. At any rate, they summoned all the marriageable men of the house of David to appear and go through a kind of raffle for the girl. The Lord directed the game, and Joseph won. He begged to be excused, on the ground that he was an old man. Perhaps the poor fellow smelt a rat. However, he had to submit, and Mary became his wife. A French

wit says that a young husband may have a child, but an old one is sure to. Joseph left his dear young virgin wife at home while he went abroad carpentering. When he returned she was in the family-way.

What was the cause of Mary's misfortune? Bishop Talleyrand, in a letter he is said to have written to the Pope after their quarrel, states that the Roman authorities discovered that Mary had an intrigue with a Roman soldier named Panthera. In the second century Celsus twitted the Christians with worshipping the bastard child of a virgin who had been forced by a Roman soldier of the same name. The *Sepher Toldeth Jesu*, an ancient Jewish story, describes Joseph Pandera, not as a Roman soldier, but as an idle profligate belonging to the fallen tribe of Judah. He was a man of fine figure and rare beauty. By the assistance of Mary's mother he was introduced to her one Sabbath evening; and she, thinking he was her betrothed Jochanan, yielded herself to his desires. There is a striking agreement in these stories as to the name of Mary's seducer. We are loth to defame the young lady's character, but we cannot help thinking that where there is so much smoke there must be some fire.

The "Protoevangelion," like the Gospel of Luke, gives a story of the Annunciation. An angel tells Mary that, while continuing to be a virgin, she shall conceive and bring forth a son. This heavenly messenger was the archangel Gabriel. Mary was then only fourteen. That was a youthful age for a mother, but the Holy Ghost was in an eager mood, and could brook no delay. When Joseph "returned from his building houses abroad," he found the Virgin "grown big." As in Matthew, Joseph decided to put her away privily. But the angel paid him a visit one night, admonished him to keep the young woman, and told him that what was within her was "the work of the Holy Ghost." Joseph of course gave in. The priests, however, were not so easily satisfied. They made him drink some of the rot-gut water of trial; but as it had no evil effect on the old fellow, they exonerated him from the charge of having taken his young bride's virginity.

Pious Christians have written vast quantities of obscene rubbish on this subject, most of which must be left in the obscurity of a dead language. French writers imagine the Holy Ghost hovering over Mary, as Jove in the shape of a swan overshadowed the charms of Leda. The speculations of Saint Ambrose cannot be translated from the Latin. His least indecent theory is that Mary was impregnated through the ear.

Catholics believe that Mary remained a virgin to the end of the chapter. The Gospels mention the brothers of Jesus, but Christian piety assumes that they were sons of Joseph by another wife. Apocryphal writings inform us that Mary died soon after the crucifixion. One document states that she was attended in her last moments by the twelve Apostles, two of whom were raised from the dead to be present. Another docu-

ment states that her body was taken to heaven by angels in the presence of Thomas, and that the brethren who would not believe it reopened the tomb and found the corpse of God's mother missing.

This Christian fable of the Virgin Mother is still devoutly believed by millions of sane men, who have accepted it on grounds of faith, and are entirely ignorant of its real origin. We have proved that the superstition is far older than Christianity. We have shown that Paul and the Apostles knew nothing of it; that it was incorporated into the Christian religion after their time; and that the strongest evidence in support of the miraculous birth of Jesus, is a probably interpolated chapter in a Gospel supposed to have been written by Matthew, but which was most certainly not written by a Jew, nor even in existence until long after all the contemporaries of the Prophet of Nazareth had mouldered into dust. Whoever persists in believing the fable after learning these facts is a slave to faith, and on the broad road to Colney Hatch.

If a pious young lady were now to give birth to a child, and protest that she knew nothing about it except that one night an angel told her that she was to become a virgin mother, would her parents and friends believe the story? And if she went into a court declaring that the third person of the Christian Trinity was her partner in the business, would any magistrate make an order against the Holy Ghost for the maintenance of the child?

Jesus Christ is said to have had no father. Thousands of other boys have been in the same plight. There is no miracle in that. If the founder of Christianity wished to prove his supernatural origin, he should have "gone the whole hog," and dispensed with a mother too. That would have been a real miracle. But at present his divine paternity is more than dubious. If there is a mother in the case, depend upon it there is a father somewhere. That which is born of the spirit is spirit, not flesh and blood; and the Holy Ghost is far too shadowy a person to be the father of a lusty boy. We feel sure that Jesus Christ was born like other men, and we decline to believe that God Almighty ever stooped to debauch an old man's wife. The whole story is a fable. There never was in this world, and there never will be, such a monstrous absurdity as a Virgin Mother.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## GOD IN A BOX.

By G. W. FOOTE.

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WHAT blasphemy! the pious will exclaim. God in a box! How shocking! The wretch who dares to utter such language should be severely punished; the wretch who dares to write it should be hung. Nay, hanging is too good for him. He ought to be burnt, broken on the wheel, or slowly tortured to death.

But soft a while, ye loving followers of the meek and lowly one! The blasphemy is not mine. I did not put God in a box; the Jews did it. They were very free with gods. They nailed up one, as a farmer fixes a bat or a weasel on the barn-door; and centuries before that, they carried about his father in a travelling trunk. Whatever blasphemy is implied in the title of this Romance must be charged to their account. The Bible warrants every statement I make, and I challenge contradiction. I found God in a box and did not put him there. I merely lift the lid and show him inside.

It is a veritable fact that Jehovah of the Jews, who became God the Father of Christianity, was originally a lump of stone, or some other fetish, enclosed in a wooden box. His devotees carried him with them in all their wanderings. When they fought, they took him into the battle to ensure victory. He was their star of fortune, their glory, and their pride. While they retained him, and kept him good-humored, they were prosperous in peace and war; when they provoked him, they were chastised with famine, plague, and slaughter; when they lost him, they sank under the frown of fate, and became the prey of foreign conquest or civil dissension. They gave him, as meat and drink, the flesh and blood of animals; and sometimes his altars were polluted with a darker sacrifice of human life. Like all fetishes, he was *tabu* except to the priests. No layman was suffered to approach him. Invading his privacy was sacrilege, and punished with instant death.

When the Jews carried and carted Jahveh from place to place, they were in a very low state of culture. They had not advanced beyond fetish-worship, which is the primitive form of religion. The word Fetish comes from the Portuguese *feticho*, and signifies a charm. We find traces of fetishism in the most advanced creeds. Savages treasure a curious stone, a piece of ivory, a fish-tooth, a rare shell, a mineral, or a gem; and Europeans still wear bone or metal crosses, attached to a string of shining beads, which are told over during prayer; while an occult virtue is ascribed to different jewels in every civilised country. Amongst the vulgar, throughout Christendom, amulets

are still worn, and often secreted next the skin. They are held to bring luck, and as sovereign against danger. Even the worship of images is preserved in the Catholic adoration of saints. Nor are the most austere Protestants free from this superstition. Their great fetish is the Bible. They reverence its very leaves and cover; they damn everybody who doubts it; and they kiss it as a token when they are obliged to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

It might easily be inferred, from the fourth verse of the third chapter of Hosea, even if there were no other evidence, that the worship of teraphim, or images, was a feature of primitive Judaism. But we are not confined to this source of information. When Jacob made tracks from uncle Laban's, with both his daughters and all the sheep and cattle worth having, the old man had to go a seven days' journey after them to recover his gods. Rachel, who seems to have been just the right wife for Jacob, had stolen the whole lot, without leaving her father a single god to worship. Laban hunted high and low for his teraphim, but never found them; for his cunning slut of a daughter covered them over, and while he searched her tent she sat upon them—hatching.

Jahveh also was no doubt a portable family god. He first calls himself the god of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Afterwards he calls himself the god of Israel—that is, of the descendants of these patriarchs. He never calls himself the god of all mankind. On the contrary, he admits the existence of other gods, and is openly jealous of them. The Jews, in turn, always speak of him as *our* god. He was their own Jahveh. They "ran" him, and were ready to back him against the field.

We are first introduced to God in a Box in the twenty-fifth of Exodus. Jahveh was sick and tired of roaming about, and having casual interviews with his prophet, in a burning bush, in a public-house, or on the top of a hill. He determined to settle down and dwell with his people. Accordingly, Moses was instructed to build him a residence. He was to have a tent all to himself, a first-class article, made of the very best stuff; fine linen of various colors, badgers' skins, rams' skins, and goats' hair; with brass and silver for the fittings, and gold and jewels for the decorations. Inside the tent, which our English version dignifies with the name of tabernacle, there was to be placed a nice snug box for him to lie in, instead of squatting ignominiously on the floor. The Bible calls it an ark, but the Hebrew word so translated, means a box, a mummy case, or a treasure chest. He was also to be supplied with furniture and domestic utensils; a wooden table overlaid with gold, three feet long, eighteen inches broad, and two feet three inches high, with golden dishes, covers, spoons and bowls; and a golden candlestick bearing seven lights, with golden tongs and snuff-dishes. Altogether it was a very genteel establishment for a bachelor god. When Jahveh came to inspect it, he said it

would do capitally, and took immediate possession. Directly he entered the place was filled with smoke, a fact which surprises those who fancy the Devil is the sole dealer in that commodity. No doubt he found it very useful. His priests, who were accustomed to incense, could stand the fume, but intruders were soon smoked out.

The priests were ordered to keep some shewbread always on that table, so that he might have a snack at any time. This is a common thing with fetish worshippers. Tylor says that pots and other necessaries are put in the fetish huts still, but "the principal thing in the hut is the stool for the fetish to sit on, and there is a little bottle of brandy always ready for him."<sup>1</sup> Probably, although it is not so stated, the Jewish priests gave Jahveh a drop of something to drink; for it was a thirsty climate, and the old fellow often betrayed a sanguinary violence of temper which usually results from intoxication. There is, indeed, a suggestion of this in Judges ix., 13, where we read of "wine which cheereth God and man."

The dimensions of the table were in keeping with those of the ark, which was three feet nine long, two feet three broad, and two feet three deep. That was the old fellow's size! We might wonder how Christians could think that God Almighty ever got inside such a box, if we did not know that they still imagine him to be in a little piece of bread. What is too great for the faith of people who, as Browning says, see God made and eaten every day?

Now what was really inside that box? I will not indulge in conjecture, nor cite "infidel" authors, but go at once to a great Dutch scholar, who has recently lectured on the religions of the world before the *élite* of Biblical students in London and the University of Oxford. Kuenen says: "When we observe how the ark was treated and what effects were ascribed to it, it becomes almost certain that it was held to be the *abode* of Jahveh, so that he, in some way or other, was himself present in it. Then only is it that we can explain the desire of the Israelites to have the ark with them in the army, their joy at its arrival, and its solemn conveyance to the new capital of the empire in David's reign. Now was the ark empty, or did it contain a *stone*, Jahveh's real abode, of which the ark was only the repository? This we do not know, although the latter opinion, in conjunction with the later accounts of the Pentateuch, appears to us to possess great probability."<sup>2</sup>

More orthodox English writers treat the subject with euphemisms. Eadie says: "This sacred chest was the awful emblem of the Jewish religion." The Speaker's Commentary says: "Now he was ready visibly to testify that he made his abode with them. He claimed to have a dwelling for himself." Old

<sup>1</sup> "Primitive Culture," vol. ii., p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> "Religion of Israel," vol. i., p. 233.

Bishop Patrick says: "It was his cabinet, as we now speak, into which none entered but himself."

Kuener's surmise is strengthened by all our knowledge of fetishism. At each end of the ark was a cherub, evidently a sacred fowl of some kind, facing inwards, and bending down over the ark. This is the attitude of worship. They were adoring the image within.

Being covered with gold, the ark looked like solid metal, though it was really made of shittim wood, according to Jahveh's directions. The reader must not expect a long dissertation on shittim wood. Kimchi says it is the best kind of cedar. Aben Ezra says it is a sacred wood that grows in the wilderness by Sinai. Smith's "Bible Dictionary" describes it as an acacia. Jerome, in his commentary on Isaiah xl., calls it *lignum imputribile*, an incorruptible wood. If he is right the ark may yet turn up, unless it has "gone to smash."

The ark was topped by a mercy seat of pure gold. "There," said the Lord to Moses, "I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims." And in David's time he is described (2 Samuel vi., 2) as "the Lord of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims." Clearly he fixed himself there at communion time. Now what was the mercy seat? It was simply the lid of the box. The Hebrew *Kapporeth* means to cover, and in the First of Chronicles xxviii., 2, the holy of holies is called the house of the Kapporeth.

Here then the whole case lies in a nutshell. If Jehovah and God the Father are indeed the same, we may say to the Christians—Your God was once carried about in a box, and he used to get out and sit on the cover.

It is highly probable that the Jews borrowed their idea of an ark from the Egyptians, whom most nations have found, as Fuseli said of Blake, "damned good to steal from." Sir John Gardner Wilkinson, in his "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians," says that "one of the most important ceremonies was the procession of shrines," which is mentioned in the Rosetta stone, and frequently represented on the walls of the temples. The lesser shrine was a sort of canopy; the great shrine was an ark or sacred boat. Like the Jewish ark, it was borne by priests. It was also carried in the same way, by means of staves passed through metal rings at the side. Wilkinson further remarks that the wings of two figures of the goddess Thmei or Truth, overshadowing the sacred beetle of the Sun, contained in some of the Egyptian arks, "call to mind the cherubim of the Jews." The chosen people seem to have "borrowed of the Egyptians" in more senses than one.

The Bible is remarkably precise in its details as to the ark. It even informs us who made it. There was only one man in all Israel whom Jahveh thought fit for the job. This was Bezaleel, of the tribe of Judah, a kind of jack-of-all-trades, and what he



did not know the Lord taught him. He wove the linen, tanned the skins, carved the wood, made the brass fittings, beat the gold, cut the stones, and fixed everything up. In theatrical parlance, he was a first-class utility man. It is an astonishing thing that, many centuries later, when Solomon built the first temple at Jerusalem, he found no Jew able to do the metal work, and had to send to Tyre for a competent artist. The Jews were not a progressive people. In this respect, at least, they seem, like Hamlet's crab, to have walked backward.

