NEW PUBLICATIONS.

RENAN'S LIFE OF JESUS.

1. VIE DE JESUS. Par ERNEST RENAN. 8vo. pp. 462. Paris: Michel Lévy Frères.
2. THE LIFE OF JESUS. By ERNEST RENAN. Translated from the Original French by CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR. 8vo. pp. 336. Carleton.

With no pretension to exact critical analysis, M. Renan here presents some of the leading conclusions of modern European speculation and research in a popular, unsystematic form, illustrated by the fruits of personal experience as a traveler in Palestine, and enlivened by the perpetual play of a brilliant and suggestive fancy, and a deep sense of the pathetic and poetical aspects of his theme. Although free from the skeptical and destructive tendencies which mark the labors of many of his predecessors in this field of inquiry, he departs perhaps no less widely from the current traditions of theology. In forming his theories, he makes no account of dogmas, takes a purely human point of view in treating the subject in hand, and constructs a biography of Jesus irrespective of the faith of the Church. At the same time, he writes in a tender and reverent spirit, fully recognizing the beauty and elevation of the life which he portrays, and its vital importance in the history of humanity. His book, accordingly, is exposed to attack from the most opposite quarters—some will accuse it of an excess of belief—others will condemn it as the denial of all that is sacred and precious in the religion of Christendom. It will be censured by the ecclesiastic for its neglect of the supernatural element in the biography of Jesus—by the unbeliever for its earnestness in claiming for him preëminence among the sons of men—by the critical scholar for its frequent looseness and inconsistency of statement, its inconclusive reasonings, and the predominance of imagination over judgment in its composition.

With regard to the pregnant question of the authority of the Gospels as sources of history, M. Renan holds that although to some extent legendary in their character, they possess a high value, as carrying us back to the half century following the death of Jesus, and in two cases, to eye-witnesses of his acts. The Gospel of Luke is a regular composition, founded on previous documents, written entirely by the same hand and of the most perfect unity. Its author was undoubtedly the same as the author of the Book of Acts, and if not Luke himself, as is probable from internal evidence, was a man of the second apostolic generation, and not a subsequent second-hand compiler.

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark do not show the same stamp of individuality. They are impersonal in their composition, with no trace of their individual authors. It is certain that they were anterior to the Gospel of Luke, and of a much less advanced character as compilations. Most probably we have neither the original works of Matthew, nor of Mark, but the first two Gospels are arrangements in which it has been attempted to supply the defects in one text by another. Each compiler wished to possess a complete copy. The one who had only the discourses in his copy, desired to have the narratives, and the reverse. Thus the Gospel of Matthew has incorporated nearly all the anecdotes of Mark, while the Gospel of Mark contains a multitude of traits which are derived from the notices of Matthew. Each moreover drew largely from the extant traditions concerning the life of Jesus, which were so far from having been exhausted by the Gospels that the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of the earliest Fathers contain many sayings of Jesus which appear authentic, and which are not found in either of the four Gospels that we possess.

The Gospel of John, according to M. Renan, presents questions of more difficult solution. How is it that by the side of definite details, which savor so strongly of an eye-witness, we find discourses so totally different from those of Matthew? The general plan of the life of Jesus appears much more consistent and satisfactory than that of the first three Gospels; but there are passages in which we perceive a dogmatic interest peculiar to the compiler's ideas entirely foreign to Jesus, and even symptoms of a personal and sectarian influence. Was it indeed John, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James—of whom not a single mention is made in the fourth Gospel—who was able to write in Greek those abstract metaphysical discourses, to which neither the other Gospels, nor the Talmud, present any parallel? "All this," says M. Renan, "is weighty, and for myself I dare not positively believe that the fourth Gospel was written entirely by the pen of a former fisherman of Galilee." But it cannot justly be doubted that it was written at least before the end of the first century, and proceeded from the great school of Asia Minor, which held to John, nor that its version of the life of the Master is worthy of high consideration and often of preference. In fact, many things in this Gospel cannot be explained on the supposition that it is only a theological disquisition without historical value; but, on the contrary, are perfectly comprehensible, if we see in them, according to the traditions, the recollections of an old man, sometimes of marvelous freshness, sometimes having suffered strange mutations.

Upon the whole, M. Renan accepts the four canonical Gospels as authentic. In his opinion, they all date back to the first century; they are in substance written by the authors whose names they bear; but are of very unequal value as materials for history. Matthew clearly deserves unlimited confidence as regards the discourses; he gives actual notes from a clear and vivid memory of the teaching of Jesus. The narrative portions grouped in the first Gospel around this primitive center have not the same authority. They contain many legends of a rather flimsy texture, which sprang from the piety of the second Christian generation. The Gospel of Mark is much firmer, more precise, and less burdened with fables of later origin. Of the first three Gospels, this is the oldest, the most original, and with the fewest subsequent additions. The material details in Mark have a precision which we seek in vain in the other evangelists. He is full of minute observations coming without any doubt from an eye-witness, perhaps, the apostle Peter himself. As to the work of Luke, it has evidently less historical value. It is a second-hand document, presenting the sayings of Jesus in a more reflective and elaborate form, and not without instances of inaccuracy and exaggeration. As between the first three Gospels and that of John, M. Renan does not hesitate to give the preference to the former.

