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At the Literary Table.

THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

(The Prices of the Books mentioned below will generally be found in the Advertisement pages.)

II.

STUDIES IN ORIENTAL SOCIAL LIFE.

By H. CLAY TRUMBULL, D.D. (*Hodder & Stoughton*. Crown 8vo, pp. xviii, 437.) This book came from America recently, and found a hearty welcome. Now Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton have reprinted it in England for the English market, and they will have their reward. For Dr. Trumbull has the two gifts of popularity and precision, so rarely combined in one writer. He writes with conscientious accuracy, and he writes with delightful lucidity. Besides, the book is appropriately illustrated, and with fidelity. The English edition will win its way easily. It is not less handsome in appearance, and it is much less exacting in price.

JOHN MACGREGOR ('ROB ROY'). By EDWIN HODDER. (*Hodder Brothers*. 8vo, pp. xiv, 458.) This is not the first biography Mr. Hodder has written; we hope it is not the last; but thus far there can be no hesitation in saying it is the best. It may be that this is the best subject he has had. That would not be so easy to prove. But undoubtedly it has some very striking effects, which Mr. Hodder has made the most of, and it has a piquancy of expectation and of possibility all through its long course to the very end.

All through its long course. Perhaps in these days sixty-six years is not reckoned a long life. But—

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk doth make man better be,
Or standing long an oak three thousand year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sear.

John MacGregor put into his six-and-sixty years the work of ten men who have passed their seventies and their eighties. This is the prominent thing in the book, the thing that everybody sees, that MacGregor had an insatiable hunger for work. Perhaps the first thought simply is that this man in his time played many parts. But a closer acquaintance proves that there is no suspicion of fickleness in that. He had to be at work on something always. If one thing came not readily to his hand, then his hand stretched itself out and

laid hold on another. He had to be at work; that was his mountain; and if the mountain would not come to Mahomet, then Mahomet went cheerfully to the mountain.

So he was an author, a barrister, a teacher, a traveller, a lecturer, a volunteer, a philanthropist (in all its varieties), a preacher, an athlete, a naturalist, an educationist (with apologies for the word), a politician, a philosopher, a ferryman, and a friend. And he threw himself into every one of these parts. He not merely played them, he played them well. This is the key to his character, this is the reason why his biography is written, and why it is so good to read. He was thorough.

Is there any lesson we need driven home as we need this? Certainly we must be thorough in a good way, else it were ill enough with us. But how many of us are in a good enough way, but do no good in it, and all for want of thoroughness? Take 'Rob Roy' then as a magnificent example of the thorough method of living the life here below. He played many parts, but this is his best part of all. He set his compass right, and then steered straight with the wind in all his sails.

THE WOMEN OF SHAKESPEARE.

By LOUIS LEWES, PH.D. Translated by HELEN ZIMMERN. (*Hodder Brothers*. 8vo, pp. xix, 384.) Of writing many books on Shakespeare, says the translator, there is no end. And that is the best apology for another. It is also its best opportunity. We read about our friends, about the persons we know and love, next to ourselves they are the most interesting to us, and the better we know them the more we are ready to read about them.

Besides, this is a German's book. Now, the Germans have taken to Shakespeare with an ardour that runs our enthusiasm very hard. It were strange if they had not something worth saying now and then. We know they have. Gervinus is to some of us Shakespeare's interpreter, we cannot name another beside him, and Delius his most sympathetic editor.

So Dr. Lewes will find an audience. He is less philosophical, more purely historical than Gervinus, less psychologically penetrating also; and he removes himself from comparison with Mrs. Jameson, Lady Martin, or any other, by the range of his subject and the simplicity of his treatment. He tells us about *all* Shakespeare's heroines; he tells us about them as we might talk to one another at the fireside, not embody them on the stage.

The book is well translated, and most worthily produced by its enterprising publishers.