Most fetishes are used for divination, and Jahveh was no exception. He piloted the Jews about the wilderness, and with such extreme accuracy that it took them forty years to do a month's journey. The priests carried him in front. When he stopped, all the people halted and pitched their tents until he chose to move on again. Sometimes he rested a couple of days, sometimes a month, and sometimes a year. Except when engaged in bloodshed, he was the laziest god that ever lived. He relished an occasional massacre, but for the rest he held with Tennyson's lotos-eaters that "there is no joy but calm." Moses had to keep this drowsy deity up to the scratch with shouting. When the ark set forward, he cried, "Rise up, Jahveh, and let thine enemies be scattered;" and when it rested he cried, "Return, O Jahveh, unto the many thousands of Israel."

God in the box was of great service to the Jews in crossing Jordan. The river was swollen with the spring freshet, and the question of transport was very difficult. But Jahveh was equal to the emergency. The priests marched boldly along with the ark, and when their feet touched the brim of the water, Jordan parted, the waters that poured down from above standing up in a heap. They held Jahveh in the bed of the river until all Israel had crossed safely, after which they followed suit, and Jordan flowed on as before.

Savages frequently take their gods into battle, and so did the Jews. General Joshua found old Jahveh of immense aid in the conquest of Canaan. The priests carried him for a whole week round Jericho, which so weakened its walls that, when the Levites trumpeted and the people shouted, they fell down flat.

There can be no doubt that the Jews relied on their fetish for victory. When the men of Ai repulsed their attack, Joshua rent his clothes and prostrated himself before the ark, where he remained for many hours, until the Lord revealed the secret of their defeat. On a previous occasion, during the lifetime of Moses, a detachment of Jews were smitten and pursued by the enemy, because they went up a hill while Jahveh staid at the bottom.

When Canaan was conquered, Jahveh's tent was set up at Shiloh, whence he was fetched to Eben-ezer in the days of Eli. Whether the ark remained there all that time is an open question. We read of a place called Bethel in the book of Judges, and Bethel means the "house of god."

The adventures of Jahveh and his box in the war with the Philistines under Eli are very lively and amusing. He appears to have been neglected by the Jews, and not without reason, for his virtue was temporarily exhausted. But after their heavy defeat by the Philistines, they resolved to fetch the ark from Shiloh, and give old Jahveh another trial. When their fetish arrived they made the earth ring with their shouts, on hearing which "the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp." Being, however, a warlike race, they soon regained courage; and they acquitted themselves so well in the next battle, that the Jews were utterly routed with the loss of thirty thousand men. The Philistines found plenty of loot, and amongst the spoil of war was old Jahveh in the box.

When Eli, the aged high priest, heard that the ark had fallen into the hands of the uncircumcised, and that his two sons, its custodians, were slain, he fell off from his seat backward, and broke his neck. Poor old fellow! Would our Archbishop of Canterbury be affected in that way? We suspect not. He would probably go on living, and stick to his fifteen thousand a year.

When Phineas' wife, Eli's daughter-in-law, heard the news, she was seized with sudden travail, and died after giving birth to a son. Her last words were, "The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken." The fetish was their paladium, and with it disappeared all their hopes.

Being strangers to the bigotry of monotheists, the Philistines treated old Jahveh with great respect. Although a foreigner, he was still a god, and they were ready to adopt him. Savages often act in that way. Waitz tells us, in his "Anthropology," that the Fantees, for instance, even "purchase gods which have acquired a certain celebrity. The gods are put on their trial, to see whether they are more powerful than others, and if they prove themselves so, obtain preference and a higher rank above other gods."

Jahveh was taken on trial. The Philistines put him in their joss-house beside their own god Dagon. It was a dangerous experiment, for two of a trade seldom agree. During the day Jahveh behaved himself decently, but in the night he got out of his box and "went for" Dagon. Now poor Dagon was taken at a disadvantage. Being a fish-god, he hadn't a leg to stand on, and he was soon sprawling on the floor. Jahveh then retreated into his box, where the Philistines found him placidly reposing in the morning, as though he knew as little about the night's mischief as the heathen Chinese knew about euchre. They set Dagon up again. All went well during the day as before, but in the night old Jahveh again slipped out of his box and assaulted his rival. This time he was in deadly earnest. He broke Dagon's head off, amputated his hands, and left nothing but the stump. In the morning the Philistines beheld this doleful spectacle, and yet the author of it all lay stone-still in his box, looking as childlike and bland as ever.

But this did not suffice. Old Jahveh's blood was up. He smote the men of Ashdod with emerods. The most superficial readers of the Bible, when they remember what a lousy victory the Lord gained over the magicians of Egypt, will readily conceive that this was a very dirty disorder. It was the bleeding piles or worse. Perhaps the sweet Psalmist had this incident in mind when he sang that the Lord "smote his enemies in the hinder-parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach." The Ashdodians were disconcerted by this attack in the rear, and at a public meeting on the question, they decided to pass old Jahveh on to the next city. But the men of Gath fared no better, for "they had emerods in their secret parts." The Ekronites also had a turn, and after great suffering and loss of life, they sent old Jahveh and his box back to the Jews with their compliments, and a peace-offering of five golden mice and five golden emerods.

Parallels to this story exist in Pagan writings. Herodotus says that Venus afflicted with "emerods" the Scythians who plundered her temple. Grotius relates a similar fiction as to the institution of the Phallica. When the Athenians ridiculed some images of Bacchus, the god sent them a genital disease, and to prevent its depopulating the city, they received his images with pomp, and displayed Thrysi with figures of the afflicted parts bound to them.

The men of Beth-shemesh, where the ark first stopped on Jewish soil, welcomed it piously; but they were rash enough to look into it, and their profane curiosity so enraged old Jahveh, that he slew fifty thousand and seventy of them. This is a good illustration of the idea of *tabu*, and a signal instance of his love of butchery.

They passed the ark on to Kirjathjearim, where it remained for twenty years, until David ordered its removal to Jerusalem. Its journey to the capital was, however, arrested at Nachon's threshing-floor. Just there the oxen shook the ark badly, and a man called Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it. His object was to save Jahveh from the ignominy of being tossed out in the dust. Nevertheless the fetish took it as an insult, and immediately killed poor Uzzah, either by a kind of torpedo shock or by a blow on the head. This is a further illustration of *tabu*.

David was highly displeased with the Lord for this "breach upon Uzzah;" and being afraid that his turn might come next, he left the ark at the house of Obed-edom, and went to Jerusalem alone. But when he heard that it brought a blessing to its lucky guardian, he fetched it away to the capital, and put it in a brand new tent. The pious king was so overjoyed that he danced naked before the ark, and his wife rebuked him for his indecent exposure.

Soon afterwards David resolved to do the Lord a good turn. Here am I, said he, dwelling in a fine cedar house, while dear old

Jahveh lives in a tent; it isn't fair; I'll build him a house. But the Lord declined the offer. No, no, said he; don't you go building me a new-fangled shanty; I've lived in a nice, airy, well-ventilated tent ever since I can remember, and I mean to go on living in one; just mind your own business and let me bide. Yet the Lord relented in Solomon's reign, and allowed himself to be placed in the temple, although he insisted on being supplied with exact copies of his old furniture.

When the priests opened the ark, according to the First of Kings viii., 9, they found nothing inside "save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb." The fetish had disappeared. Probably they had by that time grown ashamed of it; yet as religion cannot advance by too great leaps, they kept the box, called it the ark of the covenant, and treated it simply as an oracle. Many years later the box itself became an opprobrium. The great prophet Jeremiah declared that the time would come when "they shall say no more, the ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it: neither shall they visit it: neither shall that be done any more."

The author of "Hebrews" does not quite agree with the book of Kings. He states, in chap. ix., 4, that in addition to the tables of stone, the ark contained a specimen pot of that wonderful manna, and Aaron's blooming rod.

What finally became of the ark? Josephus says there was no such thing in the second temple. The apocryphal book of Maccabees states that the prophet Jeremy, being warned of God, hid it in a cave on Mount Pisgah, and sealed up the entrance, so that those who followed him could not find it; and that its resting-place is to remain "unknown until the time that God gather his people again together." The Jews still believe it will come with the Messiah. We fervently hope he will bring the box in its original state, with Jahveh inside. Archæologists would be delighted to examine such a famous old fetish; and if the Messiah is anything like other Jews, he will no doubt accept the handsome price which the trustees of the British Museum would gladly give for such an interesting relic of antiquity.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

# BULLY SAMSON.

By G. W. FOOTE.

MILTON'S sublime genius has invested the story of Samson with a fictitious grandeur. He says that it contained materials for a tragedy in the Greek style, and this plan enabled him to subordinate those ludicrous incidents which would have degraded a modern tragedy on the subject. The hero's thralldom and blindness suggested his own ill fortune and loss of sight, and the final triumph over the Philistines gave him an opportunity to vindicate himself. The real hero of "Samson Agonistes" is John Milton. All those pathetic lamentations and noble resolves flowed from the depths of his own sorrow and courage. No trace of his tender beauty or heroic splendour can be found in the story which was the occasion and not the source of his inspiration.

The Bible-story of Samson is vulgar and absurd. We can only account for it by supposing that myth and tradition were clumsily blended. Samson is nothing but a great bully, extremely fond of women, and always swaggering and fighting. It is also pretty clear that he was addicted to drink. He is described as a teetotaler, but a close examination of several texts shows that he was in all probability as partial to good liquor as Jack Falstaff. Would he had the fat knight's spirit and wit!

In the last verse of the third of Judges there is mention of Shamgar, the son of Anath, who slew six hundred Philistines with an ox goad; very probably by skewering them together like cat's-meat; and Dr. H. Oort surmises that the exploits of this hero have been woven into a solar myth, and thus made to form a new history. His conjecture is highly credible.

As to the solar myth there can be no doubt. The reader will meet with abundant evidence as we proceed. But there are two facts which should be stated now. Samson's name is never mentioned in the whole of the Jewish Scriptures outside the four chapters devoted to his career; and this renders it probable that the legend was borrowed somewhat late, and incorporated into the earlier narrative. It is also remarkable that while all the other Judges fight at the head of troops, Samson combats his enemies single-handed, and slays thousands without arms. They obtain occasional assistance from heaven, but his achievements are all supernatural.

We are first introduced to Samson in the thirteenth chapter of Judges. His father's name was Manoah, but his mother's name is hidden, in consequence of that perverse contempt of women which is so conspicuous in God's Word. The good lady was un-

fortunately barren. She expected never to have a child. But never is a long time, and the chapter of accidents is fruitful in surprises. Manoah was not the only person of the male persuasion. One day a "man of God" appeared on the scene when she was alone, as men of God generally do, and promised her a son. His intervention was very effectual, and in due course she produced a sturdy baby, who grew up the champion athlete of all time.

How strange it is that barren wives were so often selected by the Lord to become the mothers of prodigies! Sarah was barren, and ninety before she had Isaac. Rachel was long barren before the advent of Jacob, although cross-eyed Leah was very prolific. Hannah was barren, and fretted by the taunts of her productive rival Peninnah, until the Lord sent her Samuel. And the apocryphal gospels represent Saint Ann, the grandmother of God, as twenty years barren before she gave birth to the Virgin Mary.

Mrs. Manoah went home and told her husband, who besought the Lord for further information, and desired that the man of God might come again. His request was granted. The welcome visitor appeared once more to the lady in her husband's absence. This time she ran and fetched Manoah, to whom the announcement was repeated. They invited the stranger to dine with them, but he refused, and equally declined to tell them his name. By his advice, Manoah burnt a kid as an offering to the Lord. He "did wondrously" while the happy couple looked on, doubtless performing some celestial tricks; and when the flame rose from the altar he ascended with it, and vanished from their sight. Then they knew it was an angel, and they fell on their faces, exclaiming, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God."

Now who was this visitor? From the Hebrew it appears that Mrs. Manoah addressed him as "thou god of visibility." The "angel of the Lord" is said to be equivalent to "the Messiah." According to the Rev. W. A. Scott, it was "the Great Judge;" Gill says it was "no other than the Son of God;" and Adam Clarke says it was "no other than the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity." If these learned commentators are right, this was about the first appearance of Jesus Christ on earth. On the other hand, the visitor may have been the *First* Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, old Jahveh himself. This is not a wild supposition; for he who appeared to Moses in a burning bush, showed him on another occasion his posterior, and habitually conversed with him face to face, might very well call on the Manoahs, who belonged to the same chosen stock.

Mrs. Manoah was ordered by the stranger, whether an angel, Jesus Christ, or God Almighty, not to eat grapes, nor to drink wine or anything "short," for the child was to be a Nazarite from the womb. No razor was to come on his head after he saw daylight, from which we infer that the fashion of that time

was a remarkably close crop; and when he grew up he was to redeem Israel from the hand of the Philistines, a people who were continually oppressing the Jews, and who seem to have been preserved by the Lord for that very purpose, so that he might occasionally strike in, and as they say, "show the strength of his muscle."

One part of this prediction is very suggestive. How could this boy be a Nazarite, when that sect was in all probability not in existence until hundreds of years after the date of the Judges? The Nazarites were teetotalers and strict ascetics, which Samson most assuredly was not. Why then was he called a Nazarite? Because he had long flowing hair, like all the members of that sect, who eschewed the razor and all its works as affronting the decrees of God. But *his* luxuriant curls have a different reason. They amounted to seven, which was a sacred number with the Jews. They were his glory, like the shining locks of Apollo; and his strength lay in them, as is the case with all the solar gods, for that abundant hair represents the sun's rays, which are resplendent in summer, shorn in the winter, and renewed in the spring.

The very name of this miraculous child betrays his mythological character. Samson, or Shimshon, means *sun-like* according to Gesenius; *their sun* according to Saint Jerome; and *little sun* according to Adam Clarke. Dag, or fish, gave Dagon, or fish-god; and from Shemesh, the sun, was derived Shemesh-sun or sun-god. We find the first syllable retained in many Biblical names, such as Shem, Shemuel (Samuel), Shemida, Shemiramoth, and Shemezer. The Phœnician sun-god Baal, who was notoriously worshipped by the recreant Jews, leaves similar traces in the names of the sons of Saul and David, Eshbaal, Meribaal, and Baalyadah, as preserved in Chronicles, but changed by the Rabbi compilers of Samuel into Ishbosheth, Mephibosheth, and Elyadah. There were also two places in Palestine, one in Dan and the other in Napthali, called Beth-shemesh or Ir-shemesh, that is "house of the sun" or "city of the sun."