The historical value which he ascribes to the Gospels is stated with more than his usual precision. He regards them not as biographies after the manner of Suetonius, nor fictitious legends like those of Philostratus, but as legendary biographies. They may be compared with the legends of the Saints, the lives of Plotinus, Proclus, Isidore, and other works of the same kind in which historic truth and the intention of presenting models of virtue are combined in different degrees. Like all popular compositions, they are necessarily inexact. Suppose that ten or twelve years ago, three or four old soldiers of the empire had each sat down to write the life of Napoleon from memory, it is clear that their relations would present numerous errors and great discrepancies. But the character of the hero, the impression which he made upon those about him, would be presented with a great degree of truth in these inartificial narratives. In this respect, such popular histories are better than a formal, official history. The same thing may be said of the Gospels. Intent solely on placing in prominent view the excellence of the Master, his miracles and his teachings, the evangelists exhibit the most entire indifference to everything which is not the very spirit of Jesus. Contradictions as to times, places, persons, were regarded as insignificant; for the more firmly they ascribed a high degree of inspiration to the word of Jesus, the further were they from conceding this inspiration to the narrators. They regarded themselves only as simple scribes, and were intent but upon one thing—to omit nothing that they knew.

With this view of the Gospel history, M. Renan proceeds to construct the biography of Jesus seizing every hint which can throw light on his character and purposes, placing his human relations in the foreground of the portraiture, but evidently aiming at picturesque effect fully as much as at historical truth. A few passages will afford a sufficiently correct idea of his mode of treatment and illustration.

THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

He came from the ranks of the people. His father Joseph and his mother Mary were in moderate circumstances, artisans living by their toil, in this condition so common in the East, which is neither ease nor want. The extreme simplicity of life in such countries, by removing the demand for comfort, renders the privilege of rich almost useless and makes all voluntarily poor. On the other hand, the total lack of taste for the arts and for what contributes to the elegance of material life, gives to the houses of those who lack for nothing an appearance of poverty. With the exception of something sordid and repulsive which Islamism carries with it everywhere, the town of Nazareth in the time of Jesus, did not perhaps, differ much from what it is to-day. We see the streets in which he played when a child, in those stony paths or those little squares which separate the dwellings. The house of Joseph without doubt closely resembled those poor shops, lighted by the door, serving at once for the work-bench, as kitchen and as bedroom, having for furniture a mat, some cushions on the ground, one or two earthen vessels and a painted chest.

NAZARETH.

Nazareth was a little town, situated in a fold of land broadly open at the summit of the group of mountains which closes on the north the plain of Esdraelon. The population is now from three to four thousand, and it can not have varied very much. It is quite cold in Winter, and the climate is very healthy. The town, like all the Jewish villages of the time, was a mass of dwellings built without pretensions to style, and must have presented that poor and uninteresting appearance which is offered by villages in Semitic countries. The houses, from all that appears, did not differ much from those cubes of stone, without interior or exterior elegance, which now cover the richest portion of the Lebanon, and which in the midst of vines and fig-trees, are nevertheless very pleasant. The environs, moreover, are charming, and no place in the world was so well adapted to dreams of absolute happiness. Even in our days, Nazareth is a delightful sojourn, the only place perhaps in Palestine where the soul feels a little relieved of the burden which weighs upon it in the midst of this unequaled desolation. The people are friendly and good-natured; the gardens are fresh and green. Antoninus Martyr, at the end of the sixth century draws an enchanting picture of the fertility of the environs, which he compares to paradise. Some valleys on the western side fully justify his description. The fountain about which the life and gayety of the little town formerly centered, has been destroyed; its broken channels now give but a turbid water. But the beauty of the women who gather there at night, this beauty which was already remarked in the sixth century, and in which was seen the gift of the Virgin Mary, has been surprisingly well preserved. It is the Syrian type in all its languishing grace. There is no doubt that Mary was there nearly every day and took her place, with her urn upon her shoulder, in the same line with her unremembered countrywomen. Antoninus Martyr remarks that the Jewish women, elsewhere disdainful to Christians, are here full of affability. Even at this day, religious animosities are less intense at Nazareth than elsewhere.

JESUS IN GALILEE.

