BOOKS AND AUTHORS

THE ALFRED MILLENARY

THE celebration of the Millenary of King Alfred the Great—the one thousandth anniversary of his death—will culminate next month. This whole year has been given to the consideration of this king who can be truly accorded the attribute of greatness. The English-speaking world outside of England has also taken legitimate interest in the celebration and our own country has not been wanting in research into the life and services of King Alfred, fourth son of Ethelwulf, the Saxon. Most American boys and girls have enlarged their knowledge of Alfred this year. Many of them remembered him as the Saxon king who, a fugitive from the Danes, took refuge in the humble cottage of a herdsman and, having been left to watch the bread to keep it from burning, was so lost in thought about the misfortunes of his kingdom, that the housewife returning, found the bread burned to a cinder and Alfred in a brown study.

It is a matter of congratulation that the life and character of Alfred are better known now than they have been heretofore. We are interested in his career, of course, not only because, with the success of his arms over the Danes, he distinctly set up tangible suggestions of Anglo-Saxon institutions which have proven through the ages the foundations of our liberties, but because he was the promoter of learning and education, and calling in scholars from Europe, schools were founded and the king himself set the example of translating the Christian classics and other literature into Saxon. He furnished the first English prose, and multiplied the number of Saxons who could translate Latin text into English. The king made a free translation of Orosius' Universal History for his people and established a national record of events which was long maintained as "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," and placed where the people could read it. He made his people aware that they had a noble language, capable of being the constructive force of a great literature.

What he accomplished for the security of property and law and order in his kingdom and as a reformer of religion which had become weak and corrupt, is a matter of historic fact and his services as a reviver of learning in a most unpromising field were of permanent value, for he started the English language on its way to refined perfection and his work was not impaired even by the tumultuary period between his death and the conquest by Norman William.

Some English critics object to the inclusion by Cassell & Co., the English publishers, in their shilling standard library, of a volume of selected "American Humor." The Messrs. Cassell are wise to inject such a volume in the series; that is, if they have intrusted the selection of the specimens of American humor to competent hands. Few Englishment are able to make such a selection. It takes most of them a very long time to see the point of a joke. Many of them never can see it. It will be interesting to know what kind of a book the proposed volume will be. A book of selected humor is a queer piece of literature anyway. The best humor is that imbedded in stories and undetached. Even Mark Twain won't appear so humorous in a volume of selections.

NEW BOOKS

Brockman's Mavericks. By Joseph N. Quail. Illustrated by David F. Thompson. New York: Quail & Warner. Price, $1.25.

This "Maverick" of Brockman, was not a stray calf he had branded out on the range and taken into the herd, but a little boy, whose mother had left him in a squalid Texas town, where was a garrison and a chronic gathering of cowboys about the saloons. This boy is a decided hero. His adventures on Brockman's ranch and in successive fights of cowboys and troopers with Indians are thrillingly told and the way in which he and Brockman ultimately came up with the boy's fugitive mammy is told in a masterly way with all the possible incidents of cowboy life, including a wild ride by Brockman, carrying the Maverick's little mammy out of reach of the Indians and a fine account of "shooting up the town," of Henrietta. The love episode is admirably detailed and the reader will be apt to indorse the author's dedication: "To As Fine a Set of Heathens As Ever a Man Lived Among and Loved—the Men of the Half-Diamond L."

When Love Flies Out of the Window. By Leonard Merrick, author of "The Worldlings," "The Actor Manager," etc. New York: D. Appleton & Co. Price, $1.

This is a story of an English girl, Meenie Weston, who started out for a dramatic career with great expectations and found herself, after honest efforts, a singer of popular songs in a rather low-down concert hall in Paris, a forlorn condition, out of which she was rescued by the kindness of an Englishman, who found some very bad and dishonest people had imposed on the innocence of the girl. He helped her to better things and, after awhile, the two fell in love and married and then they quarreled. All this is most interestingly told, but the reader will better like the denouement, for Meenie, after awhile, won the success she had dreamed of in her younger days, and the two got together again. The author has made Meenie a very attractive character, a girl of strenuous character, who, through suffering and temptation, became strong.