Dr. Oort well remarks of Samson's adventures that "a solar myth doubtless lies at the bottom of them, as we may see by the very name of the hero, which signifies sun-god. In some of the features of the story, the original meaning may still be traced quite clearly."<sup>1</sup> The same view is admirably expanded and supported in a disquisition on "The Legend of Samson," by Professor H. Steinthal, of the University of Berlin, which forms an appendix to Goldziher's very valuable "Mythology of the Hebrews."

These sun-gods are found among all peoples who have advanced beyond fetishism. We have Apollo in Greece, Ra in Egypt, Surya in India, and Balder in Scandinavia. The mighty

<sup>1</sup> "Bible for Young People," vol. ii, p. 226.

orb was an object of wonder and praise, and soon personified and worshipped. Light, heat, and life sprang from the benignant god of day; and all their fluctuations were reflected in his career. Sunrise and sunset, the war of light and cloud, the fecund power of spring, the consuming heat of summer, the blighting approach of winter, were all described in his birth, battles, triumphs, defeat, death and resurrection.

Samson was the Jewish Hercules, although, as Dupuis remarks, he was a poor copy. Adam Clarke, who noticed the resemblance, insinuated that Hercules was copied from Samson, an idea which every scholar would now regard as absurd. We shall find many points of likeness as we proceed with the review of our hero's career.

How Samson's youth was spent we do not know. The Bible says that he "grew," but most children do that at some rate or other. We are also informed that "the Lord blessed him," although not in what way. We imagine him as a boisterous lad, fond of exercising his raw strength; pulling cats' tails, poking out dogs' eyes, robbing orchards, thrashing his schoolfellows, stealing old men's sticks and lame men's crutches, making fun of females, and "cheeking" his elders. All these characteristics may be inferred from his behavior in after life.

He entered the camp of Dan, it seems, while still young, and there "the spirit of the Lord began to move him at times." An early movement of the spirit sent him after a young woman at Timnath, a daughter of the Philistines. He returned home in sharp haste, and told the old people to go down and get her for his wife. They very properly desired him to choose a wife from his own tribe, but he cut them short. "She just suits me," said he, "so you'd better fetch her at once." This conduct was very undutiful, but then "it was of the Lord." On this occasion, as on every other, Samson went courting amongst aliens, in direct violation of God's law; but as the Lord prompted him to the first offence, we presume that he is equally responsible for all that followed.

Hercules slew the lion of the Nemean forest without any weapon, and Samson first displayed his prowess by slaying a young lion with "nothing in his hand." We are left to conjecture how the feat was performed, but religious artists have not hesitated to supplement the Bible narrative. There is one picture which represents Samson with the lion between his legs, while he wrenches open its jaws with his two hands. If that young lion's teeth were in good order, it must have been rough work for his fingers, unless the Lord specially hardened them as he did Pharaoh's heart.

Samson kept his exploit secret and went on to his young woman. Shortly after, on passing the spot again, he found a swarm of bees and honey in the lion's carcase. He took a couple of handfuls, of which he ate some himself, and gave the rest to his parents. The wedding was arranged, and thirty young men



came to share in the merriment. By way of killing the time, Samson propounded a riddle. If they solved it in seven days, he was to give them thirty sheets and thirty changes of raiment; if not, they were to give him the same articles. The riddle was, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." For six days they tried to crack this hard nut, and on the seventh they threatened Mrs. Samson that if she did not worm the answer out of her husband, they would murder her and all the family. She coaxed the great bully, wept all day like a thunder-shower, and "lay sore upon him," until at last he told her the answer, which she conveyed to his friends, who of course won the bet. Samson delicately taunted them with having "ploughed with his heifer," and then absconded, leaving his wife for his bosom friend. Being in a dreadful rage, he went to Ashkelon, and killed thirty men to cool himself down.

A passage in Virgil's fourth *Georgic* indicates the ancient belief that bees might be engendered in the carcase of an ox. It was, however, a mere superstition, involving a physical impossibility. Bees do not build in dead flesh, for their wax and honey would be spoiled by putrefaction, and Samson's riddle is a riddle still.

The slaying of the lion is mythological. We have already mentioned Hercules, but more remains. The Assyrians and Lydians, Semitic nations like the Jews, worshipped a sun-god named Sandan or Sandon, who was also a lion killer. The lion is found as the animal of Apollo on the Lycian monuments as well as at Patara. "Hence," says Steinthal, "it becomes clear that the lion was accepted by the Semitic nations as a symbol of the summer heat. . . . 'Samson, Hercules, or Sandon, kills the lion' means therefore 'He is the beneficent saving power that protects the earth against the burning heat of summer.' Samson is the kind Aristæos who delivers the Island of Keos from the lion, the protector of bees and hives of honey, which is most abundant when the sun is in the lion."

Having satiated his anger, Samson remembered the young woman at Timnath, and at harvest time he went down with a nice present. Like the rude lover in Voltaire's "L'Ingénu," he walked to her bedroom, but her father barred his way. "No, no," said he, "that little game won't do now, Samson; the girl's another man's wife, so hands off; yet there's her sister, a fine handsome girl, and you can have her if you like." Samson said he would see him in Hades first, and bolted in a tempest of passion. He caught three hundred foxes, tied them in pairs tail to tail, stuck firebrands between their rumps, and sent them into the standing corn of the Philistines. Terrible destruction ensued, and the enraged Philistines burnt the young woman of Timnath and her father to death.

Samson must have been a dexterous sportsman to catch three hundred foxes. Some commentators try to evade the difficulty by maintaining that the word *shualim* means handfuls or sheaves

of corn, instead of jackals or foxes; but the word rendered as *caught* never means simply to get, but always to seize by stratagem. We learn from Ovid's "Fasti" that it was a Roman custom in April to let loose a number of foxes in the circus with lighted flambeaux on their backs; and the people took pleasure in seeing the poor animals run about until they were roasted by the flames. Dr. Oort considers the whole episode as mythical, and states that "in the reddish-brown jackals, with torches between their tails, we easily recognise the lurid thunder-cloud, from the projecting points of which the lightning-flashes seem to dart." In any case Samson's feat is incredible. He must have been as wily as the Devil to catch so many foxes, and three hundred could not be collected without attracting attention. Nor could they make much progress if the couples were fairly matched, and pulled in opposite directions. Our opinion is that Samson could have burnt down all the Philistines' corn in less time than it takes to catch one fox; but, on the other hand, if he had acted like a sensible man, he would not have been Samson.

After smiting the Philistines hip and thigh, Samson retreated to the rocky fastness of Etam, although it is strange that so irresistible a warrior should hide himself from his enemies. His own people sided with the Philistines, and he grimly allowed himself to be bound with new ropes, and delivered up to the foe. But as they shouted he broke through his bonds like tinder, and went for them with the jawbone of a jackass that happened to be lying about. When he stopped slashing, a thousand corpses were piled in heaps. Those Philistines must have been jackasses too. They must have stood and waited their turns. Why did they not skedaddle, and leave Samson to cut slices out of the air?

According to Herodotus, Hercules had a similar adventure in Egypt, where the inhabitants took him to offer as a sacrifice to Jupiter. For awhile he submitted quietly, but when they led him up to the altar, he put forth his strength and slew them all. The charming old *raconteur* points out, however, that the Egyptians were not guilty of human sacrifices.

Samson was dreadfully thirsty after completing his tally of victims, and being ready to die, he called on the Lord, who clave a hollow in the jawbone and brought water from it. One commentator suggests that the socket of a tooth became a well. What a monstrous ass!

Hercules was favored with a similar miracle. After slaying the dragon of the Hesperides, he was in danger of perishing with thirst in the scorching deserts of Libya, but the gods caused a fountain to issue from a rock which he struck with his foot. Dr. Oort considers the jawbone and the spring as mythical; the former being the jagged thunder-cloud, from which the lightning shoots, while the latter is the rain that pours out of it as the sun-god triumphs.

This tremendous massacre of Philistines appears to have gained Samson the Judgeship of Israel, which he held for twenty years. Such a strong fellow no doubt found very few who dared to disobey him. With Samson it was a word and a blow, and no one that felt his fist once ever lived to feel it twice.

His next exploit was that of a perfect bully. He went down to Gaza for a spree, intending to stay all night at a brothel. While he sported with his harlot the Gazites heard the news, and they laid in wait for him, so as to kill him in the morning. But they were woefully disappointed, for at midnight Samson grew restless, and wanted to stretch himself. He sallied out, probably without paying his score, lugged off the gates of the city on his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a hill. How they got them back is a knotty question. Perhaps they induced Samson to convey them back, and in return settled his account with "the harlot."

His next amour, for like the pagan Hercules he had many, was with Delilah. She dwelt in Nachal Sorek, that is, the Vine Valley. This may be a mythical trait, representing the zealous wooing of the vine by the sun-god; or it may imply that Samson was anything but a Nazarite. The word Delilah, according to Ewald, means *traitress*; but the generally accepted meaning is *languid, delicate, triste*. Great bullies are usually enamoured of frail little women.

As Omphale befooled Hercules, so Delilah befooled Samson. Milton treats her as his wife, yet it is pretty clear that she was a professional beauty. The Philistines offered her eleven hundred pieces of silver to find out and reveal the secret of Samson's strength. He tricked her thrice, but the fourth time she had him. He told her that his strength lay in his hair, and that if it were shaven he would become as weak as another man. She made him "sleep upon her knees" a sleep so profound that it was probably the result of drunkenness and exhaustion; called in a barber, who shaved off his seven locks and left him bald as a plate; and then handed him over to the Philistines, who bound him with brass fetters, put out his eyes, and made him grind in their prison house.

But Samson's turn was coming. His death was to be more marvellous than his life. In the fifth act of the play he was to make positively his last appearance, to eclipse all his previous efforts, and literally bring down the house.

The Philistine lords arranged for a public holiday to celebrate Samson's capture, and to honor their god Dagon for delivering him into their hands. When their hearts were merry, they called for Samson to make them sport, from which it would appear that they had turned him into a kind of clown. They should have been more careful, for Samson's hair had begun to grow again, and his pate "showed like a stubble land at harvest home." Why did they not keep a barber to give him a clean shave every morning? Very dearly did they pay for their negli-

gence. Samson got his keeper to let him lean for rest against the two middle pillars that supported the great roof of the temple, on which there were about three thousand men and women. Then he clasped the pillars with either hand, prayed the Lord to let him avenge himself on the Philistines for the loss of his eyes, bowed himself with all his might, and brought down the whole structure in shapeless ruin. Thus Bully Samson sank, terrible in death, surrounded by great heaps of slain enemies. His people searched out his corpse, and buried it in the family vault.

Samson's suicide is capable of a mythic interpretation. Hercules also destroyed himself by burning, but arose out of the flames to Olympus. "The sun-god," observes Steintal, "in fighting against the summer heat is fighting against himself; if he kills it, he kills himself." The Phœnicians, Assyrians and Lydians attributed suicide to their sun-gods, for only thus could they understand the sun's mitigation of its own heat. Yet they did not suppose that the god actually died, but only that he renewed himself like the Phoenix. In this respect the story of Samson seems to lack a fitting conclusion; but it must be remembered that the Rabbis did not intend it to be regarded as a solar myth, that it contains a mixture of elements, and that, as Ewald holds, the present version was probably based on an earlier work.

Bully Samson's history has not a single redeeming feature. He judged Israel for twenty years, but that post did not require much virtue, and it was often occupied by sturdy rogues. Adam Clarke admits that "if we regard what is called the choice of Hercules, his preference of virtue to pleasure, we shall find that the heathen is, morally speaking, vastly superior." Yet this learned commentator elsewhere says that "a parallel has often been drawn between Samson and our blessed Lord, of whom he has been supposed to be a most illustrious type." This brings the Prophet of Nazareth very low indeed, and classes him with the gutter-crowd of Bible worthies. Jesus Christ was not, in our opinion, so transcendently good and wise and great as his followers assert; but he certainly deserves to be rescued from the critical violence of Doctor Adam Clarke. He in nowise resembles the mythical Jewish hero, who drank, spread, raked, fought, and murdered wholesale. It would be more truthful to say that he is an "illustrious type" of God the Father, for there is a most remarkable resemblance between the characters of Jehovah and Samson. Old Jahveh is the head of the house, but Bully Samson is a cadet of the family and shares the blood.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## BIBLE ROMANCES.—XIX.

# GOSPEL GHOSTS.

By G. W. FOOTE.

THE belief in ghosts is rapidly dying out. They are scarcely ever heard of in towns, except in a forlorn condition at Spiritist *séances*, where they are at the beck and call of professional mediums, and reduced to playing tricks for their sport and profit. Most surviving ghosts lurk about villages and lonely homesteads. The reason of this is obvious. Life and society quicken the intellect in towns, while the quiet and solitude of the country stimulate the imagination. And ghosts are entirely a matter of fancy. Like miracles they depend on faith. If you believe in them you may see them; if you do not you never will. The superstitious man might behold one in a dimly-lighted room, but a sceptic would not perceive one in a dark churchyard. Ghosts are pure illusions. They are literally, to use a slang phrase, "all my eye."

Yet the Bible abounds with these phantasms. They are of various kinds, from little spectres to the great Ghost, commonly called Holy, who himself appears in a variety of forms. Such a fact is, however, not surprising when we consider that God's Word is full of the grossest superstitions. Its very author, when he came on earth in the person of Jesus Christ, actually thought that mad people had devils in them, and were to be cured by the exorcist instead of the doctor. Nothing unscientific or absurd need therefore surprise us in his writings. We ought rather, in reading them, to be thankful for the smallest mercies in the shape of knowledge and common sense.