Five little cities, of which men will speak forever, as much as of Rome or Athens, were, in the time of Jesus, scattered over the space which extends from the village of Mejdel to Tell-Hum. Of these five villages, Magdala, Dalmanutha, Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, the first only can now be identified with certainty. The wretched village of Mejdel doubtless preserves the name and the place of the little market town which gave to Jesus his most faithful friend. Dalmanutha was probably near by. It is not impossible that Chorazin was a little inland to the north. As to Bethsaida and Capernaum, it is in truth entirely by conjecture that they are located at Tell-Hum, at Ain-et-Tin, at Khan Minyeh, at Ain-Medawara. It would seem that in topography, as in history, there has been a profound design to conceal the traces of the great founder. It is doubtful whether we shall ever succeed, amid this complete devastation, in identifying the places to which humanity would fain come to kiss the imprints of his feet.

The lake, the horizon, the shrubs, the flowers, these are all that remain of the little region of eight or ten miles in which Jesus founded his divine work. The things have totally disappeared. In this country, where the vegetation was formerly so brilliant that Josephus saw in it a sort of miracle,—nature, according to him, being pleased to collect here, side by side, the plants of the cold latitudes, the productions of the torrid zones, and the trees of the temperate climes, burdened all the year with flowers and fruit—in this country, I say, the traveler now calculates a day in advance the spot in which he may find on the morrow a little shade for his repast. The lake has become deserted. A single bark, in the most miserable condition, plows to-day these waves once so rich in life and joy. But the waters are still light and transparent. The beach, composed of rocks or of pebbles, is almost that of a little sea, not that of a pond, like the shore of Lake Huleh. It is clean and without mud, always beaten at the same level by the slight movement of the waves. Little promontories, covered with oleanders, tamarind trees, and the prickly caper, complete the outline. At two places especially, at the egress of the Jordan, near Tabiha and at the border of the plain of Genesaret, there are interesting parterres, where the waves die above small clumps of grass and flowers. The brook of Ain-Tabiha forms a little estuary full of pretty shellfish. Clouds of swimming birds cover the lake. The horizon is sparkling with light. The water, of a celestial azure, deeply encased between frowning rocks, seems, when viewed from the summit of the mountains of Safed, to be in the bottom of a cup of gold. To the south, the snowy ravines of Hermon stand out in white lines against the sky; on the east, the high undulating plateau of the Gaulonitis and of Peræa, completely arid, and clothed by the sun in a species of velvety atmosphere form a continuous mountain range, or rather a long elevated terrace, which, from Cæsarea Philippi, trends indefinitely toward the south.

The heat upon the borders is now very oppressive. The lake occupies a depression of six hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and thus shares the torrid conditions of the Dead Sea. An abundant vegetation formerly tempered these excessive heats; it is difficult to comprehend that such an oven as the whole basin of the lake now is, from the month of May, was ever the scene of such extraordinary activity. Josephus, moreover, considers the country very temperate. Doubtless there has been here, as in the Roman campagna, some change of climate, brought about by historical causes. It is Islamism, especially the Moslem reaction against the crusades, which has blasted like a sirocco of death, the region favored of Jesus. The beautiful land of Genesaret did not suspect that beneath the brow of this peaceful wayfarer her destinies were swaying. A dangerous compatriot, Jesus was hated by the country which had the perilous honor of producing him. Become to all an object of horror or of hate, envied by two rival fanaticisms, Galilee as the price of its glory, was to be changed into a desert. Just who would say that Jesus had been happier had he lived to the full age of man, obscure in his native village? And who would think of these ingrate Nazarenes, if, at the risk of compromising the future of their little town, one of them had not recognized his Father, and proclaimed himself son of God?

JESUS AMONG THE PEOPLE.

Like all great men, Jesus had sympathy with the people and felt himself at home with them. The Gospel was made, in his idea, for the poor; it is to them that he brings the good news of salvation. All the outcasts of orthodox Judaism were his favorites. Love of the people, pity for their weakness, the sentiment of the democratic chief, who feels living in him the spirit of the multitude, and recognizes himself as its natural interpreter, constantly bursts forth in his acts and his discourses.