Kim. By Rudyard Kipling. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., No. 34 Union Square. Price, $1.50.

Some of Mr. Kipling's critics have declared that he has emitted nothing but stupor since he had his severe illness in New York. This is very severe judgment, but it is not accepted by the public. Mr. Kipling's poetry has deteriorated mut in "Kim" there does not seem to be any lack of vigor or power to interest. While the story has been running as a serial in several periodicals, it has certainly had large vogue. The story is beyond doubt a most faithful sketch of life in India, such as a halfbreed youth and the company into which he falls would naturally lead. The attachment of Sergeant Kimball's son by a native woman to the solemn old lama as his disciple and the story of their travels and adventures is not lacking in romantic interest. The peculiar superstitions of the yogi class and the boy's fulness of wit, humor and wisdom make a strange mixture; but it commands attention, while the contrast deepens between the great solemnity of the "Holy One," and his perpetual fingering of his rosary and Kim's continual tendency to lying. Kim possessed the Irish wit of his father and the subtlety of his oriental mother.

Justice to the Woman. By Bernie Babcock. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., No. 215-221 Wabash avenue. Price, $1.25.

This is a story of a poor girl who made the same mistake that many other girls made and trusted a society scoundrel's promise to marry her and found herself deserted with a child coming. It is the same old story, but related in a very different and much more interesting and profitable way than usual. Mignon encounters and follows good advice and ultimately, having successfully resisted the efforts of the man who betrayed her to enter upon a life of shame, marries the good doctor who befriended her in her time of trouble and proved her genuine friend afterward. The fate of the man who betrayed Mignon is very effectively disclosed.

Arline Valere. A Story of Life. By Joseph Halworth, with 180 sketches by the author. Boston: L. C. Page & Co. Minneapolis: Nathaniel McCarthy.

A peculiarity of this book is that the illustrations and text are reproduced in facsimile from the original manuscript of the author, who, fortunately, writes a very good hand. The marginal pen-and-ink illustrations are capital. The story is of humble life in New York, in which figure an artist and a little girl, whose name gives the title to the book. The author has introduced some very odd characters in his story, as Mr. John Bolivar Potts, the collector, and Mrs. McFlicker. "Little Baggs" bears about with her a Dickensy atmosphere and East New York furnishes the locale.

The Poetry of Niagara. Compiled by Myron T. Pritchard: Boston: Lothrop Publishing company. Minneapolis: N. McCarthy. Price, $1.

The compiler of this volume has, through generally excellent taste in selecting poetry on Niagara, and by a judicious use of very good illustrations, made a very attractive volume. The first quotation is in prose—Charles Dickens' first impressions of Niagara—and among the selections are some from Richard Watson Gilder, Mrs. L. H. Sigourney, W. E. Channing, Samuel Lover, W. D. Howells, Joseph Rodman Drake and George Houghton, the latter having the strong poetic instinct facilitating interpretation of sights and sounds.

The Battle Invisible and Other Stories. By Eleanor C. Reed. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co. Price, $1.25.

The author of these stories is a new Chicago writer, and her work is certainly attractive and very promising. The title story is a very strong one. It tells of a family sundered by anger and crime and misconstruction, the daughter turned out of the house by her father, and how, after a time, she, having married a man who loves her, a reconciliation takes place through the ministrations of her little child. The story is beautifully told. The other stories are of farm and country life, bringing the reader in its very atmosphere, and among quaint and interesting and original characters. What humor and pathos there is in "The Widow Perkins," her smoldering love for Jonathan Allen, and her rigid discipline of her niece Mirandy, who was expected to kill every fly in the house under all circumstances. The tale of the loves of the Widow Perkins and Mirandy is wholesome and humorous.

From Atlanta to the Sea. By Byron A. Dunn. "The Young Kentuckian's Series." Chicago, A. C. McClurg & Co.

This is an admirable story of the civil war, dealing with Sherman's march from Atlanta to the sea, General Hood's troublesome campaign in Tennessee and Sherman's raid through the Carolinas. The book is equally interseting with the former volumes of the series, relating the adventures of two young Federal officers during Sherman's march, one of them, Shackelford, being Sherman's chief of scouts. Some "strenuous" rebel young ladies figure in the story and prove irresistible to the two brave young Federal officers, who add them to their conquests, and they are properly "reconstructed rebels," as the family scene in the last chapter shows. Other volumes in the interesting "Young Kentuckians series" are announced by the publishers.