Gospel Ghosts are the subject of this Romance, but I cannot treat them without some preliminary words on those of the Old Testament. We are very early introduced to one of these. The second verse of Genesis says that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." But as there were no eyes to view this ocean traveller, the very fish not being then in existence, we have no notion of its form or feature. All we can say is that it was the loneliest ghost on record, with the most miserable occupation. It was worse off than Noah, for although he sailed the seas for twelve months without sight of land, and must have been heartily sick of so much water, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he had a drop of "something short" inside his floating menagerie; especially when we reflect that the first thing he did after the Flood, directly he had offered his burnt offering to the Lord, was to get dead drunk, which seems to show his ardent love of the *cratur*.

The next ghost was "the Lord God," whom Adam and Eve heard "walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Scripture

states that they heard his *voice*, so he was probably holding a conversation with himself, as persons of weak intellect often do. This is quite in keeping with the sequel, which displays him in a dreadful passion at occurrences which anyone but a fool would have naturally expected. Yet this ghost is, in a manner, an advance on the first, having passed, as Herbert Spencer would say, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous state, from the simple to the complex. The "Spirit of the Lord" appears to have been a gaseous body, if I may so speak of a ghost; but the "Lord God" has a voice and a walking apparatus, and is therefore organic. I wonder how long this process of development took. The ghostly biologist who answers that question will settle a puzzling problem in chronology, namely, the interval of time between "in the beginning" and the creation of Adam.

After the Flood, and until the Jews settled down in Palestine, the Lord frequently appeared again. He visited Abraham several times, and on one occasion stopped to dinner. Two of his angels, or himself divided into two, called on Lot at Sodom, and put up with him for the night. He met Jacob near Jabbok brook and held a wrestling match with him, in which, after many hours' rough sport, he was at last defeated, although he dislocated his adversary's thigh. Moses saw him in a burning bush, in a public-house, and up a mountain, where he spent forty days with him and had a panoramic view of his "afterwards." Altogether Jahveh was a pretty busy ghost, until he found it more respectable and prudent to cultivate a retiring disposition.

Lastly, there were many angelic ghosts in the Old Testament who played various parts, such as heavenly messengers, promisers of children to barren wives, (these were doubtless young and good-looking), lying prophets, and wholesale murderers. But the most remarkable angels were those sons of God who saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and who were apparently the progenitors of a mongrel race of giants. It has, however, been suggested that this narrative was written by a subtle satirist who sailed as close to the wind as he could; that these sons of God were priests, a class always fond of the fair sex; and that the mongrel offspring were the bastard children they procreated.

The first Bible ghost, in the more modern sense of the word, is that of the prophet Samuel, who was raised by the witch of Endor. This old lady kept a "familiar spirit," and no doubt a bristly tom-cat. Her trade was summoning ghosts in the dead of night. She was one of the survivors of a numerous tribe of witches and wizards whom Saul had rooted out of the land in his vigorous and sensible reign; but in his decline, when the priests and conjurers were all against him, and he was himself troubled with fits of melancholy and superstition, he paid this old Hecate a visit. Apparently ashamed of his weakness, he went in disguise, and asked her to bring up Samuel. There was much haggling before she would begin the performance, for according to the

law her life was in danger, but at last she brought the old fellow up. Probably as business had been dull of late, she had grown unused to ghosts; at any rate, when she saw Samuel she screamed, and fancied she saw streams of spectres issuing from the ground. Samuel wore a mantle, so there are clothes in the spirit world, as the Spiritists of to-day aver, although some of their lady mediums have been detected playing the ghost themselves with devilish little on.

Samuel's ghost spoke, and all other ghosts indulge more or less in the same diversion. They generally talk utter nonsense, although Samuel's language was rather wicked than absurd. I should like to know what sort of voice he had. Superstition generally ascribes to ghosts the ghost of a voice. Savages describe the spirit-voice as a chirp or murmur, and the classic descriptions of Homer and Ovid are very similar. Shakespeare makes the King's ghost in *Hamlet* speak monotonous lines which we naturally associate with subdued accents; and the low mysterious tone is still affected by the "familiar spirits" of modern mediums. A screaming ghost would be a screaming farce. Those who wish to find the explanation of this and many other facts of Animism should consult Mr. E. B. Tylor's magnificent work on "Primitive Culture."

Now let us make a leap to the time of Elijah, who played an extraordinary trick with a ghost. He was lodging with a widow at Zarephath, and living on her miraculous barrel of meal and cruse of oil, which never failed, but gave forth perennial supplies of pancakes. This fortunate lady's boy fell ill and died, and she reproached the prophet with being the cause of her loss. He in turn gave the Lord a lecture on the subject, and asked what he meant by slaying the poor woman's son. Then Elijah carried the little corpse up into the garret he occupied rent free, laid it on his bed, "stretched himself upon the child three times," and besought the Lord to let its soul come back. His prayer was heard, the third stretch was lucky, "the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." Curiously there is a similar feat recorded of Elisha, who inherited Elijah's mantle, and probably all the rest of his paraphernalia. His hostess, however, was not a widow but a wife. Her husband was old, and she had no child when Elisha first came to their house, but that little defect was soon remedied. She had a son and heir, who grew big enough to carry his father's dinner to the reaping field, where alas! he was killed by a sunstroke. Elisha operated on the corpse as Elijah had done before him. He stretched himself on the child, mouth on mouth, eyes on eyes, and hands on hands, gave it a good warming, and then went downstairs to get up the steam again, perhaps over a bottle of inspiration. Being well primed, he ascended and gave the corpse another cuddle. This effort was crowned with complete success. The child's soul returned, he sneezed seven times, and opened his eyes, no doubt, thinking Elisha had been giving him snuff.

What a fine example of barbaric superstition! Among savages, such as the ancient Jews undoubtedly were, it is a common belief that the soul leaves the body when a man faints or dies, and may sometimes be brought back by calling on it; and thus, says Tylor, "the bringing back of lost souls becomes a regular part of the sorcerer's or priest's professions." Elijah and Elisha seem to have both been in this line of business, and these two cases may have been recorded merely as specimens of their skill.

And how interesting and instructive is that incident of the child sneezing seven times! The breath and the soul were the same thing, and both passed through the nose. God breathed into Adam's *nostrils* the breath of life. At the Flood all in whose *nostrils* was the breath of life died. Jacob, as Tylor says, prayed that man's soul might not thenceforth depart from his body when he sneezed. It has been a general custom to utter a pious ejaculation on sneezing; and when, after a good sneeze Christians say "God bless me!" they are unconsciously performing an ancient religious rite. Sternutation is widely associated with demoniacal possession. The idea appears among peoples so diverse as the Hindus, the Persians, the Kelts, the Kaffirs, and the Jews, not to mention a number of other races. The Messalians, an heretical sect, used to spit and blow their noses to expel the demons they might have drawn in with their breath. There are pictures of mediæval exorcists driving out devils through the patients' nostrils; and centuries earlier Josephus told of his seeing a certain Jew, named Eleazar, cure demoniacs by drawing the demons out through the same channel. Yes, the nose is as prominent in religious history as it is on our faces, and its intimate connection with the soul may explain why the priests have always led us by this particular organ.

Elisha's bones, although they could not resuscitate themselves, had the power of reviving others. A corpse dropped hurriedly into his sepulchre stood up alive and kicking. Ezekiel saw a whole valley of dry bones start into life again. Probably the old ghosts were ready to resume their bodies at a very short notice, for they were supposed to haunt the place of their burial. Quite another kind of ghost was the one that passed before the face of Eliphaz in the dead of night and made the "hair of his flesh" stand up like quills upon the fretful porcupine. Unfortunately we have no description of it; yet, as it preached a long sermon, we may conjecture that it was the ghost of a parson looking out for a fresh pulpit.

This preliminary dissertation on the apparitions of the Old Testament has proved longer than I expected; but it is necessary to my purpose, and it will enable the reader to understand the Gospel Ghosts.

Jesus Christ himself was considered a ghost by some of the early heretics. They could not conceive that Deity was born of a woman, ate, drank, and slept, and suffered an ignominious death; so they held that the Messiah was not a being of flesh and blood, but a phantasm. There is something to be said for this opinion



for the same Jesus who was crucified and buried ascended into heaven; and does not St. Paul say that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God?" But on the other hand there are the very plain unequivocal words which Luke puts into the mouth of Jesus on his appearance to the eleven, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." This seems decisive. Yet those fastidious heretics may be met half way, for if Jesus was not a ghost, he was the son of a ghost.

With the exception of those spirits Jesus was in the habit of casting out from people who never possessed them, a sprightly variety of which he sent into the Gadarean swine, the first authentic ghost he took in hand was that of Jairus's daughter. Some critics, among whom is Olshausen, throw doubt on this however. When Jesus came to raise the girl from the dead, in other words to call her ghost back, he said "the maid is not dead, but sleepeth." Those critics take this language literally, and assert that it was not a case of resurrection at all. When the doctors differ who shall decide? No doubt this is a very important question, but somehow the world is quite content to leave it unsettled, even though it remain open till the day of judgment.

Matthew, Mark and Luke narrate this story, but John does not. Mark and Luke both say that Jesus, after restoring the maid to her friends, charged them that they should tell no man, while Matthew says that "the fame hereof went abroad into all that land." This is a good illustration of Gospel Harmony. Yet it is fair to say that the different stories may be reconciled by supposing that Jesus told a white lie. He might have asked them to keep the miracle a secret, in order to get it well published.

Jesus raised up more than one person from the dead, as indeed was to be expected, for Rabbi Acha in the Talmud only expressed the general belief when he said that "in the Messianic time God will wake the dead, as he did before by Elijah, Elisha and Ezekiel." The second case was that of the widow's son at Nain. Jesus resuscitated him publicly before "much people" as he was being carried to the grave. Of course the young man, like the young maid, was never heard of again; and although the "rumor went forth through all Judæa," it never reached the ears of Matthew, Mark and John. Josephus did not hear of it, nor even Paul, for he told Agrippa that Christ was the first that rose from the dead, and in Corinthians (xv, 20) he calls him "the firstfruits of them that slept." For any useful result, or any conviction it produced, this miracle was as barren as the figtree.

Philostratus relates a similar story of Apollonius of Tyana, who met one day in the streets of Rome a damsel carried out to burial, followed by her betrothed, and by a weeping company. He bade them set down the bier, saying he would staunch their tears; and having enquired her name, whispered something in her ear, and then, taking her by the hand, he lifted her up, and she began straightway to speak, and returned to her father's house. This story is quite as beautiful as Luke's, and probably quite as true.

A far more beautiful story is told of Buddha. Professor Rhys Davids and other Buddhist scholars narrate it with slight variations, but it is more finely rendered by Mr. Edwin Arnold in his noble poem "The Light of Asia." A young mother brings the Master her dying child, bitten by a poisonous snake, and implores his aid. Gazing at her with his gentle eyes, and laying on her his patient hand, he says that there is one thing which might heal her grief and the boy's wound, if she could find it; a black mustard-seed, taken from a house where no father, mother, child or slave has died. But she seeks it in vain, for although those of whom she begs kindly offer her the seed, she cannot take it, because every house bears the taint of death; and she returns to the pitiful wise Master with the sad news.

"My sister! thou hast found," the Master said,  
 "Searching for what none finds—that bitter balm  
 I had to give thee. He thou lovedst slept  
 Dead on thy bosom yesterday: to-day  
 Thou know'st the whole wide world weeps with thy woe:  
 The grief which all hearts share grows less for one.  
 Lo! I would pour my blood if I could stay  
 Thy tears and win the secret of that curse  
 Which makes sweet love our anguish, and which drives—  
 O'er flowers and pastures to the sacrifice—  
 As these dumb beasts are driven—men their lords.  
 I seek that secret bury thou thy child.

How pathetic, yet how sane! How far above Luke's story of Christ, which teaches no lesson and touches no eternal problem! Yet Buddha was a "heathen moralist," who lived centuries before Christ was born.

Luke claims to have had "perfect understanding of all things from the very first," and he certainly beats the other evangelists in his account of the ruler's daughter. Yet he yields to reporter John in the case of Lazarus; in fact, John beats all three of his rivals hollow, for while he hunts up all the details of the gentleman's resurrection, they never once get on the scent. Lazarus was loved by Jesus; he lived and died, rose from the tomb, and lived and died again, unless he is still roaming the earth; yet Matthew, Mark and Luke never heard of him. What makes this ignorance still more striking is that John represents the raising of Lazarus as the fact which provoked the resentment of the chief priests and Pharisees, and led to the crucifixion of Christ.

Jesus knew that his friend Lazarus lay dying, but would not save his life, because he meant to work a bigger miracle. When he arrived at Bethany, Martha and Mary were surrounded with sympathetic friends, and weeping over their brother's grave. The scene was so affecting that "Jesus wept" too, although he knew, which they did not, that in less than a minute Lazarus would be restored to life. Jesus is called "the man of sorrows," and not without cause, for he could pipe his optics on the smallest provocation.

Lazarus had been dead four days, and his flesh was rather high. Martha said "he stinketh"; and St. Ambrose wrote that the smell was like Egyptian darkness, so thick that it could be felt. But Jesus, being the son of Jahveh, and used to the sickly odor of burnt offerings, was not deterred by such a trifle. Approaching the tomb, he first asked his celestial parent to back him up, and then shouted "Lazarus, come forth!" Whereupon the corpse started up all alive, but not kicking, for it was bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and must have looked remarkably like a bale of bacon. Lazarus was soon unpacked, and then he walked away into infinite space, for he was never heard of afterwards. Many people saw this miracle, but it was not mentioned at the trial of Jesus before Pilate. What a strange omission! If Lazarus had been produced in court, with the witnesses of his resurrection, is it likely that Pilate would have sentenced Jesus to death? Or, if the chief priests and Pharisees believed in the miracle, would they have tried to kill one who had proved himself the master of Death?

Why did Jesus *shout* "Lazarus, come forth"? Would not a *whisper* have done as well? There is a theatrical air about the whole performance. Rénan suggests that it was all a trick, got up between Lazarus and Jesus, when the latter's head was turned and his conscience perverted by the Messianic delusion. Dr. Davidson saves the credit of his Savior by impeaching John's accuracy, and charging him with "converting the Lazarus of the parable in Luke into a historical person." Keim also holds that "not a doubt can remain of the spuriousness of the whole story." A host of Biblical critics agree with this view, including Schenkel, Strauss, Baur, Weisse and Hilgenfeld.