OUR CHILDREN FOR CHRIST BY THE REV. SAMUEL MACNAUGHTON, M.A. (Edinburgh: *Hunter*. 16mo, pp. 96.) Mr. MacNaughton divides his subject into two parts—(1) Infant Church Membership; and (2) The Mode of Baptism. The first part is historical, the second exegetical. And Mr. MacNaughton proves himself both a scholar and a clever controversialist. This is the fourth edition.

ACHAN'S GHOST. BY JOHN M. BAMFORD. (*Kelly*. Crown 8vo, pp. 200.) The Gospel in fiction, even the Gospel according to Methodism in an English village, where the Gospel is the backbone of the character and the ever present help in time of need.

LIFE HERE AND HEREAFTER. BY MALCOLM MACCOLL, M.A. (*Longmans*. Crown 8vo, pp. xiv, 405.) Canon MacColl's title simply means that his sermons have partly to do with the life that now is, and partly with the life that is to come. And yet, so far as can be seen, the life that is to come has no speculative or independent interest even for Canon MacColl, so impossible is it for the most alert-minded to escape the influence of the Time Spirit. There are four sermons on the 'Many Mansions,' but even of them this is the controlling thought, that *here* there are so great varieties among men, there are such diversities of gifts, and in the way they are used, that there must be a diversity of dwelling-places in heaven for their reception and exercise.

Well, there is nothing that has been more whipped of late, and nothing that has deserved its whipping better, than other-worldliness. We are glad Canon MacColl will have none of it. And yet how far is he removed from the other extreme

of secularism. In truth, he is simply too scriptural to be so one-sided. This is his distinguishing mark. He abides close by the written Word, and as a familiar and loving student, he brings many instructive things out of his close study. For example. Can you tell on the spur of the moment why Christ adds, 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'? Canon MacColl will answer for you, with utmost interest and persuasiveness.

A MOUNTAIN PATH. BY JOHN A. HAMILTON. (*Sampson Low*. Crown 8vo, pp. viii, 207.) Mr. Hamilton has the nearest approach to George Macdonald's gift of any man living—his gift of speech for the young. How rare it is! How exquisite when found! These are not the Children's Sermons you are familiar with, and mayhap even have preached—the catching text, the jostling anecdote. Search this volume and you will not find from cover to cover the text about the broken hedge and the biting serpent; you will not find a single instance of 'this reminds me of a story.' It is all unexpected, uplifting, highly imaginative, memorable.

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN OLD ENGLISH VERSE. BY REV. C. J. ABBEY. (*Sampson Low*. Crown 8vo, pp. xiii, 456.) Mr. Abbey's work needs no introduction now. It has won its way, and will maintain it. If preachers would do this for themselves, preachers who feel that their sermons want humanity and the touch that thrills, if they would go through the poets steadily, selecting the good things and casting the bad remorselessly away! But they will not. So the next best thing is to read Mr. Abbey, who has done it for them.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF DEAN CHURCH. EDITED BY HIS DAUGHTER, MARY C. CHURCH. (*Macmillan*. 8vo, pp. xxiv, 355.) 'He were such a gentleman, and he cared for us so.' These were the words of one of Church's parishioners, spoken after he left Whatley. Do they not describe him accurately? Do they not describe him wherever he was? First he was in Oxford for nineteen years. Would not John Henry Cardinal Newman, even in the days of the Oratory, have described him so? For did not Mr. Church care for John Henry Newman exceedingly, and even rescue him