Middlemarch. The Personal Edition, by George Eliot. A Story of Provincial Life. Two volumes. With biographical introduction by Esther Wood. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. Price, $1.50 a volume. Sent postpaid to any address on approval, to be paid for if satisfactory or returned to the publishers, if upon examination it is not wanted. Minneapolis: N. McCarthy.

This edition of George Eliot's works is in every respect elegant and attractive. Mrs. Wood's introduction is an especially noteworthy feature. She is a literary artist who has made a profound study of the distinguished novelist and her works, and throws a flood of light upon her personality. In each volume there are fac-simile reproductions of portions of the Eliot manuscripts, and the illustrations are of localities which are mentioned or which figure conspicuously in the novels. In "Middlemarch" there are facsimiles of manuscript pages and a view of Middlemarch and of George Eliot's house in Cheyne Walk, from a drawing by Joseph Pennell. Mrs. Wood says in her introduction to "Middlemarch": "It is not so easy to trace out 'originals' in 'Middlemarch' as in those earlier books, into which George Eliot wove so much of the life of her own family and her childhood's acquaintances; but there has never been any doubt among her friends and those who knew her opportunities for satire, that the figure of Casaubon was very largely drawn from the Rev. Mark Pattison, rector of Lincoln at that period, and whom she visited just before writing the novel; a man whose narrow pedantry spoiled what might have been a useful life work in scholarship. Again, it is impossible not to be conscious of a more or less faithful portrait of her husband, George Henry Lewes, in the character of Will Ladislaw—one of the most delightful of George Eliot's creations."

Tennessee Sketches. By Louisa Preston Looney. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co. Price, $1.

This volume of stories shows some very good literary work and some of a rather unsatisfactory character, suggesting inexperience. The long and elaborate story, "The Member from Tennessee" would be much better had the author not been in a hurry to write it. It shows marks of haste, need of deliberation. It is about a Tennessee legislator and congressman, who was defeated for a third nomination to congress by the machinations of political enemies, but succeeded in getting a friend nominated and defeating his opponent. Ultimately Felton gets one of the senatorships of Tennessee. The love affairs in the story are a little perplexing. Felton had been disappointed in love in early life and was rather pessimistic on the subject, and had a hard time looking after his niece and ward to keep her from falling in love with a youth of his family's enemies, and as for himself—well, the author disposes of him very worthily. There is some very good writing in "In the Face of the Quarantine," "Joe's Last Testament," "Aftermath of the Old Regime," and "Gray Farm Folk," the latter a story of the civil war.

Juell Demming. By Albert Lathrop Lawrence. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co. Price, $1.25.

The author of this book has certainly put enough love and tragedy in his story to please anyone who likes much of that sort of thing. Juell Demming was found at dusk in her mother's front yard prostrate and sick, when Cora Wexstaff, school teacher, returned from her day's work in the schoolhouse. The young man was nursed for weeks by mother and daughter before he recovered full consciousness and was pronounced out of danger by good Dr. Kenneth. Most writers of stories would bring about an attachment between Demming and pretty Cora, and ultimate marriage, but there is a different trend of events. The young man seems to have been worth saving, for he was duly grateful to his benefactors and went to work editing a newspaper as soon as he could and his experience as a fighter in the Spanish and Boer wars is certainly worth reading. The interest in the story centers in Demming's devotion to Dr. Kenneth's daughter Helen, who was married to a brute, whom she despised, and in the tragical way by which she was freed from the hateful incumbrance and found her happiness in the love of Demming. The reader will follow the pretty Cora's career with deep interest and will try to persuade himself that the girl married happily.

Stevenson's Attitude to Life. With Readings From His Essays and Letters. By John Franklin Genung. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., Nos. 426 and 428 West Broadway. Sixty cents.