What became of Lazarus after his resurrection? Scripture is silent, but tradition says he became Bishop of Marseilles, which is no doubt as true as that he wrote the "Marseillaise." Epiphanius relates that he lived thirty years after his "second birth." What a pity he did not occupy some of that time in writing his autobiography! The history of the four days he spent God knows where would have been the best bit of literary property in the market. There is a tradition that the first thing Lazarus asked on coming to, was whether he should die again; and on being told "Yes," he never smiled more. Had he then, like Jesus a little later, spent those four days in Hell? Or had he been to Heaven, and finding it dismally monotonous, as Revelation depicts, was he terrified at the thought of returning, and dwelling for ever with what Heine called "all the menagerie of the Apocalypse"? Robert Browning has brought great learning and subtlety to bear on this subject, in his Epistle of Kars-hish the Arab Physician, but of course he is a poet and not a theologian.

Jesus Christ's ghost will be dealt with in my next Romance, which I shall devote entirely to his resurrection and ascension. I conclude this one with a few words on the great ghost, the

ghost of ghosts, the Holy Ghost. Let us, dear reader, approach this mystical spirit with fear and trembling; for blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is a sin that will never be forgiven us in this world or the next. It leads as surely to the pit as jumping from the gallery of a theatre; and is all the more to be dreaded because nobody knows exactly what it is.

Men have speculated whether this being should be called he she, or it. But the incidents treated in my Romance of "A Virgin Mother" decisively settle that question. Mary "was found with child of the Holy Ghost." What shape the heavenly father of Jesus took when he visited Joseph's young woman is a moot point. Protestant writers shirk the subject, but Catholics go in for the dove or the pigeon. They ridicule the pagan story of Jove's making love to Leda in the form of a swan, and becoming the father of Castor and Pollux. But what difference is there between these two myths except in the size of the bird? Yet to laugh at the one is legitimate fun, while to laugh at the other is unpardonable sin. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost depends on a mere point in ornithology.

There is no doubt as to the Holy Ghost's form on his next appearance. When Jesus was baptised "he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." This is Matthew's account. Luke goes farther. He writes as though all the bystanders witnessed the marvel as well as Jesus, "The heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove." Fancy such an avatar occurring to-day, and some pious sportsman taking a pot shot at the sacred bird, and eating the Holy Ghost for supper. Fortunately the age of miracles is past, and we need not fear such a catastrophe.

The last appearance of the Holy Ghost was on that famous day of Pentecost, when he came in the form of tongues of fire on the heads of the twelve apostles. The effect of this visitation was singular; they all began to jabber strange tongues. Some of the auditors thought they were filled with the spirit, and others said they were drunk. A similar diversity of opinion has obtained since. Many men have been "filled with the Holy Ghost," like those captains of the first Salvation Army, have talked with strange tongues, have seen visions and dreamed dreams; and while some people have thought them inspired, others have thought them delirious. This latter class have ever, as in the Acts, been stigmatised as "mockers," but their number is rapidly increasing in this age of science and common-sense. They have always had the laugh on their side, and now the world is coming over too. A mighty roar of laughter is shaking the realms of superstition, fluttering all the ghosts, warning them to melt into thin air, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision faded, leave not a wrack behind."

PRICE ONE PENNY.

# A RISING GOD.

By G. W. FOOTE.

WE now approach the Romance of the Resurrection and the strange exploits of the famous Jerusalem ghost. Singular as it may appear, the "greatest religion in the world" is founded on the history of this phantom. For eighteen centuries it has rested the eternal welfare of mankind on a fable. Ever since St. Paul wrote "If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain," Christianity has staked everything on a mythical story, no more respectable than that of the Cock Lane ghost. The wild delusions of an hysterical woman, communicated to a multitude of others by a well known process of infusion, originated that Gospel of the Resurrection which is described as the Christian's support in life and consolation in death, and without which none of us should see salvation.

In the previous Romance of "Gospel Ghosts" I prepared the ground for this, and considerable space was devoted to the Old Testament ghosts because their treatment was essential to my purpose. My readers can now estimate the statements of Canon Westcott on this subject, and see through his sophistries. In his "Gospel of the Resurrection" he contends that Christ's disciples were not likely to have been deceived, because "there was no popular belief at the time which could have inspired them with a faith in an imaginary Resurrection." This writer presumes on his readers' ignorance. The resurrection of the dead was a primary doctrine of the Pharisees, and distinguished them from the Sadducees. These parties were the two great religious divisions of Judaism, the former representing popular Dissent and the latter the orthodox State Church. When Paul stood before the Sanhedrim, and was in danger for reviling the high priest Ananias, he dexterously availed himself of their jealousy by crying, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." This clever evasion set them by the ears at once, and "there arose a dissension." On a former occasion the Pharisees cornered Jesus with a puzzle that turned on their favorite doctrine; they asked him whose wife a woman seven times married would be at the resurrection. Canon Westcott's statement is thus belied by his own Scripture. And it is further belied by history, for the sect of Essenes, to which Jesus himself probably belonged, joined with the Pharisees in their opposition to the Mosaic doctrine of the Sadducees, and their acceptance of the belief in a future life. We have also seen that the raising of persons from the dead was not uncommon in the days of the prophets, that Jesus several

times performed the same feat, and that the Jews fully expected the Messiah to revive corpses after the manner of Elijah.

The learned Canon merely alludes to these significant facts, and then tries to nullify them by arguing that "the belief in the resuscitation of the dead to the vicissitudes of ordinary life would indispose for the belief in a rising to a life wholly new in kind and issue." Perhaps so, but what new feature was there in the story of Christ's resurrection? It is beyond all dispute that he was believed to have risen in the body. Beyond a certain capacity for mysteriously appearing and vanishing, and floating through closed doors, he displayed all the characteristics of a human being. He walked, talked and dined; and when the apostles imagined him a spirit, he repudiated the idea, and invited them to feel his muscle. True, he ascended into heaven before their eyes, but it was in a bodily form; and they were quite prepared to see him levitate, for Enoch and Elijah had gone aloft in that way, and could the Messiah do any less?

The idea of a lost leader's return is not novel. Witness the legends of Arthur, Arminius, Barbarossa, and Napoleon. Even Nero, as Suetonius relates, was expected to come again and resume his throne. And to this day the crazy Southcootians believe that their Joanna will revisit the earth. But perhaps the most signal parallel to the apostles' frame of mind is to be found in the story of Omar, who, when the report of Mohammed's death was brought, drew his scimitar, and swore he would kill the wretch who dared to say that the prophet of Allah could die.

Let it not be said that it was impossible for a legend concerning Jesus to grow up during the lifetime of his disciples. Light-foot well says that the Jews were perhaps the most superstitious people that ever lived. With equal truth Rénan asserts that "Palestine was one of the countries most in arrear in the science of the day; the Galilæans were the most ignorant of all the inhabitants of Palestine, and the disciples of Jesus might be reckoned among the most stupid Galilæans." There was nothing too extravagant for their credulity. Sixteen centuries later a similar legend to that of Jesus Christ arose among the followers of one of his compatriots. Sabbathai Sevi, in 1666, proclaimed himself the Messiah, and attracted a crowd of disciples. Being seized by the Sultan, who would not tolerate his vagaries, he had to face the grim alternative of making a summary exit from this world or becoming a Mussulman. He preferred conversion to execution, and lived until 1676, when he succumbed to a colic instead of the bowstring. "It might have been expected," says Milman, "that his sect, if it survived his apostacy, at least would have expired with his death; but there is no calculating the obstinacy of human credulity: his followers gave out that he was transported to heaven like Enoch and Elijah; and notwithstanding the constant and active opposition of the Jewish priesthood, the sect spread in all quarters." Now if, in the seventeenth century, such a legend could arise respecting a man who publicly

apostatized, and who, instead of suffering martyrdom, died of flatulence ; how much more easily, in the first century, might a similar legend gather round the memory of a nobler character, whose tragic end is one of the most pathetic episodes in human history.

Having in another volume admitted that our four gospels cannot be traced back farther than the second half of the second century, Canon Westcott is obliged to make much of the earlier epistles of St. Paul. The First of Corinthians is universally allowed to be authentic, and in the fifteenth chapter the great apostle gives his "testimony to Christ's resurrection." Paul writes that "he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures : And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve : After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once ; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James ; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." There is no idealism about this, says the learned Canon ; it is purely historic. He then arbitrarily fixes the date of Paul's conversion at "ten years after the Lord's death," and concludes that we have the unimpeachable witness of a contemporary. What marvellous logic ! What astounding ignorance of the laws of evidence !

Paul was not an actual witness of the Resurrection ; and as there is not the slightest evidence that he ever saw Jesus in the flesh, how could he recognise his apparition ? For ten years after the crucifixion Paul disbelieved the story of the risen Christ, and persecuted those who embraced it. He was not a dolt, but a man of sharp, inquiring intellect ; and surely he examined the story before he rejected it. Investigation and argument never convinced him of its truth ; it required a miracle to persuade him. And even that is open to doubt, for there are many who hold that he was converted by a sunstroke. On the road to Damascus, where he intended to ferret out the Christians, "suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven : and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?" This was not a case of sunstroke, say the apologists, for the narrative states that "the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man." But Paul himself, in relating the adventure (Acts xxii, 9), says that they "saw indeed the light, and were afraid ; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." On the whole it is clear that he only heard the voice, while neither he nor they beheld any apparition. It was clearly a case of sunstroke attended with hallucination. Paul may be pardoned for yielding to delusions at a time of intense excitement, but there can be no excuse for the Christian apologists who share them in cold blood.

Paul obviously considers this "appearance" of Christ of the same kind as the others. He made no distinction between sub-

jective and objective experiences. Of what value, then, is his testimony? And how can he stand sponsor for the other witnesses he enumerates but does not produce?

Who were the "five hundred brethren" that saw the risen Christ? Why did not Paul record their evidence fully? Why were not the survivors brought before a responsible committee, and their examinations taken down and preserved? And how did there happen to be "five hundred brethren" assembled in one place, when the disciples, immediately after the Ascension "together were about an hundred and twenty"? Did Jesus descend again from heaven, and give another farewell performance, positively for the last time?

Now let us come to the four gospels. These were not in existence until long after Jesus and all his disciples had mouldered to dust. They are not contemporary witness, but the voice of tradition, put into a literary form by unknown writers. As might be expected, they agree considerably as to the *sayings* of Jesus, but differ widely as to his *doings*; and their disagreement is naturally greatest with respect to the *supernatural* portions of his history.

Matthew states that at the crucifixion there was darkness over all the land for three hours. Luke says it extended "over all the earth." Mark and John never heard of it, nor did Josephus, who was also a Jew. It also escaped the notice of every profane historian. Pliny, Suetonius, Tacitus and Plutarch do not mention this extraordinary occurrence, although two of them carefully recorded prodigies and wonders. Matthew also states that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Luke of course agrees, and Mark and John are again silent. An earthquake is introduced to account for this rent, but how could an earthquake tear a soft, flexible substance without throwing down the solid structure to which it was attached? Matthew further alleges that this capricious earthquake opened the graves, and that many of the sleeping saints arose and strolled into Jerusalem. Mark and John are again silent. Even Luke throws up the sponge, and leaves Matthew in possession of the field.

Earthquakes were cheap enough in that superstitious age, and ghosts were as plentiful as blackberries. No wonder the Christians borrowed a few for their Savior's death. How could they do less, when as much was done for Pagan kings and emperors? Shakespeare, who let nothing slip, notices how

"In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mighty Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets."

Why are not the prodigies related of the death of Cæsar as credible as those related of the death of Christ?

Matthew's use of the word "saints" in this story is very singular. As they died before Jesus, they were not redeemed



by his precious blood. Perhaps it is true, as Irenæus asserts, that Jesus lived till fifty; and thus a crowd of disciples might have gone to their graves before he gave up the ghost. And what became of the "saints" after their resurrection? Why did not Paul produce a few of them instead of vaguely alluding to those "five hundred brethren"? According to Eusebius, Quadratus presented an apology to the Emperor Hadrian about A.D. 120, in which he asserted that some of them were still surviving! Many of the biggest lies on record were told by those early Christians; and if the Devil is the father of liars as well as lies, they have a good claim to be considered his eldest children.

In what condition did the "saints" arise? Were they stinking like Lazarus? They were not spirits, but resuscitated bodies. Did they return home "like ghosts to trouble joy," as the Lotos Eaters say in Tennyson's poem? Surely there must have been great confusion. The late Mr. Solomons probably found Mrs. Solomons married again to Mr. Isaacs, and so reconciled to her lot as to resent his impertinent intrusion. Jesus would of course be obliged to act as umpire; and in deciding whose wife Mrs. Solomons-Isaacs was, he would be unable to resort to the evasion with which he baffled the Pharisees. "Don't tell me that in the kingdom of heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage," roars Solomons, "this ain't heaven; and I want my wife." "No, no," shrieks Isaacs; "he shan't have her. Send that preposterous fellow back to his grave, and tell him to lie there quietly, without plaguing his old neighbours, or there'll be a breach of the peace, Mr. Jesus." Let us draw a veil over the dreadful scene.

It has been doubted whether Jesus actually died on the cross. Crucifixion was very slow murder to a man in the prime of life. The victims sometimes lingered for days, perishing at last from sheer exhaustion. Jesus was only on the cross for a few hours, and when Joseph of Arimathæa applied for the body "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead." This is Mark's version. John, however, says that he was hastily removed with the two thieves, "that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day." Considering these facts, some have held that Jesus did not die then, that the resurrection and ascension were "a plant," arranged between him and the disciples, and that he retired to an Essenian monastery, where he spent the remainder of his days in quiet obscurity.

Matthew describes the burial. Joseph of Arimathæa, lays the body in a new tomb, rolls a big stone against the entrance, and goes home to supper. In that sepulchre Jesus performed the marvellous feat of remaining three days between Friday night and Sunday morning. Perhaps he reckoned the nights as overtime, but even then his arithmetic was rather elastic.