The chosen band presented, indeed, a very motley character, at which the orthodox must have been greatly astonished. It numbered in its bosom people with whom a Jew of self-respect would not associate. Perhaps Jesus found in this unconventional society more distinction and more heart than in a pedantic, formal respectability, proud of its seeming morality. The Pharisees, exaggerating the Mosaic rules, came to think themselves polluted by contact with people less rigid than they; they reached in their meals almost the puerile distinctions of caste in India. Despising these miserable aberrations of religious sentiment, Jesus loved to dine with those who were its victims; they saw beside him persons who were said to lead an evil life, perhaps, it is true, for this cause only, that they did not share in the follies of the pretended devotees. The Pharisees and doctors cried out at the scandal. "Behold," said they, "with what manner of men he eats!" Jesus made, then, keen responses, which exasperated the hypocrites: "The whole need not a physician;" or again: "The shepherd who hath lost one sheep out of an hundred, leaves the ninety and nine to go after that which is lost, and, when he hath found it, he bringeth it home upon his shoulders rejoicing;" or again: "The son of man is come to save that which was lost;" or again: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners;" finally, that delightful parable of the prodigal son, in which he who has fallen is presented as having a sort of privilege of love over the one who has always been righteous. Women, weak or guilty, surprised by so much charm, and tasting for the first time the alluring contact of virtue, freely approach him. They were astonished that he did not repulse them. "Oh," said the Pharisees, "this man is no prophet; for if he were, he would perceive that the woman who is touching him is a sinner." Jesus answered by the parable of a creditor who forgave his debtors unequal debts, and he feared not to prefer the lot of him to whom the largest debt was forgiven. He measured souls only by their love. Women, with hearts full of tears and disposed by their faults to feelings of humility, were nearer his kingdom than commonplace natures, in whom it is often little merit not to have fallen. It is easy to conceive, on the other hand, that these tender souls, finding in their conversion to the sect, a ready means of reinstatement, became passionately attached to him.

Far from seeking to check the murmurs which his contempt for the social susceptibilities of the times aroused, he seemed to take pleasure in exciting them. Never did any one avow more haughtily that disdain of the "world" which is the condition of great achievements and of great originality. He pardoned the rich man only when, by reason of some prejudice, the rich man was hated by society. He loftily preferred people of equivocal life and of little consideration to the orthodox magnates. "The publicans and the harlots," said he to them, "go into the kingdom of God before you. John came; the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." We can understand how cutting must have been the reproach of not having followed the example of women of pleasure, to people making a profession of gravity and rigid morality.

He had no external affectation nor show of austerity. He did not shun pleasure; he went gladly to marriage festivals. One of his miracles was performed to relieve a village wedding. These marriage parties in the East are held in the evening. Each one carries a lamp; the lights dancing to and fro produce a very pleasing effect. Jesus loved this gay and animated spectacle, and drew from it some of his parables. When such conduct was compared to that of John the Baptist, it seemed scandalous. One day, when the disciples of John and the Pharisees were observing a fast: "Why," he was asked, "do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast and pray, but thine eat and drink?" "Suffer them," said Jesus; "can ye make the groomsmen fast, while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; then shall they fast." His gentle gayety was constantly expressing itself by lively reflections and kindly pleasantries. "Wherunto," said he, "shall I liken this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying:

> We have piped unto you,
> And ye have not danced;
> We have mourned unto you,
> And ye have not wept.

John came, neither eating nor drinking; and ye say, He is a mad man. The son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say: Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of all her works."

Thus he traversed Galilee in the midst of a perpetual holiday. He rode upon a mule, an animal in the East so sure and good, whose large black eye, shaded with long lashes, is full of gentleness. His disciples sometimes displayed a rustic pomp about him at the expense of their garments, which took the place of carpets. They put these upon the mule which bore him, or spread them upon the ground in his path. When he alighted at a house, it was a rejoicing and a benediction. He stopped in the market-towns and at the great farm-houses, where he received an assiduous hospitality. In the East, the house at which a stranger stops becomes at once a public place. The whole village assembles there; the children invade it; the servants drive them away; they return continually. Jesus could not permit any to treat these artless auditors harshly; he, called them to him and embraced them. Mothers, encouraged by such a reception, brought him their nurselings that he might touch them. Women came to pour oil upon his head and perfumes upon his feet. His disciples repulsed them at times as importunate; but Jesus, who loved old customs and all that indicates simplicity of heart, repeated the evil done by his too zealous friends. He protected those who desired to honor him. So the children and the women adored him. The reproach of alienating from their families these delicate beings, always easily charmed away, was one of those oftenest made by his enemies.

The infant religion was thus in many respects a movement of women and children. These had formed about Jesus, as it were, a young guard in the inauguration of his innocent royalty, and bestowed little ovations upon him, with which he was much pleased, calling him "son of David," crying *Hosanna*, and bearing palms around him. Jesus, like Savonarola, used them perhaps as instruments for pious missions; he was pleased to see these young apostles, who did not compromise him, rushing in advance, and bestowing titles upon him which he dared not take himself. He did not check them, and when asked if he heard, he responded evasively that the praise which falls from young lips is the most pleasing to God.

He lost no occasion to repeat that the little ones are sacred beings, that the kingdom of God belongs to the little children, that it is necessary to become a little child in order to enter it, that it must be received as a little child, that the Heavenly Father hides his secrets from the wise and reveals them unto babes. To him, the idea of his disciples is confounded with that of little children. One day, when they had among themselves one of these disputes concerning precedence which were not rare, Jesus took a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said: "Behold the greatest; whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven."