The author of this interesting critique on Robert Louis Stevenson suggests that, if the latter was framing an ideal for us he would put it: "Do not assume an attitude toward life at all, but just live; do not be a spectator and critic of the business of living, but throw yourself into the heart of it, and be all there and say no more about it." His "attitude" was "the free, joyous erectness of the undismayed soul." He had, it is to be remembered, physical weakness and enforced exile in the South Pacific isles to contend with, but he maintained his cheerfulness and "morning face," as he used to express it, to the last. The following extract from Stevenson's "Walking Tours" amply illustrates his spirit: "We are in such haste to be doing, to be writing, to be gathering gear, to make our voice audible a moment in the derisive silence of eternity, that we forget that one thing, of which these are but the parts—namely, to live. We fall in love, we drink hard, we run to and fro upon the earth like frightened sheep. And now you are to ask yourself if, when all is done, you would not have been better to sit by the fire at home, and be happy thinking. To sit still and contemplate—to remember the faces of women without desire, to be pleased by the great deeds of men without envy, to be everything and everywhere in sympathy, and yet content to remain where and what you are—is not this to know both wisdom and virtue and to dwell with happiness? After all, it is not they who carry flags, but they who look upon it from a private chamber, who have the fun of the procession." True enough, and yet there is not absent from this attitude toward life some degree of selfishness. The book throughout is admirable. Professor Genung extracts much pure gold from Stevenson's thought and his comments are delightful.

THE MAGAZINES

Truth's (Truth company, New York) leading feature is "A Half Century of Cup Contests," by W. P. Stephens, an expert on the subject of yachting, with eight full-page illustrations in color of the famous yachts of today. There are some very good illustrated fiction features and Grace Gallatin Seton-Thompson contributes a paper on jacking for eels, crabbing, trout, menhaden and other water creatures. The "Autobiography of an Office Boy" is a most humorous feature, but the yachting matter overshadows everything else in interest, while the cover design is simply delicious and appropriate—a mermaid contemplating herself in her mirror.

McClure's for October is a very pleasant number, largely owing to Clara Morris's reminiscences of the production of "Miss Multon," which she relates in a charming way, and such stories as Lighton's tale of the Nebraska pioneers. Most readers will enjoy Ray Stannard Baker's illustrated sketch of the career of J. Pierpont Morgan, showing the great things he has accomplished in finance, notably in reorganizations of distracted corporations into successful careers, and effecting gigantic industrial combinations, but, withal, showing himself a very liberal and thoughtful philanthropist. Josiah Flynt's account of municipal protection of crime in New York is no doubt absolutely true, more's the pity! Kipling contributes a new "Barrack Room Ballad," of the mounted infantry, and there is a breezy account of elephant hunting in Africa. It seems there are still a few left.

The Smart Set's completed novel is "The Career of Mrs. Osborne," by S. Carleton and Helen Milecete. These two persons together ought to have produced a novel possessing a little more of the quality of probability; but it will pass—only Mrs. George Wilton, wife of Captain George Wilton of the Royal Irish Fusileers, must be set down as one of the most enterprising American women who ever went to live in England. As for this number of Smart Set generally, its short stories are better than the long, pretentious novel.

The September number of the Current Encyclopedia is, like its predecessors, and up-to-date in politics, education, history, science, philosophy, art, religion, etc., recording the leading occurrences in every department. Among the features of this number is an account of the Siberian railway, illustrated; of the current polar expeditions, and of the Pan-American exposition. Published by the Modern Research Society, Chicago.

Success (New York, Washington Square,) gives prominence to an illustrated paper on the proposed deep water route for lake traffic to the sea, to which Tom Johnson, Carter Harrison, S. M. Jones of Toledo and others contribute their views. The number is full of good reading about people who have solved the problem of successful living and valuable data as to our great national progress.