once by a most courageous and dramatic act? And was not all the care and love that of a gentleman? Next he spent nineteen years at Whatley. And there 'an occasion of this kind was long remembered in the village, when, after being sent for, late at night, to stop a fight between two men, both very drunk, and both fiercely quarrelsome, Mr. Church laid hold of the more dangerous of the two and walked with him up and down the road, until at last the man, sobered and quieted, turned and shook his hand, saying, "Well, sir, I think now I'll go to bed." Was not that care of them, and the care of a gentleman? And, lastly, he spent nineteen years at St. Paul's. (You see he had what they call in Scotland 'three nineteens,' separate leases, and he did justice to every one of them.) In St. Paul's he was a gentleman surely; but read what Canon Scott-Holland says about him in this book, and you will not ask if he cared for them and for all things. Says Canon Scott-Holland: 'No one could venture on taking the Dean lightly. Anything done under his eye had, perforce, to be done at the best level that the conditions permitted. It was in this way that his influence, without formally initiating, was felt at every turn.' And he says again: 'A flame of righteous anger that has no trace of personal injury in it, and that leaps up at the sight of public wrong because it is wrong, and for no other reason—this is rare indeed. And it was all the more startling, as it sprang from one so associated with courteous gentleness as the Dean.'

But the book is not quotable. These quotations are nothing. There are no wise saws and modern instances here. We cannot find much 'Point and Illustration.' Dean Church is here, and you see that 'he were such a gentleman, and he cared for us so.' And that is enough.

WEEK BY WEEK. BY FRASER CORNISH. (*Macmillan*. Fcap. 8vo, pp. 110.) Mr. Cornish has written a short hymn for every Sunday in the year, finding its inspiration in the Collect, Gospel, or Epistle for the day. They do not pass the strait gate of poetry, these hymns, but they are smooth and easy, well fitted to give the tired spirit rest.

A TRANSLATION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS FROM THE SYRIAC OF THE SINAITIC PALIMPSEST. BY AGNES SMITH LEWIS, M.R.A.S. (*Macmillan*. Crown 8vo, pp.

xxxviii, 239.) In the Introduction, which fills the first eight-and-thirty pages, and is of the utmost interest, Mrs. Lewis tells us—(1) how the manuscript was discovered and transcribed; (2) the relation which it is supposed to bear to other Syriac versions; (3) the appearance of the manuscript itself; and (4) some of its leading characteristics. Then the translation follows, with the lacunæ and the curiosities all displayed, but in good New Testament English. And with all its other attractions this volume will serve also as a kind of new Commentary on the Gospels. For, as you read, you are arrested at every step by a new turn of expression, or an entirely new reading, and effectually prevented from falling into the slovenliness of thoughtless acquiescence. Take the volume all in all, it is the most valuable addition that has been made to our New Testament literature. The unlearned will see that at once, and the learned will yet agree with them. Mrs. Lewis has done a fine service in giving us so good a translation so soon.

TRACINGS FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. BY C. E. STUART. (*Marlborough*. Crown 8vo, pp. 400.) Mr. Stuart's Commentaries seem to have taken hold; and they deserve it. Their method is new and reasonable. Why should we be for ever condemned to the old-fashioned commentary, with the text filling three-fourths of the page and the exposition in smallest type apologetically crammed into the remainder? Mr. Stuart leaves the text to your memory or your Bible. Then he says what he has found to say in good bold type, filling the whole page with it, and dividing it into paragraphs, with clarendon subject-headings to each paragraph. And, besides, what he has to say is evangelical and worth saying.

SIMON PETER: HIS LATER LIFE AND LABOURS. BY CHARLES S. ROBINSON, D.D. (*Nelson*. Crown 8vo, pp. viii, 325.) Dr. Robinson's earlier volume is one of the most widely circulated 'Lives' of St. Peter, we should suppose, even in this country. There are those who associate St. Peter and Dr. Robinson together in their minds, as we used to associate St. Paul with Conybeare and Howson. The new volume has the same simplicity and unction. It is wonderful in its combination of direct natural speech and almost ideal reverence—characteristics, by the way,

of St. Peter himself. So this is, no doubt, the meaning of Dr. Robinson's success; the heart of Simon Peter beats within himself.

'TUCK UP' TALES. (*Nelson*. Crown 8vo, pp. 128.) 'Now climb—and hug—and fairy story!' exclaimed Ailie (see Mr. Crockett's *Play-actress*), and the great Dr. Rutherford was equal to the climb, and even the hug, but not to the fairy tale, for this book was not published then. Here they are now, however; one for every night for fifteen nights, and then he may begin again.