While Jesus was putting in three days' time between Friday night and Sunday morning, the chief priests and Pharisees were also acting in an extraordinary way. They went and told Pilate

that Jesus had promised to rise again after three days, and asked him to take precautions against his disciples' playing the part of body-snatchers. He gave them a watch of soldiers, and they made the sepulchre still surer by sealing the stone. But in the night there was another earthquake; an angel flew down from heaven and rolled back the stone, sat on it, and frightened the keepers into fits. In the confusion Jesus picked himself up and walked off to borrow a suit of clothes. The watch then went and told the chief priests and elders, who gave them "large money," asked them to say that the disciples came by night and stole the body while they slept, and promised to make it all right with Pilate.

Was there ever a sillier story? The big-wigs of Jerusalem had executed Jesus as "a deceiver." Surely, then, when they found he was not, when they learnt that he had angels in his retinue and was lord of death, they would have trembled with fear, and repented in sackcloth and ashes. Deceiving the people in this extremity was simply asinine, for that would be no protection against *him*. Nor is it likely that the soldiers would say they had slept at their posts, when it was an offence punishable with death. The promise to pacify Pilate was all fudge, for the Governor and the Sanhedrim lived in a constant state of mutual enmity. Regard it how you will, this story is absurd. It is the work of a man who knew nothing about the political and social condition of Jerusalem.

But this is not all. How did the priests come to know that Jesus prophesied his resurrection? His very disciples were ignorant of the fact (John xx., 9) and how could the priests be aware of what was unknown to them? Fortunately, there is a little sentence in Matthew's narrative which throws a flood of light on the whole affair. The saying that the disciples stole the body, he says, "is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." Until this day! Does not this show that the story was written long after date? Does it not allow scope for the introduction of any quantity of legend and mythology?

The contradictions of the four gospels now come fast and thick. In their stories of the visit to the sepulchre, of Christ's first appearance, of his subsequent interviews with his disciples, and of his final ascension to heaven, they differ hopelessly. Such conflicting evidence would be laughed out of any court of law, and shall it be accepted in the high court of reason? These inspired writers scarcely agree on a single point, while their disagreements are numerous and essential. I cannot deal with them all, but I select a few typical cases.

Matthew brings two women to the tomb, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary." Mark brings these two with a third called Salome. Luke ignores Salome, and brings a third called Joanna, with "other women" whose names are not mentioned. John brings Mary Magdalene alone. Here is gospel harmony for you! However, they all agree that mad Mary Magdalene was there if

anybody was. Jesus had cast seven devils out of her; in other words, she was afflicted with hysteria; and it is quite possible that she invented the whole story of the resurrection, and forced it on the disciples by mere force of impudence and iteration.

Matthew says there was an earthquake, and that an angel rolled away the stone and sat on it. Mark says the women saw no angel, but the stone was rolled away, and on looking in they saw a young man in white. Luke also omits the angel, but he places two men in shiny suits in the sepulchre. John merely says that they found the sepulchre open, without seeing any angel or man, although two angels were there afterwards when Mary Magdalene came the second time. The wonder is that the crazy creature did not see a million.

Matthew says that Jesus appeared first to the women. Mark says that he appeared to Mary Magdalene alone. Luke says that his first appearance was to two of the disciples as they were walking to Emmaus. John agrees for once with Mark.

Matthew says that the angel told the disciples to go into Galilee, where they should see their Master; and Mark agrees with him. Luke omits this message, and keeps the disciples in Jerusalem. John also omits the message, although he takes Jesus and the disciples to Galilee. And right on the heels of John comes the Acts, stating that Jesus and his disciples never went into Galilee at all, but that he expressly "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem."

Gospel harmony is like Dutch harmony, in which each man sings his own tune, without caring a curse for his neighbors. We have had some good illustrations already, but they are tame to those that follow.

The gospels differ as to the subsequent appearances of Christ as well as about the first. Matthew says that he appeared only once, just before going aloft. Mark says he appeared three times: to the women, to two disciples as they walked, and to the eleven. Luke says he appeared twice: to the two pedestrians, and to the eleven in a room. John says he appeared four times: to Mary Magdalene, to the disciples in a room without Thomas, to the same again with Thomas, and to the same once more at Tiberias. John only tells the dramatic story of doubting Thomas Didymus, and of course he is the only evangelist who introduces the spear-thrust. It was necessary that when sceptical Tom wanted to plunge his hand in his Savior's entrails, he should find a ready-made hole.

When Jesus appeared to the eleven in a third-floor back he must have floated through the door or crept through the keyhole. Yet he gave them ocular and palpable proof that he was not a spirit, but good solid flesh and bone. Luke and John both make him eat broiled fish and honeycomb with his disciples, the undigested remnants of which he appears to have carried in his stomach to heaven.

I now come to the Ascension, or the flight of the Jerusalem

ghost. Of course the Christians were obliged to get rid of their "resurrected" Savior in some way. They could not produce him when people began to inquire, and so they had to account for his disappearance. Only one resource was possible. They reported that he had "gone up." But they did this in the clumsiest fashion, and their various accounts are a remarkable instance of "gospel harmony." Matthew (that is, the first gospel; for Matthew had as much to do with it as the man in the moon) does not even narrate the ascension. He vaguely hints that Jesus evanesced after appearing to the eleven disciples who were left after Judas stretched his own neck, up "a mountain" somewhere in Galilee. John (or the fourth gospel) breaks off with a fine piece of buncombe, and leaves Jesus flitting about in the world like a disconsolate bat. The whole positive story of the ascension lies between Mark and Luke. Luke says that Jesus ascended from Bethany, a short distance from Jerusalem, on the very day of his resurrection, or, at the latest, the next morning. Mark, on the contrary, without any precision as to time, distinctly states that he ascended from Galilee, at least sixty miles from Jerusalem. It cannot be said that they agree as to time; it can certainly be said that they differ as to place; and this difference puts them both out of court until one or the other can find a corroborating witness. There is only one more witness to examine—the anonymous author of the undated "Acts of the Apostles." He agrees with Mark as to the place, but differs from both Mark and Luke as to the time; for he plainly says that Jesus spent forty days (off and on) with his disciples before levitating through the clouds.

There is a significant statement in this last account. Jesus was "taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." That is, he was lost in a cloud, just as they were. With a little licence in metaphor, we might say that the whole thing concluded in smoke. And this is the end of the Rising God.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## THE BIBLE MENAGERIE.

By G. W. FOOTE.

MENAGERIES are delightful places to visit. The objects of the show are not only interesting but alive. It is not art but nature. The animals do not keep one posture and a fixed gaze. They exhibit the varying emotions of conscious vitality, in limbs, features and eyes. Unfortunately, however, the Bible menagerie is cold and dead. Many of its specimens, it is true, belong to species which still inhabit the earth; but others alas! are without any living counterparts, and there are sceptics wicked enough to suggest that they are artificial products of a pious imagination.

The first animals specifically mentioned in the Bible are "great whales." God made a quantity of these on the fifth day of creation out of the same material from which he manufactured everything else, namely Nothing. The Revised Bible calls them "great sea-monsters." Calvin translates the Hebrew word *tanmin* as tunny fish. Patrick thinks it means the crocodile, and Adam Clarke any large aquatic animal. What a beautifully clear language Hebrew is, and what a happy family are the commentators!

Job is supposed to refer to one of these "great whales" in his fantastic description of leviathan, a creature which the Revised Bible degrades into a crocodile. Rabbi Kimehi says it is the same animal mentioned in the Creation story, and the largest fish in the sea. But whether leviathan was a whale or a crocodile, there are no specimens of either now extant in the least resembling Job's, with its "comely proportions," its pyrotechnic "neesings," its eyes "like the eyelids of the morning," and its breath that could light a fire without matches. The author of the Book of Job was a poet, and he seems to have used all the license of his tribe in this piece of description. If he were alive now he might earn a good living by drawing up the advertisements for Wombwell's menagerie or the Bank Holiday announcements for "the Zoo."

A still more distinguished member of the "great whale" family was the interesting mammal that so obligingly took in Mr. Jonah out of the wet, when he was literally about to perish from water on the brain. We have already related the prophet's adventures, and at present we are only concerned with his three-days' companion. How the hospitable creature got Mr. Jonah down is a debatable question. Without a miracle, the gullet of a whale will only accommodate an ordinary herring. What a distention its poor throat must have suffered! In every way it was a frightful

*stretch.* The Talmudic writers give many interesting details of this animal's character. They say it possessed seven eyes, one for every day in the week. They also assert that it was a male, and that Mr. Jonah, finding its entrails rather restricted, besought Jehovah to change his quarters. He was then transferred to a female; but as she was in an interesting condition, Mr. Jonah found his accommodation still more limited; and he was therefore compelled to ask Jehovah to shift him back to his original apartments. Whether male or female, the poor whale must have been sadly punished by entertaining a man in its belly for three days and nights. What a horrid stoppage of the bowels! There was plenty of emetic in the shape of salt water, but it would not operate until the Lord's time was come. Some Arabic writers, in opposition to Jesus Christ and the book of Jonah, assign forty days, instead of three, as the period of Mr. Jonah's residence in the whale's interior. The supposition is too cruel. Anyhow, it was a wonderful fish; and any aquarium that possessed one like it, as well as a preacher who could stand being swallowed and vomited, would soon make a large fortune. There might be a performance twice a week, and man and whale could have Sunday to themselves for rest and devotion.

The Book of Jonah describes the animal that took him for a deep-sea excursion as "a great fish," and Bochart and other commentators have opined that it was a shark, some of that species being quite capable of swallowing and containing a man. But sharks have an awkward habit of "chawing" with their formidable rows of teeth; and Mr. Jonah's condition, after passing that ghastly barricade, would defy surgery. Fortunately we have the authority of Jesus Christ for saying that the animal was a whale. Yet this makes the Bible contradict science or itself, for a whale is not a fish, although it lives in the sea.

Mr. Adam and Mrs. Eve are the next animals the Bible mentions. One was made out of mud, and the other out of a spare rib. Both were modelled like their maker, who is therefore, we presume, bisexual. With the scripture in their hands, the Christian priests still maintain that man is the image of God. If the Almighty is like some of them he is very ugly. Mr. Adam doubtless differed a good deal from the men of to-day. He lived nine hundred and thirty years, and according to Jewish tradition he was several hundred feet long. His skeleton, if it is ever discovered, will tax the resources of our largest museums.

The Bible menagerie is well supplied with serpents. One of these is a truly remarkable creature. It held a conversation with Mrs. Eve, and introduced her to the forbidden fruit. She was not at all astonished at its powers of speech, and we may infer that serpents talked in those days. God was asleep or off duty at the time. When he discovered the serpent's trick, he cursed it, dooming it to go upon its belly and eat dust all the days of its life. Clearly, therefore, Mrs. Eve's serpent must have peram-

bulated on its back, its head, or its tail; unless we allow, with Josephus, that it walked on legs, besides possessing a human voice. Adam Clarke, in a learned disquisition on the many renderings of the Hebrew *machash*, concludes that it means an ape, and perhaps an orang-outang. What a pity the world has lost the primitive zoological dictionary! It was compiled by Mr. Adam, who gave names to every beast of the field and every fowl of the air as the Lord paraded them before the grand stand. No doubt the volume was ornamented with cuts by the old man or one of the boys, who had plenty of leisure for the work. If it existed now, it would not only be the most precious of ancient relics, but throw a clarifying light on the vexed question whether Mrs. Eve succumbed to a serpent or a monkey.

Mrs. Eve's tempter is not the only talking animal in the Bible menagerie. There is at least another, namely Balaam's ass, whose exploits we have already narrated. This four-legged wonder, like most asses, had a faculty for seeing angels. The Lord opened its mouth, as he has the mouth of many an ass since. From this fact we judge it was not a loquacious animal, like its modern successors. According to the story, its eloquence required to be stimulated with a stick: an excellent hint to congregations that are troubled with a dull preacher.

Recurring to serpents, the Lord sent some fiery ones to bite the Jews for murmuring against his commissariat. The bite of this reptile was mortal to "much people." Some of them, however, recovered by a sort of homœopathic treatment. They looked at a serpent of brass stuck on a pole, and were healed. We commend this remedy to the attention of the British Government in India. It would probably save the lives of thousands of Hindoos. Should there be any difficulty in finding a brazen serpent, any Christian church or Missionary Society could easily furnish one, and between them they might supply every district with one of its own. We may add that the fiery serpents in Numbers are *serpentine seraphim*. They are mentioned by Paul (Hebrews i., 7), and by Isaiah (vi., 2), who locates them with the Lord of Hosts and gives them hands and speech. God's command to Moses is not "Make thee a fiery serpent," as the Bible renders it, but "Make thee a seraph." The whole legend is probably connected with animal worship. The Egyptians adored the ibis, the cat and the crocodile, and the Jews who had resided in the Nile valley were naturally infected with the same superstition. When Jehovah and Moses had apparently ended in smoke at Mount Sinai, the chosen people called on Aaron to make them a new god, and he obligingly made them a golden calf (out of *their* metal, of course, not *his*), which they danced round naked, to the great disgust of Moses, although he had just viewed the Lord's seat of honor. Aaron's calf is very suggestive of the Egyptian worship of Apis. The Jews have had a sneaking fondness for the golden calf ever since. Even so late

as the reign of Jeroboam (1 Kings xii., 28, 29) they worshipped two golden calves at Dan and Beth-el, and the brazen serpent remained till the time of Hezekiah. According to the Bible (2 Kings xviii., 4) it was the original article manufactured by Moses. Hem!

Related to the fiery serpents are the dragons which are mentioned fourteen times in the Bible. The best description we know of this fabulous monster is in the eleventh Canto of the first Book of Spenser's "Faerie Queene"; a work no less romantic than the Bible, and far more delightful. Dragons could walk or fly; their shape was something like a lizard's; they were covered with hard scales; their tails were long and powerful; they had "deep devouring jaws" with several ranks of terrible teeth; and their claws were viciously keen and strong. Fourteen times does the word of God certify to this animal's existence, and who shall eliminate it from the Bible menagerie? Perish the thought! Whoever doubts the existence of dragons is an unbeliever, and all unbelievers shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire.

The most remarkable dragon was the one seen by St. John in his holy nightmare. It was "a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." What a tail! And what a tale! St. John shines forth as the boss stretcher, and O Arabian Nights and Baron Munchausen, hide your diminished heads.