In the International Monthly for September Edmund Gosse discusses, in his interesting way, the "Historic Place of Meredith and Hardy." Unlike in many respects, he finds they have in common a "strenuous determination to express in adequate literary form the ideas and experiences which distinguish each of them from all other human beings," and each "puts the trivial and oft-repeated surface-tricks behind him," and "stoops to nothing which he knows to be insignificant because he thinks that it will please, and who always deals with great emotions as he personally has seen them revealed in the words and actions of living men and women." An admirable paper is John La Farge's "Art and Artists," which will be continued in the next number, and another article of value is Elizabeth von Heyking's "Diplomatic Life in Peking," where she lived several years, but left two years ago. She tells many interesting things about the anti-progressive spirit of the dowager empress, whose "greatness," she says, "consists in coming personally unscathed out of events which have destroyed thousands of innocent lives." "The Bases of Chinese Society," by F. W. Williams, and "English Painting and French" are other important features of the number. Mr. Williams thinks the price of China's redemption from encompassing evils, "must be the sacrifice of her pride and the renunciation of many of her ancient ideals."

In the American Journal of Sociology there is a valuable paper on the "Social Aspect of Chicago Stock Yards," giving details of the organization and conduct of the packing industry there, in its features of stock yard and transit company, live stock exchange and packing plants, with the various technical processes. S. S. McClintock of the University of Chicago contributes a second article on "The Kentucky Mountains and Their Feuds," detailing some of the most bitter of the feuds and showing that the chronic disturbances of this kind in Kentucky were due to the fighting spirit inherited from the early settlers. There is an interesting paper by J. M. Gillette on "Culture Agencies in South Chicago," showing the strength and weakness of the institutional work of the churches there, the weakness being in the lack of a spirit of union and co-operation, which is essential to success. C. R. Woodruff's paper detailing the defiance of the public in Philadelphia in the granting of street railway franchises by the council a few months ago refates to one of the most glaring of municipal machine outrages. Among other attractive features is Victor L. O'Brien's account of the Columbia Park Boys' Club of San Francisco.

An interesting feature of the Century for October is the paper by M. U. Northrup on the inner history of the origin and formation of the electoral commission of 1877, which saved the country from a possible internecine conflict over the Tilden-Hayes election dispute. Mr. Northrup was secretary of the special committee of the house of representatives and his story of the thrilling contention around the danger point is well told, although familiar to old stagers. Another paper of interest is Mr. Bishop's illustrated account of how he bought and transformed an abandoned farm in Connecticut into a kind of paradise, and few readers will skip John M. Howell's informing paper on "A French Government School from the Inside." At these schools hazing and fagging are practiced. Elizabeth Pennell delightfully describes "Italy's Garden of Eden," which is the lovely region of the lakes, such as Como, Lugano, Maggiore and Garda. Mr. Howland's paper on the New York bar is a notable feature of the number.

Harper's Weekly for the current week is given up almost entirely to the funeral of the late president, and is not only of great interest now, the faithful and accurate halftone reproductions of photographs giving the reader a vivid idea of the great mourning procession, but will be invaluable in the years to come. Among the most valuable sources of information for the future historian will be the pictures of the present. The pages of Harper's Weekly will tell the story of a nation's mourning for its best-beloved more graphically and truthfully than it could be told in any other way.

Literary Notes.

The Macmillan company announce "The First Interpreters of Jesus," by Rev. George Holley Gilbert, author of "The Student's Life of Jesus," etc. Also "The Fallen Stuarts," by F. W. Head, Cambridge; "Robert Browning as a Religious Teacher," by Arthur C. Pigon, and Albert Shaw's "Municipal Government in Great Britain."

"The Corsair King" is a thrilling story of pirate life, pirate successes, pirate disasters and daredevils, by Maurus Jokai, the Polish romance writer. The story is different from Jokai's usual elaborate tales and the translator has probably condensed it somewhat. Published by L. C. Page & Co., Boston, and for sale by McCarthy in Minneapolis. Price $1.

The Macmillan company onnounces "New Canterbury Tales," by Maurice Hewlett; "A Friend With the Countersign," a new novel, by B. H. Benson, and "The Roentgen Rays in Medicine and Surgery as an Aid in Diagnosis and as a Therapeutic Agent," by F. H. Williams, M. D., of the Boston city hospital and member of various medical and sanitary associations.

Helen Maitland Armstrong has illustrated the "Swedish Fairy Tales" of Miss Anna Wahlenberg of Stockholm, which her brother Axel has translated and which A. C. McClurg & Co., Chicago, have just published. This firm has issued "Lady Lee and Other Animal Stories" by the late Herman Lee Ensign. There are ten of the stories, with eighteen full-page photogravure illustrations.