MORNING AND EVENING. By C. H. SPURGEON. (*Passmore & Alabaster*. 32mo, pp. 735.) Here are the two well-known volumes, *Morning by Morning*, and *Evening by Evening*, newly printed and bound in one, and that one not a fourth of the size of either. And without doubt this is the best way to have their matter. We can read on, one portion for the morning, and one portion for the evening, following in natural sequence. The type is small, for in this small page every morning's or every evening's portion is found complete. But it is quite legible and comfortable to ordinary eyes.

ROCHDALE SERMONS, 1891-94. By THE VEN. JAMES M. WILSON, M.A., F.G.S. (*Kegan Paul*. Crown 8vo, pp. xii, 350.) Archdeacon Wilson has no interest in theology, either in the creation or in the defence of it. These Sermons have titles which seem to suggest doctrinal discussion now and then, but it is only appearance. Take 'The Salvation of the Heathen'—the Church doctrine, whatever it may have cost the Church to reach it, is brushed aside with the words: 'A spirit of exclusiveness and mystery!' And we are led back to the sentence of Christ: 'In My Father's house are many mansions.'

Archdeacon's interest is in life, not in doctrine; in individual life, in social life, in Church life, in worldly life. A Bible that men do not read, and cannot be got to read, were nothing to him; a dogma hoary with all the Christian centuries were less than nothing, if the men of to-day will not believe it.

So it may be that in the next generation men will not care to read Archdeacon Wilson's Sermons. He does not vex his soul with the thoughts of the

men of the next generation. But he is most anxious and earnest that the men of to-day should read him, for he has a message for them.

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS. By W. ARNOLD STEVENS and ERNEST DE WITT BURTON. (Boston: *Silver, Burdett, & Company*. 4to, pp. x, 237.) Harmonies are ugly books to look at, but they are right indispensable. This one comes from America. It is the work of two professors of New Testament interpretation there, one of whom is the author of that *Grammar of New Testament Moods and Tenses* with which our scholars are all so pleased, and the other is, in his own country at least, a well-recognised authority in his special department. The Harmony is found upon examination to reveal a responsible independence which is always the sign of the best scholarship. Its authors acknowledge their debt, first to 'the epoch-making Harmony of Edward Robinson, and next to the *Life of our Lord*, by Samuel J. Andrews, a work into which has gone a lifetime of scholarly research, and to which all students of the life of Christ are under large obligation.' But the whole ground has been worked over at first hand by themselves, and they have been most careful to let no bias interfere with its simple truthfulness. Thus they apologise for the title 'Harmony.' It cannot now be displaced. But it witnesses to another aim than theirs, the aim and the desire of bringing all the parts of all the evangelists into harmonious relationship. They have had no such aim: 'Whatever discrepancies the four narratives contain, we have preferred to let the printed page display them equally with the agreements.' And so we have the facts before us, and may harmonise if we will and can. And that is far better.

THE SOUL OF THE SERMON. By THE REV. JOSEPH DAWSON. (*Simpkin*. Crown 8vo, pp. 71.) Two lectures in homiletic; the one being on the Soul of the Sermon, the other on the Personality of the Preacher. Two excellent lectures, and their subjects are essential.

VOICES OF THE PAST. (*Skeffingtons*. Crown 8vo, pp. 128.) It is a Sacred Drama in three parts. The poetry, however, is the least of it. For the most part the author has manifestly had

no intention of writing rhythmically, but given us good work-day prose in varying lengths of line. But the idea is something, highly imaginative indeed, and the situations fit into it easily. There is genuine poetry in the thought. Why then is the expression so prosaic?

BOYS OF THE BIBLE. BY LADY MAGNUS. (*Raphael Tuck*. 4to, pp. 76.) Lady Magnus has told the story of Isaac and Samuel and the rest of the boys of the Bible as if she were telling it in modern English to boys of England around her knee. And then Mr. John Lawson and Mr. Henry Rylands have filled the volume with illustrations, some of them in colour. Here, for example, is a new 'Daniel in the Lions' Den.' It fills the page, and is most impressive. The volume is beautifully bound as was to be expected.