Another flying animal is the *Columba Paracletus*, the holy dove or pigeon, the third person of the blessed Trinity—in short the Holy Ghost. It moved over the face of the waters in the reign of "Chaos and old Night," and visited the Virgin Mary after the manner of Leda's swan. Jove, however, like his bird, was the more powerful, or his mistress was the more fruitful; for twins sprang from his embrace, while Jahveh's only produced a lackadaisical youth with corkscrew curls.

Flying also, and serpentine, is the cockatrice, which the Revised Bible has changed to a basilisk, although they are the same thing. This marvellous creature is several times mentioned in holy writ. Sir Thomas Browne makes it the subject of a chapter in his "Vulgar Errors." "Such an animal there is," he says, "if we evade not the testimony of Scripture." The quaint and learned old doctor gives a list of profane writers who have mentioned it, from Pliny to Scaliger, and gravely asserts on the latter's authority that "a basilisk was found at Rome in the days of Leo the Fourth." The modern basilisk, according to Browne, "is generally described with legs, wings, a serpentine and winding tail, and a crest or comb somewhat like a cock. But the basilisk of elder times was a proper kind of serpent, not above three palms long." Winged or not, it had two peculiarities. It killed with its glances, and it was hatched by a toad or a serpent from



a cock's egg.\* We should like to see such a cock. It would be a knowing old bird. The only cock, in our opinion, likely to do the feat, was the one that crowed at Peter; and we daresay the apostle would share our view of that astonishing fowl.

It is certainly surprising that the Bible menagerie should contain a cockatrice, but we need not wonder at the ancient Jews believing in the existence of such a creature, for Mr. B. H. Cowper justly remarks that "The race of Rabbis delighted in creating animals otherwise unknown in heaven above or earth below."† They sported a wild cock, whose feet rested on the earth while its head touched heaven; and a bird called the zig, of such magnitude, that when it spread out its wings it caused an eclipse of the sun. Another extraordinary fowl was so colossal that one of its eggs, dropping on the earth, submerged sixty villages, and broke down three hundred cedars. Eggs like that would be dirt cheap at thirteenpence a dozen.

Among the unclean animals forbidden to the Jews by the Levitical law were "fowls that creep, going upon all four." These four-legged birds would be very interesting to the ornithologist. Two verses farther (Leviticus xi., 21) we are introduced to creeping things "which have legs above their feet." What a delightful novelty it would be to discover some of the creeping things, suggested by this text, with their feet above their legs! Locusts, beetles and grasshoppers are not considered edible now, but Moses recommended them to the Jews. Yet he prohibited jugged hare on the ground that the hare "cheweth the cud" and is therefore unclean. This is one of the Mistakes of Moses. The hare is not a ruminant. No doubt the inspired penman observed that the hare has a habit of moving its jaws when resting, and thus fell in to a very natural error. But why did not the Lord set him straight on this point? And why also (we may inquire) did the Lord take so much trouble in the time of Moses to decide what animals were clean and what unclean, when the distinction was well known before the Flood? (Gen. vii., 2).

May we not, after all, conclude that the Levitical law with respect to clean and unclean animals was borrowed from Egypt? Porphyry tells us that "the Egyptian priests abstained from the flesh of all solid-hoofed quadrupeds, which had toes and no horns, and from all birds of prey and from fish." Lane says that the modern Egyptians will not eat fish without scales. According to Josephus, Manetho accused the Jews of being turned out of

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\* So late as 1710 the French Academy received a memoir from M. Lapeyronie, of Montpellier, on some "cock's eggs" brought to him by a farmer. Some learned blockheads examined one, and found no yolk, but a colored particle in the centre, which they took to be the young serpent. The cock was dissected, but the farmer brought more eggs. They were laid by his hens!

† Article on the Talmud, *Journal of Sacred Literature*, Jan. 1868

Egypt because they were leprous and impure. Pig's flesh was said to promote skin disease, and the Jews were stringently forbidden to touch it. Abstention from pork has ever since been a prime article of their faith. But whose were those swine into which Jesus sent a legion of devils? Perhaps the animals were bred for the export trade, as the Jew butchers in Russia sell *kosher* meat to their co-religionists and dispose of all the bad to the Gentiles. Yet the miracle was rather rough on the unfortunate porkers, and Jesus Christ evidently did not agree with Charles Lamb on the subject of Roast Pig.

Among the very small animals, smaller than locusts, beetles and grasshoppers, the Lord's peculiar favorite is the louse; and perhaps it was for this reason that the pious genius of Robert Burns immortalised the creature. The magicians of Egypt kept up with Messrs. Moses and Aaron in their first three performances. They turned their rods into serpents; after *all* the water in Egypt was turned into blood, they turned the *rest* into blood; and they brought up frogs galore as well as their opponents. But when the Hebrew conjurers turned all the dust of Egypt into lice, the native magicians gave up the competition. "This is the finger of God," they cried. They recognised his trademark. When they saw the lice they knew the Lord was shaking himself to some purpose.

We come now to the cherubim, a curious kind of fowl, generally depicted by Bible illustrators with plenty of head and no tail, all stem and no stern. They are graphically described by Ezekiel (x., 12, 14). They had four faces, which is twice as many as some Christians have; a cherub's, a man's, a lion's and an eagle's. Their bodies, backs, hands and wings were covered with eyes, so that there was no getting round them. Saint John (Revelation iv., 6—8) improves upon Ezekiel by splitting this composite creature into four separate ones, omitting the cherub however, and substituting a calf. These four beasts have six wings each, and are "full of eyes before and behind." They are a sort of body-guard to the Lord, and protect his throne against Republicans and Socialists. No doubt they face the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, and turn their many-eyed posteriors to their sovereign, who probably dotted them with optics in that quarter to break the monotony and give the surface an air of intelligence. We presume it would be blasphemy to compare these creatures with Argus of the Greek mythology, who had a hundred eyes, only two of which slept at a time. What a price Barnum would give for a couple of cherubim! He might sell Jumbo and the white elephant, and make a magnificent fortune on the Hebrew wonder. Walk up, walk up! ladies and gentlemen; see the four-headed marvel with one leg and two million eyes, just purchased at immense cost from Messrs. Ezekiel and St. John, head keepers of the Bible menagerie, and warranted by the Pope of Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We dare say Barnum would offer a good price for a pair of unicorns. This animal is mentioned seven times in the Bible. Daniel's bear (vii., 5) with three ribs in its mouth, would also be a catch; or one of Isaiah's satyrs (xiii., 21) which the Revised Bible rashly changes into he-goats; or the horses of fire, like the flaming steeds of Apollo, that carried Elijah to heaven; or Aaron's blooming rod that turns into a serpent and swallows other reptiles like greased lightning. A few specimens from what Heine calls the Menagerie of the Apocalypse would also be a great attraction. The Son of Man (i., 13-16) with white woolly hair, brass feet, a voice like a cataract, and fiery eyes, doing the sword trick. The lamb (v., 6) with seven horns and seven eyes. The locusts (ix., 7-10) shaped like horses, with men's faces, women's hair, lion's teeth, scorpion's tails, iron breast-plates and golden crowns. The leopard (xiii., 1, 2) with bear's feet, a lion's mouth, seven heads and ten horns. To these curiosities might be added one of the antediluvian giants (Genesis vi., 4). These personages undoubtedly existed, although the Revised Bible is ashamed of them, and hides them behind the Hebrew *Nephilim*. They are such monsters (Numbers xiii., 33) that ordinary men look like grasshoppers beside them. There might also be included a specimen or two of those hardy Egyptian cattle that were first killed by the murrain, then plagued with boils, and afterwards killed again with fiery hail (Exodus ix).

Behemoth might likewise have figured in the collection, if it had not been degraded into a commonplace character in the Revised Bible. Our juvenile imagination was inflamed by the extraordinary description in the fortieth chapter of Job. "Behold now behemoth," exclaims the Lord, and we pictured an animal as big as a cathedral. Alas for the romantic fancies of youth! Behemoth turns out to be merely our old friend the hippopotamus. It must, however, have suffered an alteration since the days of Job, for we do not find at present that "his force is in the navel of his belly."

We may here observe that many animals in the Bible menagerie are wrongly ticketed, especially those in the eleventh of Leviticus. The eagle should be the vulture, the vulture the kite, the kite the red kite, the owl the ostrich, the nighthawk the owl, the cuckoo the gull, the ferret the gecko, the chameleon the frog, the mole, the chameleon, the bittern, the porcupine, the swan the ibis, the heron the grasshopper. At least this is what we gather from the Revised Bible and the commentators.

There is a dog in the Bible menagerie but it is treated with great contempt. "By the law," says Cruden, "it was declared unclean, and was very much despised among the Jews: the most offensive expression they could use, was to compare a man to a dead dog." What disgusting ingratitude to one of man's best friends! The dog has played an important part in the history of civilisation, and is held in esteem by nearly every people

except the Jews. The Zend Avesta enjoins kindness to our canine companions, because he who made man made the dog also. Compare this with Paul's selfish exclamation "Doth God care for oxen?" (1 Corinthians ix., 9). Before Christians are able to display any care for the lower animals, they must neglect the teachings of the Bible, and expel the virus of Judaism from their blood. The most noble and pathetic lines on a dog in the English language were written by the sceptical Byron.

The last animals we can refer to in the Bible menagerie are angels. What their exact shape is no man knoweth, but as they are usually represented with wings, we may regard them as a species of fowl; although, curiously enough, Jacob saw them, in his dream, climbing a ladder. But perhaps, as the schoolboy said, it was moulting time, and the angels were disabled from flying. According to the Psalms (lxxviii., 24, 25) they live on manna, a large supply of which was sent down to the wandering Jews from the heavenly larder. They are not, however, incapable of eating a meat dinner, for two of them (Genesis xviii.) sat down with Abraham and the Lord to a succulent repast of roast veal. But there is no such savory dish in heaven; the *menu* is most monotonous—manna for breakfast, manna for dinner, manna for tea, and manna for supper. No wonder the Jews tired of it, and longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. Add to this that angels have no sex, and neither marry nor give in marriage, and you will be able to form some idea of the happy prospect in store for you when you join the heavenly band. It is true that the sons of God, in Genesis, who saw the daughters of men that they were fair, have been regarded as angels by some subtle commentators, who could see as far into a millstone as most of their neighbors; and undoubtedly there is a good deal to be said for the conjecture. But, on the other hand, nobody is bound to believe it; and, besides, even if angels went courting in those days, there may have been a revolution in their physiology since, or the Lord, being a jealous God, may have unmanned his courtiers, to prevent their fawning on any objects but himself. From the language of Jesus Christ and the revelation of Saint John, we infer that Paradise is filled with angelic eunuchs, eating manna and singing psalms for ever and ever. Oh what must it be to be there!

PRICE ONE PENNY.

# THE CRUCIFIXION.

By G. W. FOOTE.

THE poet Wordsworth pictures a "fingering slave," so eager in the pursuit of science, and so lost to all sense of decency, that he "would peep and botanise upon his mother's grave." There are also many orthodox Christians who will start at the idea of the Crucifixion of their blessed Savior being included in these Bible Romances. Nothing is sacred to a sapper, says the French song; and these irate believers will exclaim that nothing is sacred to a Freethinker. Some of them will go farther and indulge in epithets and expletives that leave Wordsworth's reprobation far behind. Let me, however, beseech my ruffled critics to pause and reflect. I do not propose to laugh at the Crucifixion, or to treat it as a subject for jest; for the tragedies of life are truly sacred, whether enacted in a palace or a cottage, or under the infinite cope of heaven. I would no more mock Jesus on his cross than I would mock Prometheus on his rock. My purpose is different. I wish to show that the Gospel story of the Crucifixion is pure romance from beginning to end; that the evangelists are hopelessly at variance with each other; that their narratives betray a gross ignorance of Jewish law and custom; and that if Jesus Christ did "suffer under Pontius Pilate," there is no authentic history of how and why his sufferings were inflicted. My space does not allow me to go into all the details of this subject; I shall therefore be obliged to deal with its broad features and salient points.

According to the story, why did Jesus go to Calvary? His preaching, miracles and popularity, had excited the enmity of the priests. These Jerusalem sky-pilots knew he was master of Life and lord of Death, for they were apprised of his having raised corpses from the tomb, and restored them to their old board and lodging. Yet, with these facts before their eyes, or in their minds, they sought to put the miracle-worker himself out of the way; and a greater marvel still, they succeeded in doing it. He was perfectly well-known, yet they paid one of his disciples to point him out; and they arrested him in the garden of Gethsemane, although the mere sound of his voice flung his apprehenders on their backs. Nay more, when peppery Peter drew a sword, and cut off an ear of one of them, Jesus actually picked it up and fastened it on again. Most men would be inclined to let such a miraculous person alone; but those obstinate Jews persisted in their design in

spite of heaven and hell. They were always a stiff-necked and perverse people.

Matthew, Mark and Luke, represent Jesus as brought before Caiaphas for examination, while John places the trial in the house of Annas. Whichever place we take, the story is equally incredible. The Judges who were trying the culprit would certainly not walk about the room with the witnesses, the servants, and the crowd; much less would they spit upon and revile him. There remains a still more fatal objection. Jesus could not have been tried by priests, whether they were high or low. Let us hear a learned Jewish rabbi on this point:—"The whole trial, from the beginning to the end, is contrary to Jewish law and custom as in force at the time of Jesus. No court of justice with jurisdiction in penal cases could or ever did hold its session in the place of the high priest. There were three legal bodies in Jerusalem to decide penal cases: the great Sanhedrim, of seventy-one members, and the two minor Sanhedrim, each of twenty-three members. The court of priests had no penal jurisdiction except in the affairs of the temple service, and then over priests and Levites only."\*

How then, Christians will ask, did the Jewish writers of the Gospels fall into such a glaring error? The answer is simple. The Gospels were not written by disciples of Jesus, or by Jews at all. They were composed in Greek, nobody knows where or by whom, more than a hundred years after the alleged Crucifixion.†

The subsequent trial before Pilate is also full of fancies. We pass by the absurd statement that the Roman governor at Jerusalem sent a prisoner to Herod who ruled in Galilee merely because the man was born there; which is as silly as the supposition that a Frenchman who committed a murder in England would be sent for trial to Paris. Pilate's wife sent to her husband on the judgment-seat to say that she had suffered a bad dream about Jesus, and that he was innocent and should be acquitted. A very likely message to a Roman governor in the reign of Tiberius! Pilate himself "finds no fault" in Jesus, and afterwards sentences him to death. Another likely circumstance! He exculpates himself by washing his hands in public, to symbolise his guiltlessness of the man's blood, and to throw it upon the Jews. What transparent absurdity! Such an act would be meaningless to a Roman, and it was more than Pilate's life was worth to show such contempt for the imperial law. Tiberius would have whipped off his head in a jiffy.