It was childhood, indeed, in its divine spontaneity, in its innocent sparkles of joy, which was taking possession of the earth. All believed at every moment that the kingdom so intensely longed for was on the point of appearing. Each saw himself already seated upon a throne, beside the master. They distributed the places; they sought to compute the day. It was called the "Good News," the doctrine had no other name. An old word, "*paradise*," which the Hebrew, like all the tongues of the East, had borrowed from the Persian, and which originally designated the parks of the Achæmenides, summed up the dreams of all; a delightful garden, in which they should continue forever the enchanting life that they were leading here below. How long did this intoxication endure? We know not. None, during the course of this wonderful advent, measured time any more than we measure a dream. Duration was suspended; a week was as a century. But whether it filled years or months, the dream was so beautiful that humanity has since lived by it, and it is our consolation yet to welcome its diminishing perfume. Never did so much joy swell the breast of man. For a moment, in this effort, the most vigorous which it has ever made to raise itself above its planet, humanity forgot the leaden weight which fastens it to earth, and the woes of life here below. Blessed was he who could see with his eyes this divine outburst, and share, were it only for a day, this peerless illusion! But more blessed still would Jesus tell us, he who, disenthralled from all illusions, shall reproduce in himself the heavenly advent, and, with no millennium dream, with no chimerical paradise, with no signs in the heavens, by the rightcousness of his will and the purity of his soul, shall create anew in his heart the true kingdom of God!

THE DEATH OF JESUS.

Although the real motive of the execution of Jesus was wholly religious, his enemies had succeeded, at the tribunal, in presenting him as guilty of treason; they would not have obtained from the skeptical Pilate a condemnation for the cause of heterodoxy. Following out this idea, the priests, through the multitude, demanded the execution of Jesus by the cross. Crucifixion was not of Jewish origin; had the condemnation of Jesus been purely Mosaic, he would have been stoned. The cross was a Roman punishment, reserved for slaves and those cases in which it was desired to add to death the aggravation of ignominy. In applying it to Jesus, he was treated like highway-robbers, brigands, bandits, or those enemies of an inferior class to whom the Romans did not accord the honor of death by the sword. It was the chimerical "King of the Jews," not the heterodox dogmatist, who was punished. In consequence of the same idea, the execution was of necessity abandoned to the Romans. We know that, among the Romans, soldiers, slaughter being their occupation, performed the office of executioners. Jesus was therefore delivered to a cohort of auxiliary troops, and all the horror of the tortures introduced by the cruel customs of the new conquerors was unfolded before him. It was about noon. He was dressed in his clothes which they had taken off to parade him before the people, and as the cohort had already in reserve two thieves to be executed, they put the three prisoners together, and the cortege took up its march for the place of execution.

This place was a spot called Golgotha, situated outside of Jerusalem, but near the walls of the city. The name *Golgotha* signifies skull; it corresponds, it seems, to our word *Chaumont* [Baldmount] and probably designates a smooth hill, having the form of a bald skull. We know not with exactitude the situation of this hill. It was surely to the north or north-west of the city, in the high rolling plain which is bounded by the walls and the two valleys of Cedron and Hinnom, a miserable region, made still more melancholy by the disagreeable incidents of its proximity to a great city. It is difficult to place Golgotha on the precise spot where, since Constantine, all Christendom has revered it. This spot is too near the interior of the city, and we are inclined to believe that in the time of Jesus it was comprised within the circuit of the walls.

He who was condemned to crucifixion had himself to bear the instrument of his torture. But Jesus, weaker than his two companions, could not bear his. The squad met a certain Simon of Cyrene, who was returning from the country, and the soldiers, with the rough procedure of a foreign garrison, forced him to bear the fatal tree. Perhaps they exercised in this a recognized right of impressment, Romans not being able to cumber themselves with the infamous wood. It seems that afterward Simon belonged to the Christian community. His two sons, Alexander and Rufus, were well known in it. He related perhaps more than one circumstance which he had witnessed. No disciple was at this time near Jesus.

They finally reached the place of execution. According to Jewish usage, the victims were offered a highly spiced wine, an intoxicating drink, which from a sentiment of pity was given to the sufferer to stupefy him. It seems that the women of Jerusalem themselves often brought to the unfortunates who were led out to torture this wine of the dying; when none of them came it was bought at the expense of the public treasury. Jesus, after having touched the cup to his lips, refused to drink. This sad solace of common criminals was unsuited to his lofty nature. He preferred to go out of life with his mind perfectly unclouded, and to await with full consciousness the death which he had wished and invoked. He was then despoiled of his garments and fastened to the cross. The cross was composed of two beams attached in the form of a T. It was quite low, so low that the feet of the victim almost touched the ground. The cross was first set up, then the prisoner was fastened to it by driving nails through his hands; the feet were often nailed, sometimes merely tied with cords. A billet of wood, a sort of arm, was fastened to the stem of the cross, toward the middle, and passed between the legs of the victim, who rested upon it. Without this the hands would have been torn and the body would have sunk down. At other times, a horizontal tablet was fixed at the hight of the feet and sustained them.