THE CRUSADES. BY T. A. ARCHER and CHARLES LETHBRIDGE KINGSFORD. (*Fisher Unwin*. Pp. xxx, 467, with Maps and Illustrations.) There are fifty-eight illustrations, evidently faithfully executed, and three maps; there is a useful index, and some genealogical tables; and besides all these mechanical and most welcome aids to the interpretation and use of the text, the text itself is full of life. One man working over another man's work—the risk was great. But it seems probable that both had been caught in the spirit of the subject, and were hurried on. What a spirit-moving subject it is, even after all these days, and under all the altered conditions. How imperiously it lifts us above all the blunders and the pettinesses, into admiration of the truly heroic and self-sacrificing, the highest daring, the noblest doing that man is capable of. Let us read the story of the Crusades when we are feeling sordid and common. Let us set it before our children to read. And there is no book in which it will be read with more delight by us or them than in this volume of 'The Story of the Nations.'

HANDBOOK OF THE BIBLE. BY REV. WILLIAM TURNER. (New York: *Thomas Whitaker*. Crown 8vo, pp. x, 235.) A further description is 'A Compendium of Facts and Curiosities.' And there is a very large number of both. Yes, even of facts. It is evident that Mr. Turner has used good recent sources, and for a man who

delights in curiosities been surprisingly careful of his steps. The book is somewhat after the manner of the 'Helps' that are so popular now. But it contains many things not found in them. And to everything that it contains an excellent index gives immediate access.

AN EPITOME OF THE SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY. BY F. HOWARD COLLINS. (*Williams & Norgate*. 8vo, pp. xix, 640.) With the best will in the world it is impossible for many of us to read through Herbert Spencer. We can scarcely read through even a popular novelist's whole works now. And it must be admitted that Herbert Spencer takes more out of us than the popular novelist. But many of us, surely most of us, can do this—we can read through Mr. Collins' *Epitome of Herbert Spencer*.

It is a wonderful book. Herbert Spencer's works have been reduced to one-tenth their bulk, yet they are all here. And more wonderful than that, *each volume* has been reduced to one-tenth its bulk. To skip the difficult books and call them less necessary, and then give us the rest peptonised, would have been vastly easier, but it would not have been Herbert Spencer. But Mr. Collins has too much reverence for the master to do that. He knows no book that is of inferior worth, and he has given us the concentrated essence of them all.

It is a wonderful book. And surely the most wonderful thing about it is that it is readable. That is not to say that you will take to it for the pure purpose of killing time, or in preference to the latest novel. But if you can take to philosophy at all, or, at least, if you have taken to it long enough to have got the easy end of some of its longest words, then you may actually find this book readable and of utmost interest.

This is the third edition; so many a one has read it already. And this third edition contains the Principles of Ethics (the concentrated essence of the same), published since the second edition was issued.

PAMPHLETS AND SERMONS:—

1. *Walking with God.* By the Rev. George H. C. Macgregor, M.A. (Marshall Brothers. 16mo, pp. 19.)

2. *Are the Books of Moses Holy Scripture?* By the Rev. Charles Jerdan, M.A., LL.B. (Macniven & Wallace. 8vo, pp. 46. 4d.)

3. 'Length.' By Arthur James Mason, D.D. (Longmans. 8vo, pp. 20. 6d.)

4. *Syllabus of Sunday-School Lessons.* (Kendal: Atkinson & Pollitt. Crown 8vo, pp. 60. 3d.)

5. *Raffles and Holiness.* By the Rev. W. Elliott. (Bristol: Mack. 8vo, pp. 8. 1d.)

6. *Grace Reigning through Righteousness.* By the Rev. W. Elliott. (Plymouth: Chapple. Crown 8vo, pp. 19. 1d.)