In the Library of Useful Stories, D. Appleton & Co., New York, have issued "The Story of Books," by Gertrude B. Rawlings, with seventeen illustrations. There are chapters on material for writing and the preservation of literature, books and libraries of classical times, and mediaeval times, the invention of printing, early printing in different countries and the making of a modern book.

Fleming H. Revell Co., Chicago, have issued "A Clean Life," by Katharine Bushnell, with an introduction by Mrs. Josephine E. Butler. This little book is a strong and earnest appeal to men and women for personal purity as against one of the most desolating sins in the world—impurity—and it points out the conquering power which comes to every beleaguered soul which cries for it, and enables it to overcome the temptation and stand fast in the liberty and power imparted from above.

Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., New York, have issued Honore de Balzac's "The Chouans," with illustratrations by Julian Le Blant and an introduction by Professor William P. Trent. Price $1.50. "The Chouans" was one of the first of Balzac's novels to bring him prominently in public favor. It lifted him out of starvation conditions in his garret. This novel appeared in 1829, and in 1846 it was incorporated in Balzac's series of the "Comedy of Human Life," and by some critics is regarded as embodying some of his finest descriptive passages.

Henry T. Coates & Co., Philadelphia, have published "A Short History of the American Trotting and Pacing Horse," containing also pedigree tables of famous horses, suggestions on training horses, rules for track-laying. Included is a sketch of the American trotting turf in 1899 and 1900, by H. M. Gillam, and useful advice as to what should be done for a horse when sick or has met with an accident before the veterinary surgeon comes, by Dr. George Fleming. There are several illustrations, including Goldsmith Maid in her twenty-sixth year; Dexter in his twenty-fifth year, and other noted horses.

"Captain Ravenshaw" is the title of a romance of London at the close of Queen Elizabeth's reign. It is a story of an uproarious neighborhood in London, in an uproarious period, when it was decidedly unsafe for a man to go unarmed at night. Ravenshaw, "the roaring captain," did a good many tumultuary things, but was tamed to more gentle manners by pretty Millicent, the "maid of Cheapside." The book is published by L. C. Page & Co., 200 Summer street, Boston, and is for sale in Minneapolis by McCarthy. Price $1.50.

L. C. Page & Co., Boston (Minneapolis: Nathaniel McCarthy), have issued a very charming series of books for young people, called "The Little Cousin Series," entitled, "Our Little Japanese Cousin," "Our Little Brown Cousin," and "Our Little Indian Cousin," by Mary Hazelton Wade. Price $2.40 for the set of four volumes. Illustrated by L. J. Bridgman. Each volume tells about the life and customs of people in the countries indicated, as "The Little Brown Cousin" tells of the Malays in Borneo. The books are attractively written and illustrated.

Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., New York, Nos. 426 and 428 W Broadway, have issued "Stephen, a Story of the Little Crusaders," by Eva Madden, telling of the effort of European children to carry out a crusade to rescue the sacred places in Jerusalem from the infidels, in imitation of their fathers. The author has written a very impressive story of this remarkable movement. (Price 50 cents.) Also, "A Pair of Them," by Evelyn Raymond, a fine story of a little wealthy girl of New York, who found a friend in a poor, deformed child of the slums, whom she was enabled to help and whose life she was able to brighten. The two reciprocally benefited each other. It is an extraordinarily good story. Price 50 cents.

A writer in the Literary Era, discussing the Boston library's censorship, says: "An applicant at the public library for George More's 'Esther Waters' was refused permission to take it out, but was allowed to have the same author's 'Confessions of a Young Man.' It was explained to her that 'Esther Waters' was a good book to keep in the library (in the locked cases) as an exponent of contemporary fiction, but was not for general circulation. Now, this story, whose truth is acknowledged by Librarian Whitney, throws a curious light upon Puritanical methods and ideals. If any book of value and interest is for moral reasons to be excluded from general circulation (and I grant that the principle is a good one), surely it ought to be the 'Cofession of a Young Man,' and not 'Esther Waters.' The first is an autobiography as salacious, though not as brutally candid, as the 'Confessions of Rousseau.' The second is a novel detailing the struggles of a well-meaning and honest woman of the poorer classes, who sins through weakness, but repents and reforms. It is written with tender sympathy, with pity, with a large, loving humanity. It is as moral as 'The Vicar of Wakefield.' To be sure, it is not exactly the book to be placed in the hands of a boy or girl, but no man and no woman of adult years could be injured, but rather improved, by its perusal."