Jesus tasted these horrors in all their atrocity. A burning thirst, one of the tortures of crucifixion, devoured him. He asked for drink. There was at hand a cup of the ordinary drink of the Roman soldiers, a mixture of vinegar and water, called *posca*. Soldiers had to carry their *posca* with them in all their expeditions, among which executions were counted. A soldier dipped a sponge in this drink, put it on the end of a reed, and bore it to the lips of Jesus, who sucked it. The thieves were crucified on either side. The executioners, to whom were ordinarily abandoned the minor spoils (*spoliatoria*) of criminals, drew lots for his garments, and, seated at the foot of the cross, guarded him. According to one tradition, Jesus pronounced the words, which were in his heart if not upon his lips: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

An inscription, in accordance with the Roman custom was attached to the top of the cross, bearing in three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin: THE KING OF THE JEWS. There was in this wording something humiliating and opprobrious to the nation. The numerous passers who read it were shocked by it. The priests sent word to Pilate that he ought to adopt a wording which would imply only that Jesus had said that he was the king of the Jews. But Pilate, already disgusted with the case, refused to make any change in what was written.

His disciples had fled. John nevertheless declares that he was present and remained all the whole standing at the foot of the cross. We can affirm with more certainty that the faithful women of Galilee, who had followed Jesus to Jerusalem, and continued to serve him, did not abandon him. Mary Cleophas, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Salome, and others beside, stood at a distance and watched him. If we may believe John, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also at the foot of the cross, and Jesus, seeing his mother and his beloved disciple together, said to him: "Behold thy mother," and to her: "Behold thy son." But we cannot understand how the synoptic evangelists, who mention the other women by name, should have omitted her whose presence was so striking a fact. Perhaps indeed the extreme elevation of the character of Jesus does not render such a personal tenderness probable, at the moment when, entirely absorbed in his work, he no longer existed save for humanity.

Aside from this little group of women, who from afar comforted his eyes, Jesus had before him only the spectacle of human debasement or stupidity. The passers insulted him. He heard about him vulgar raillery, and his death cries or anguish turned into hateful mockery. "Ah! behold him," said they, "he who called himself Son of God! Let his father come now and deliver him, if he will have him." "He saved others," it was muttered, "himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him!" "Ah," said a third "thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down." Some, partially aware of his speculative ideas, thought they heard him call Elias, and said: "Let us see whether Elias will come to take him down." It appears that the two thieves crucified beside him also reviled him. The sky was dark, the earth, as in all the environs of Jerusalem, dry and melancholy. For a moment, according to some accounts, his heart failed him; a cloud concealed the face of his Father; he endured an agony of despair, a thousand times more excruciating than all his tortures. He saw nothing but the ingratitude of man; perhaps he repented having suffered for a vile race, and he cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But his divine instinct soon drove it away. In proportion as the life of his body was extinguished, his soul became serene and gradually returned to its celestial source. He regained the consciousness of his mission, he saw in his death the salvation of the world; he lost sight of the hideous spectacle exhibited at his feet, and, thoroughly made one with his Father, he commenced upon the cross the divine life which he was to lead in the heart of humanity for infinite ages.

The peculiar atrocity of crucifixion was that a man might live three or four days in this horrible condition upon the seat of anguish. The hemorrhage of the hands very soon ceased and was not mortal. The true cause of death was the unnatural position of the body, which induced a hideous disturbance in the circulation, fearful pains in the head and heart, and finally rigidity of the limbs. Men of strong constitutions died only of hunger. The principal idea of this cruel punishment was not to kill the criminal directly by absolute torture, but to expose the slave, nailed by the hands of which he had not known how to make proper use, and let him rot upon the tree. The delicate organization of Jesus preserved him from this slow agony. Everything leads to the belief that the rupture of a blood-vessel produced at the end of three hours, immediate death. A few moments before he rendered up his soul, his voice was still strong. Suddenly he uttered a terrible cry, in which some heard: "O, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" and which others, more attentive to the prophecies, rendered by these words: "All things are accomplished!" His head fell upon his breast, and he expired.

Repose now in thy glory, noble founder. Thy work is finished; thy divinity is established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thy labors fall by any fault. Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, thou shalt witness from the heights of divine peace the infinite results of thy acts. At the price of a few hours of suffering, which did not even reach thy grand soul, thou hast bought the most complete immortality. For thousands of years, the world will depend on thee! Banner of our contests, thou shalt be the standard about which the hottest battle will be given. A thousand times more alive, a thousand times more beloved, since thy death than during thy passage here below, thou shalt become the corner-stone of humanity so entirely, that to tear thy name from this word would be to rend it to its foundations. Between thee and God, there will no longer be any distinction. Complete conqueror of death, take possession of thy kingdom, whither shall follow thee, by the royal road which thou hast traced, ages of worshipers.