7. *The Promise of Life: A New Year's Address to Young Men.* By R. Henderson Smith. (Edinburgh: Y.M.C.A. Rooms. Crown 8vo. 1d.)

LITERARY NOTES.

There is some prospect of Bruder being at last superseded. Dr. Moulton of Cambridge and Professor Geden of Richmond have jointly issued a Prospectus of a new Concordance to the New Testament, which, it seems, is ready for the printer. It will be printed and published as soon as a sufficient number of subscribers to pay the mechanical cost have intimated their subscriptions. The text adopted as standard is Westcott and Hort's, and everything may be counted on that sound scholarship and painstaking accuracy can do. The price is to be 21s. net. in cloth or 18s. net. in parts. The publishers are Messrs. George Bell & Sons, York Street, Covent Garden.

Dr. Alexander Whyte is at present delivering a course of lectures on the leading 'Bible Characters.' A week or two ago he had Eve for his subject, and then next week he found it necessary to apologise. This is his apology:—

'Listen to the following correspondence, to see how in modern Athens, and in the country round about, a whole Tower of Babel may be built up in some men's minds out of a very small quarry of stone.

“Forfarshire, November 1894.

“DEAR DR. WHYTE,—Pardon the liberty and the interference of an old friend. But your lecture on Eve the other week has caused your friends here great pain; and I do not know what to answer about it when I am challenged. I have myself gone carefully over, I think, all the passages in the Gospels in which our Lord speaks to women, or speaks about women, and I am bound to say that I have found nothing that at all justifies you for one moment in what you say about our Lord. Pardon me, but I must tell you what I feel. You should publicly retract what you said about 'the tremendous attack' that Jesus made on women; for, surely, He never did any such thing.—Your old friend and fellow-servant,

“7 Charlotte Square, December 1894.

“MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,—Why did you not write me sooner? In my lecture on Eve I quoted from 'The Wisdom of Solomon,' what, I thought, was a very striking expression about Adam and Eve; and then, in my very next sentence, as I see, I passed on to take another

illustration out of the very next book to the 'Wisdom,' 'Ecclesiasticus,' namely. But here was my mistake. I took for granted that my hearers would know that Jesus was the author of Ecclesiasticus: Jesus the son of Sirach. But I should not have left my hearers to finish and fill up my imperfect sentence; I should have said Jesus, the author of Ecclesiasticus, or, Jesus, the son of Sirach. I am very sorry for the pain and the trouble I have given you, but it is a lesson to me for the time to come. You ask about Behmen. I send you a tract of mine on that amazing man. And I will only say this more about him, that he was not unlike yourself in his genius for a good construction, and in another genius he had for silence when a good construction failed him. Remember me to so and so, and to so and so, my old friends, and tell them that I go about with a rope on my head for the unfortunate snare I so unwittingly set for them in my lecture on Eve.—Believe me, with great goodwill,

“ALEXANDER WHYTE.”

Mr. Allenson is about to issue a new edition of Mr. S. A. Tipple's *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*. It will be both revised and enlarged. The same publisher has entered the lists with a weekly paper. Its title is *Fellowship*, but that title is further explained as 'a weekly journal concerning holiness.' The editor is Mr. Gregory Mantle.

A work attributed to Abû Sâlih, the Armenian, and probably dating from the first years of the thirteenth century of the Christian era, on *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some Neighbouring Countries*, will be published very shortly in English and Arabic by the Clarendon Press. The text is edited by Mr. B. T. A. Evetts, from the unique MS. in the National Library in Paris; and copious notes are added from the pen of Mr. Alfred J. Butler, to whose *Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt* the new treatise forms a valuable supplement. The complete work will appear in the series of 'Anecdota Oxoniensia'; but the translation and notes will likewise be issued separately. It will be found to throw much light on Egyptian geography, and on the religion and ecclesiastical antiquities of the Copts, as well as on the relations existing in the twelfth century between the Christians of Egypt and their Mohammedan fellow-countrymen.