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\* Rabbi Wise, "Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth," p. 66.

† "There is no evidence that either the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, or the other writings, as we have them, existed within a hundred and twenty years after the Crucifixion."—Rev. Dr. Giles "Christian Records," p. 9.

When did the Crucifixion occur? Matthew, Mark and Luke, distinctly assert that Jesus had already eaten of the Passover. The festival had therefore begun. But this exposes the evangelists' ignorance of Jewish customs. Rabbi Wise says that "In the first place, the Jews did no public business on that day; had no court sessions, no trials, and certainly no executions on any Sabbath or feast day. And in the second place, the first day of the Passover never was on a Friday, and never can be, according to the established principles of the Jewish calendar."\*

The fourth Gospel is later than the other three, and the work of a more learned pen. The author silently corrects his predecessors' mistake, and makes Joseph of Arimathæa bury Jesus before the Passover begins.

The evangelists differ as to the *hour* of execution. According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus gave up the ghost about the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon; and Mark states definitely that Jesus was crucified about the third hour, or nine o'clock in the morning. According to Luke, however, the trial did not begin till the morning after the arrest; and there must have been a very sharp despatch of business to get Jesus nailed up by nine o'clock. John is even more irreconcilable with the other writers, for he distinctly says that Pilate's court was still sitting at mid-day, three hours after Jesus (according to Mark) was on the cross.

According to John, Jesus carried his own cross from the prætorium to the place of execution. But Matthew, Mark and Luke, say that, owing to his prostrate condition, it had to be carried for him by Simon of Cyrene. The Lord only knows who Simon was. From the narrative as it stands, without any other light, he appears to have turned up promiscuously, as such handy people always do in romances. One of the early Christian sects, the Basilidians, made this utility-man play a further part in the drama. They denied that Jesus was crucified in person, and asserted that he only suffered by proxy, poor Simon having been tacked up in his stead. That profane wit, the Rev. Robert Taylor, imagines a conversation between the original and the substitute. Simon reproves Jesus for letting him be crucified; it was carrying the simulation a great deal too far. But Jesus replies "Oh no, Simon, my boy; you may as well die for me as I for you."

We may add that Muhammed evidently accepted the heretical notion of some victim having suffered for Jesus. A phantom or a criminal, the Kuran says, was substituted on the cross, and the innocent Jesus was translated into the seventh heaven. Another Christian idea was that Judas Iscariot had to act as proxy. This is a funnier notion, and involves a sort of poetical justice. It might be called "Judas for Jesus, or the biter bit."

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\* "Origin of Christianity," p. 30.

The Synoptics represent Jesus as falling under the burden of the cross, and Christian artists picture him tottering, with a great wooden structure on his shoulders, heavy enough to tax the strength of a giant. But this is all imagination. What the prisoner had to carry was not the upright part, which was a fixture at the place of execution, but simply the cross-piece, or patibulum; and the obligation was imposed, not as a physical labor, but as a moral indignity.

There have been hot disputes whether the feet as well as the hands of Jesus were nailed to the cross. Some rationalists have contended that he did not actually die, and his feet being uninjured, he was able to walk about after "the resurrection." But Luke (xxiv., 39) makes Jesus show the disciples his hands and feet to prove his authenticity. John, however, omits the feet, and mentions the hands and *side*. But John was up to something, as we shall see presently.

Pilate set an inscription on the cross in three languages, and the evangelists read it so clearly that they write it in four different ways. Matthew says it was "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Mark says it was "The King of the Jews." Luke says it was "This is the King of the Jews." John says it was "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." This is a beautiful instance of Gospel Harmony. Anybody can see that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were inspired to write the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Three hundred years after the Crucifixion, the very cross on which Jesus suffered was found by St. Helena, the mother of Constantine, together with the crosses that bore the two thieves. The novel explorer was turned eighty, and very much in her dotage. She went to Jerusalem on purpose to find the cross, and it was not likely that the bishop and his clergy would let her go away disappointed. The authentic nature of Christ's cross was shown by its working miracles, while the others were no more efficacious than ordinary wood. Helena took a part of the true cross to Constantine; the rest she enclosed in a silver box, and left in care of the bishop of Jerusalem, who periodically exhibited it to the faithful, for a consideration. Afterwards little bits of it were sold, and in a short space of time the sacred wood was "spread all over the earth." To account for this extraordinary distribution, it was asserted that the true cross was like the widow's cruse of oil; the more there was taken from it the more there was left. Calvin said that if all the pieces in Europe were collected into a heap, they would form a good shipload. Crowds of monkish pedlars lived on the cross, who never could live on the square.

The historians of Saint Helena's lucky "find" say that the true cross bore the very title affixed to it by Pilate. Yet by some unfortunate accident the clergy of Jerusalem omitted to copy it. We are therefore unable to decide between the different versions



of the four evangelists. Alack and alack! And now the age of miracles is flown, and the true cross, with many other pious relics, has melted into "the infinite azure of the past."

Crucifixion is said to have produced an agony of thirst, and John makes Jesus suffer from this craving. "I thirst," cried the victim, and they gave him a sponge full of vinegar; perhaps the *posca*, or vinegar and water commonly drunk by the Roman soldiers. The other evangelists mention a different concoction, which was offered to Jesus as he reached Golgotha. Matthew says it was vinegar and gall, while Mark says it was wine mingled with myrrh; two very delectable drinks.

According to Matthew and Mark, although Luke and John do not mention the tremendous circumstance, Jesus shrieked on the cross, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Whereupon, say the evangelists, some of the by-standers remarked "This man calleth for Elias." Moonshine! The writers were ignorant of Hebrew. If the by-standers were Romans, they knew no more of Elias than of Tobit. If they were Jews, they could not have confounded *Eli* with *Elias*, for the words differ very widely in their pronunciation. The tag to the exclamation is obviously the work of men who knew nothing of Hebrew, who saw that *Eli* and *Elias* were alike to the eye, without knowing how they differed to the ear.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? It is the first verse of the twenty-second Psalm. What a terrible cry! Abandoned by disciples, mocked by enemies, and forsaken by God. Where are the legions of angels that should come to the rescue? Are all the armies of the ghosts no match for a company of Roman soldiers? Blood trickles from the thorn-crowned brow; the body strains against the cruel nails in the gory hands and feet; the throat and lips are parched with thirst; and overhead shines the implacable Syrian sun, every beam like a sword of fire. There is no help on earth, and none in heaven. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Yet with this terrible cry ringing in their ears, the Christians assert that the man who uttered it was "very God of very God." Surely it is the dying exclamation of a deluded enthusiast! And the speaker was of less heroic mould, if the story be true, than many a martyr of liberty and progress. Giordano Bruno languished for seven years in a loathsome dungeon. He was tortured—no one knows how often—by the fiends of the Inquisition. At length he was sentenced to be burnt alive. But captivity had not broken his proud spirit, and he said to his judges: "I suspect you pronounce my sentence with far more fear than I hear it." The fire shrivelled his body, and with inconceivable pangs turned the noblest heart on earth to dust, but it could not wring a single plaint from the scorching lips. Bruno stood alone against the world with no hope of assistance from heaven, and no expectation

of a martyr's crown. Truth was his goddess, and he served her with a noble devotion. Unlike Christ, who quailed under the frown of Death, he met it with a serene smile; for he had that within him which Death might extinguish, but could not terrify, a daring fiery spirit that out-soared the malice of men, and out-shone the flames of the stake.

Various versions are also given of Jesus's last words. According to John, he said "It is finished" immediately before expiring; and hundreds of sermons have been preached on this enigmatical sentence. According to Luke, however, he said "Father unto thy hands I commend my spirit." Matthew and Mark, on the other hand, simply say that he uttered a loud cry and gave up the ghost. Another instance of Gospel Harmony!

Mark adds that a Roman centurion, who was standing by, when he heard Jesus cry out, exclaimed "Truly this man was the son of God." Whoever knew such a little evidence go such a very long way? Was there ever another man in the world so easily satisfied? The exclamation is simply impossible; its meaning is so absolutely foreign to the Roman mind. Matthew chronicles the same event, but he throws in an earthquake and the resurrection of "many bodies of saints," besides the loud cry of Jesus, to account for the centurion's conviction.

Differences obtain also as to who were the friendly spectators of the Crucifixion. Matthew says that Jesus was watched from afar by Galilean women, who had traipsed after him to Jerusalem, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children, a female apparently without a name. Mark's account is similar, but he introduces a lady called Salome. Luke says that Jesus was *followed* by a great crowd of both sexes. But John artistically excludes the tag-rag and bob-tail of true believers; gets up a pathetic scene between Jesus, his mother, and the beloved disciple; and brings on Mary Magdalene and another Mary to fill up the stage. On the other hand, John barely alludes to the two malefactors who were crucified with Jesus; while Matthew and Mark made them mock their companion. Luke works up a more striking scene. One thief mocks Jesus, and is rebuked by the other; and the Savior as a reward for the man's generosity, says, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." We wonder how Jesus kept his promise. According to the Apostles' Creed, he descended into hell for three days after the Crucifixion, on which occasion, we presume, he "preached to the spirits in prison." After his resurrection also, as we read in John, he forbade Mary Magdalene to touch him, saying, "For I am not yet ascended to my Father." On the whole, we conclude that, owing to a lapse of memory on the part of Jesus, the penitent thief had to hang about the gates of Paradise for forty days before he could walk in with Jesus.

John, or whoever was the author of the fourth Gospel, tells us something else about these two thieves and Jesus. The Jews

requested Pilate to let all three be taken down before the Sabbath began, and he dispatched some soldiers for that purpose. They broke the legs of the two thieves, but finding Jesus already dead, they left his continuations alone. One of them, however, prodded him in the side with a spear, and "forthwith came there out blood and water." What arrant nonsense! If Jesus had been dead for any time, the spear would have drawn no blood. If he were alive, it would draw blood, but no water, unless he suffered from dropsy.

Why did that soldier prod Jesus with his spear? And why is not the incident related by the other evangelists? Because John required it as a preparation for another incident as to which they are equally silent. After the Resurrection, Jesus desires doubting Thomas Didymus to thrust his hand in his Savior's side, to satisfy himself that it was all correct. John introduces the spear-thrust, which Matthew, Mark and Luke knew nothing of, simply to have a hole ready for Tom's fist.

Now we come to a matter on which John is silent while the other three evangelists prattle. During the Crucifixion there was darkness over all the land for the space of three hours. The Pagan historians, as well as John, knew nothing of this marvellous eclipse. It happened in the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, each of whom, says Gibbon, "in a laborious work has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect." Yet these writers never heard of the supernatural darkness of the Passion. To meet this difficulty, the early Fathers discovered a passage in Phlegon, which states that the greatest eclipse ever known occurred in the two hundred and second Olympiad. But, as Gibbon ironically observed, the passage "is now wisely abandoned," and at the present day no apologist of Christianity thinks of defending it. It was nothing but a fraud, devised to buttress a tottering fable.

Matthew mentions another circumstance, which is omitted not only by John, but also by Mark and Luke. In addition to the eclipse, there was an earthquake, which shook the temple, rent its holy veil in twain, and opened the graves of many saints, who quietly got up and walked into Jerusalem. Having already dealt with this piece of fiction in my romance of "A Rising God," I shall content myself with asking why Matthew only, of all the four evangelists, heard of this tremendous occurrence. A no less curious fact is, that the Jews who witnessed these extraordinary events never believed them; and as Diderot said, the transcendent wonder of wonders is not the miraculous career of Christ, but the incredulity of the Jews.

Imagine such a story as that of the Crucifixion under examination in a court of law. How the opposing counsel would badger the witnesses. How he would expose their mutual contradictions on every important point. How he would gloat over

the fact that some of them saw and heard the most startling occurrences, while others never noticed them, although they were present. How confidently he would ask the court to treat the evidence of such witnesses as altogether unworthy of credit.

When we turn to the rest of the New Testament we find grave reasons for doubting whether Jesus was crucified at all. Paul preached "Christ and him crucified," and the very emphasis seems to show that there was an opposite school. His great rival, Peter (Acts v., 30), speaks to the Jews soon after the alleged Crucifixion, of "Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree"; and again at Cæsarea (Acts x., 39) he speaks of Jesus and the Jews in the third person, "whom they slew and hanged on a tree." Peter further says (Acts xii., 29), "they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre." And in his first epistle he speaks of Jesus "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Peter does indeed, refer twice in the second of Acts to Jesus as "crucified," but it is in a long-winded speech, which was probably composed for him by the author. Curiously too, Paul himself (Galatians iii., 13) sides for once with Peter. "Christ," he says, "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." On the whole, it is impossible to decide whether Jesus was crucified or hung. The reader buys his Bible and takes his choice. Whoever wishes to read more on this subject should refer to the "Jewish Life of Christ," which I edited in collaboration with my friend Mr. Wheeler. He will there find that the Talmuds speak of Jeshu, by whom Lardner says is meant our Jesus, as having been hung.

This much, however, is certain: the cross on which Jesus was crucified, if he suffered that death, was not shaped like the cross we see in religious pictures. It resembled a big letter T, and there was no extension of the upright beam above the cross-piece. The true cross was an ancient phallic symbol. It was used in Egyptian hieroglyphics as the sign of life. When Constantine abolished the punishment of crucifixion, the Roman cross ceased to be familiar, and the Christian priests were therefore able to confound it with the most venerated symbol of ancient faiths. They thus artfully transformed an executed rebel into a sacred figure, radiating the mysticism of all the creeds.

PRICE ONE PENNY.