Such is the dramatic manner in which the events of the Gospel narratives are set forth by the lively, imaginative, and not over-scrupulous French artist. The perusal of his book will probably give satisfaction to but a limited circle of readers. As a picture of oriental life and manners, it leaves a vivid, and we presume, a not inaccurate impression on the mind, and may serve to present the external environment of the personages described in the New Testament in a familiar and natural light. The style of the volume, in spite of its numerous inconsequences, is not without a certain enticing charm. Its sweet and tender words often linger in the ear like the remembrance of some delicious melody. The author writes in a tone of evident sincerity and frankness; even his most fanciful conjectures are urged with a naive simplicity that creates a prepossession in his favor; but he has only a slight perception of the laws of historical perspective, and reasons with more beauty of illustration than force of argument. His work may furnish significant and valuable suggestions to the sagacious reader; it may throw fresh light on a few isolated incidents in the sacred narratives; but as a complete, connected, and consistent account of the portion of history which it undertakes to explain, its want of success is no less eminent than the boldness of its attempt.

MRS. STEPHENS'S REJECTED WIFE.

THE REJECTED WIFE. By Mrs. ANN S. STEPHENS. 12mo. pp. 436. T. B. Peterson & Brothers.

Mrs. Stephens has gained a wide popularity among the lovers of exciting fiction by her vivid descriptive power, her careful elaboration of familiar homely scenes, and a certain degree of dramatic effect in the evolution of her plots. The present story is well adapted to sustain, and perhaps, to enhance her reputation, and will not fail to enjoy the welcome of a favorite among a numerous class of readers.

The scene is laid in Connecticut just before the commencement of the Revolution, and no less renowned a personage than Benedict Arnold plays a conspicuous part in the progress of the tale. This notorious individual is introduced at an early period of the story, youthful in years, but ripe in the false and treacherous spirit, which subsequently made his name a bye-word among men. He had contracted a secret marriage with Amy Leonard, the young and beautiful daughter of a farmer in very humble circumstances, but is not long in discovering that he had grown weary of the connection, and begins to plot for its dissolution. An intimacy ensues with a charming French lady of reputed fabulous wealth, Laura de Montreuil, whose affections he gains, and, in due time, explains to her the state of his own heart, though without committing himself too decisively. The declaration was made, or rather intimated, on a sleigh-ride, which took place during a visit at the old family homestead, to which Arnold had brought Laura and her brothers to pass the festival of Thanksgiving in the primitive Connecticut fashion. Mrs. Stephens shall tell the story in her own words.

"Where on earth are you driving to, Mr. Arnold?"

"Into the town. I wish to show you the view from some of those terraces; it is peculiarly fine."

"Town!" cried the lady, with a pretty scream, "town! when you know I detest the very sight of a house that isn't built of logs. No—no, I am dying to see the Falls, that we only got a glimpse of the other day. It was for that I stole Paul's horse and kidnapped you."

Arnold tried to say something of the happiness of a captivity like that; but secret annoyances distorted the words on his lips, and he said, rather sharply.

"Indeed, mademoiselle, you will find the road rough, and the Falls frozen to marble."

"That is exactly what I want—a good jolting—jumpers all along the road, as you call those ridges, they shake one up so; and an overturn in the snow, if one does not plunge too deep. Now, don't talk of roads to me. I like obstacles and difficulties, or how should I ever endure you, the most cross-grained, obstinate person in the world, every one says."

"But I hope you will not say so, Laura."

"Laura!"

"Have I offended?"

"I don't know. Yes, of course."

She blushed scarlet under his glance, for she felt that her own heedless encouragement had kindled the audacity burning there.

"Oh, if I only had a right—if every glance at that face was not a presumption."

She looked up, softened by the humility of his speech, but still dissatisfied by the tones of his voice.

"Why do you speak of presumption? It is no great crime to forget strict proprieties for once," she said, gently.

"The word—yes, you might forgive that—but the feelings, the burning imprudence here—who will forgive that?"

He waited a moment expecting her to speak, but she was looking out up the glittering snow-crust, while her cheeks glowed like ripe peaches.

"You shall not say one word to reassure me," he said, stooping his head to feast on her blushes, as a rapacious child devours fruit.

She laughed, half nervously, half in a pretty defiance of her own feelings.

"I should not fancy that you required reassuring, Arnold."

"No. Doubtless you scoff at the audacity of a farmer's son claiming a right to possess human feelings where so much wealth and beauty are concerned. I have exposed the baroness of my antecedents—taken you into the bosom of my family. Do you scorn me for the plainness that seems like poverty to one like you?"

"You know that I do not scorn you for anything—least of all for what I have seen in your home," she said, with feeling.

"But you are rich, very rich. I dare say—of gentle blood, too, and that means so much in foreign countries. Yours is an old name, a proud family; while I—what on earth do I possess which can bring me on an equality in any point with you?"