Rev. R. H. Charles of Exeter College, Oxford, is rapidly winning a great reputation as an Orientalist and biblical critic. He is at present (in conjunction with Mr. Morfill) passing through the Clarendon Press a translation of, and commentary on, the Slavonic Enoch, and a text of the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees*. Mr. Charles is also preparing a translation of, and commentary on, this latter book, as well as on *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. He has likewise been commissioned to write several articles on these and other apocryphal books for the great biblical dictionaries at present in preparation.

The next number of the 'Studia Sinaitica' series will be—Part V. *The Anaphora Pilati in Syriac and Arabic*; the Syriac transcribed by J. Rendel Harris, and the Arabic by

Margaret Dunlop Gibson, with translations; also a short and early form of the Recognitions of Clement in Arabic, transcribed and translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson.

Part VI. *Select Narratives of Holy Women*, as written over the Syriac Gospels by John the Recluse of Beth-Mari Kaddisha in A.D. 778. No. I will contain the stories of

Eugenia, of Mary who was surnamed Marinus, of Onesima, and of Euphrosyne, transcribed and translated by Agnes Smith Lewis. These very entertaining tales throw a vivid light on the character of monastic life in its prime, and have apparently been the favourite reading of the Syriac monks who once formed part of the community on Mount Sinai.

The Parables of Zechariah.

BY THE REV. JAMES STALKER, D.D., GLASGOW.

VIII.

THE PARABLE OF THE EPHAH.

(ZECH. V. 5-11.)

THE first five of Zechariah's parables advance steadily in a single direction, and they are all animated with the same spirit—the spirit of encouragement and hope. But at the sixth a check occurs; the spirit of the prophet darkens, and he speaks in a tone of severity and reproach. It is by the sense of prevailing sin that he is pulled up; and what he pauses to say is, that, till this scandal is removed out of the sacred community, the promises made in his previous parables cannot be fulfilled.

This is still the burden of the seventh parable: it is a denunciation of prevalent sin; only its application is more specific.

It is, however, a very obscure deliverance. So dark is it, that probably it is perused by the general reader without any comprehension whatever. Indeed, it has a curtness and grotesqueness by which the mind of any reader may at the first be irritated. Let us see, nevertheless, whether, by close study, we do not derive from it an instructive and even fascinating message.

I. First of all, let us try to get a clear idea of what the prophet saw, when anew the revealing spirit caused an image to appear on the field of prophetic vision.

He saw an ephah, that is, a vessel, in shape and size resembling our bushel.¹ The mouth of it was closed with a talent of lead, which served as

¹ In the second half of ver. 6, some, reading vav for yod, translate 'This is their wickedness.' If yod be retained, perhaps the best translation is, 'This is what their eyes are fixed upon.'

a lid, and concealed what the ephah contained. The hidden thing was, however, to be disclosed to the prophet. And, when the lid was lifted, behold, sitting in the ephah, there was a woman! Here was the secret, at the sight of which his soul blushed and was dismayed. But the scandal was not to be long tolerated; for there appeared on the scene two women to carry it away. They had wings like those of a stork, and, as they flew, the wind swelled their pinions and bore them forward. So the lid was crushed down again on the top of the woman; and the two, lifting up the ephah, with what it contained, bore it away to the land of Shinar; and there they fixed it, and left it in its own place.

Such are the details; but as yet there is very little light in the representation. All we see is, that the vision typifies some evil thing which was to be conveyed out of the midst of the community.

Light begins, however, to appear when we remark that the ephah is, in Hebrew, the principal measure of capacity—the standard for the transactions of the market-place. The talent, with which the mouth of the ephah is closed, is, in like manner, the typical weight—the standard, for example, used in weighing out the precious metals, when payments are made. The ephah and the talent, then, are the implements of the merchant, and stand for the transactions of merchandise. The talent served as a lid for the ephah; but, when it was lifted, a woman was discovered, who had been sitting there hidden. And when the prophet asked the woman's name, he was told that it was Wickedness. Evidently the meaning