"It is not for me to point out your advantages, Mr. Arnold, but all the possessions you point out are things in which I have no claim to merit. What is good blood but an accident, over which we have no control? Our wealth, which comes from the past without merit or exertion? All that relates to you as a man, or me as a woman, you have left out: thought, energy, feeling, all that makes up life and honor."

Laura was greatly agitated as she said this. The color flashed in and out of her face like gleams of lightning; her lips grew bright with the words that passed them. He could feel her form tremble amid the furs.

She had answered his question—twice answered it—and now he had no desire to press the conversation further; this was neither the time nor place. She was rich; she loved him—this brilliant, stately creature. What could be ambition of man ask for more?

She was listening with parted lips. Her very soul was thirsty for the answer which her generosity should have brought; but he only said, very softly, and with a humility that charmed, while it disappointed her,

"Oh, if I dared—if I only dared!"

The blood burned in her cheek now; the very snowflakes melted into tears of shame as they fell upon its hot crimson. Every word she uttered stung her like a disgrace. Was he modestly retreating, now that she had gone so far? She clenched the restless hand in her lap till the grasp pained her; she bit her lips till they glowed like wounded coral; and at last dashed her little foot down into the bottom of the sleigh in a paroxysm of self-censure.

"What is the matter? Have I wearied you with my slow driving?" asked her companion, with tender deference.

"Yes—yes—no—it is not that. You will persist in driving the wrong way. I wish to see the Falls."

"But—"

"I will not listen to a but. Here, give me the lines and the whip. I know how to drive. You won't. Oh, very well. If you do not turn toward the Falls, I will get out and walk there. Nothing can prevent that."

The young French girl said this with great satisfaction, for her spirit was all in revolt. She longed to do something hateful—to perpetuate an act of despotism which would convince him how very little her heart had been in the whole conversation. The coquetry of her impulsive nature came out in force then. She was glad that there was some one thing which he seemed reluctant to undertake. Her desire to see the Falls flamed into a passion. She would go. It was what had brought her from New-Haven. Nothing else could have induced her to take so long a journey on the very cage of Winter.

Arnold listened with a curve of the lip that might mean wounded pride, might be assumed self-contrition. But he turned his horse, and drove toward the Yantic Falls without a word.

"The youth is father to the man." Benedict Arnold was not a person to be taken unawares, even at that early age. Of all places in the world, he would have shunned the Yantic Falls and its neighborhood, had the choice been left to him, but the willful girl at his side had doomed him, and on toward that romantic pass they dashed, he too restless for silence, and she exactly in that state of mind when wit flashes like chain lightning from the heart of a woman wounded in her pride.

You never saw a more beautiful creature than that young French girl appeared, as they swept through the frosty air, along that line of shimmering snow, listening to the bells as if they had been bursts of martial music, her face all one glow of roses; her eyes bright as diamonds; and her heart swelling with a storm of angry shame. Arnold could hardly maintain his cautious reserve as he glanced toward her.

But he would not commit himself further, at least in that dangerous neighborhood. If she would go to the Yantic Falls, it must be with a burning heart. His was cold enough, at any rate.

The suffering and shame brought upon the family, which had been deceived by the treachery of Arnold, and the struggle of the young wife between her affections and her duty are depicted in glowing and impressive colors. His infamous conduct is at length brought to light, the marriage with Laura is prevented by the exposure, and the character of Amy is cleared up just before her death of a broken heart. In the progress of the story, Mrs. Stephens has introduced many characteristic features of colonial society in Connecticut, and revealed the interior of the humble abodes which formed the home of the fathers of the Revolution. She excels in the delineation of rustic scenes; her descriptions are fresh and natural, with a decided flavor of the woods and hills; and in spite of certain anachronisms in the provincial dialect of which she makes large use, the book has a striking air of reality, as if drawn from observation rather than from fancy.

FROM FERNANDINA, FLA.

Affairs on the Peninsula.

From Our Special Correspondent.

FERNANDINA, Fla., Nov. 30, 1863.

The first mental impression made by Fernandina is that of a small, deserted village, in which the wooden houses are fast relapsing into a vegetable condition of existence. The stores are without goods, the streets without people, the port without commerce. Coming here in a severe rain-storm, I landed on a dock the planks of which were all independent of each other, as though they had been intended for one of those "political platforms" of the good old times, when the "country was saved" every two months by "our most distinguished men" (and, like Mark Tapley, ain't I glad we have got to the end of the breed, Sir!) The great events of the place are the arrival of occasional schooners, laden with bricks for the construction of Fort Clinch, on Amelia Island, defending St. Mary's River, and guarding the neighboring inlets against blockade-runners. The small public of Fernandina are mildly fermenting—almost—about the recent recall and detention of one of these vessels, aboard of which a few hides had been shipped for New-York! The Harbor-Master, Quartermaster, and