Sabbath-School Lesson.

OCTOBER 6, 1901

By John R. Whitney—Copyright, 1901.

Joseph Sold Into Egypt—Gen. XXXVII 12-36.

Golden Text.—The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him.—Acts vii., 9.

With this lesson we begin the study of the gospel, in Joseph. In the history of Jacob, his father, we saw that the grace of God gives the sinner both peace and power with God. The simple facts were made known to us. Now, however, in the story of Joseph many details of the plan of grace are unfolded, and very beautifully illustrated. These explain the facts.

For this plan of grace thus illustrated sets before us some of the important features of the great scheme of redemption. The scriptures declare that it rests upon two foundation stones; the love of God and the guilt of man. Both are essential foundation elements, and the story of Joseph is a great help to enable us to comprehend how they work together.

Like all plans, that of redemption was prepared long before it was put into operation. This is the very nature of a plan. It is always a provision for something in the future, and a necessary provision. Thus if one intends to build a house, he does not first gather together his workmen and bid them build with the material he has provided. But he first designs, or plans, the arrangements and proportions of the house. The plan comes first, and the building afterwards. And the character of the plan is always determined by the conditions to be met in carrying it out. Thus, if the house is to be built upon marshy ground, the plan must necessarily be very diffrent in many respects —especially in its foundations—from that of one to be built upon a rock, or upon the sand.

So the plan of redemption must meet special conditions. It must satisfy both the love of God and the needs of man. It must be so arranged that his sinfulness, so far from being an impediment, must be one of the essential elements of its perfection, just as the sand, the marsh or the rock are essential elements to be recognized in the planning of a house to insure its stability.

Now, in this story of Joseph, these great truths are presented to us so simply that every child can comprehend them. Here we see, on the plane of human experiences, how the love of the father—and the guilt of the eleven brothers—worked together in perfect harmony to provide bread and protection in the near future, even for those who were guilty. In fact, humanly speaking, there could have been no bread or protection provided without both the love of the father and the guilt of the brothers, any more than redemption could have been accomplished excepting by "the determinate counsel of God" and "by wicked hands" of men. (Acts ii., 23.)

The story of Joseph is one of the most fascinating stories in the Bible, and his character one of the most perfect. In considering it there will be no difficulty in gaining and holding the attention of either old or young. If any lessons are drawn from it they will most likely be such only as are suggested by the characteristics most dwelt upon in the telling.

Thus, if we look into the home of Joseph and consider it simply as that of a family of God's people, we will very naturally be struck with the character of the different members of the household. For it will present to us, in very striking colors, the weakness and partiality of the father, the envy and hatred, and heartlessness of the eleven brothers and the beautiful simplicity and guilelessness of Joseph. In such a study we can learn much to avoid and much to copy.

If, however, we look upon this family in its outward relationships, we will be struck with the fact that it is one of great historic importance. Studying it from this standpoint, the character of its individual members will be of very little importance. But we will be impressed with the wonderful way in which God overruled events so as to literally fulfil the word spoken to Abraham some two hundred years before (Gen. xv., 13). In such a study the hand of God in history will be clearly seen.

All such lessons are doubtless interesting and valuable. But it is questionable whether they are of the most importance. The history of nations is, in fact, only important as we see how it sets forth the progress of Christ's kingdom in the world, and the highest relationships of man are those which connect him with that kingdom. It is with that kingdom that the scriptures have the most to do.

In studying, therefore, the facts recorded in this story, it is more than probable that they were meant to teach us something more than the folly of unwise dealing with children, or the wickedness of envy, hatred, lying and murder, or even the overruling providence of God. The records of our daily journals teach all of these every day. But the scriptures teach them that they may set forth the more clearly the higher things of God's kingdom and the eternal needs of the soul.

If we place the story of Joseph and that of Jesus side by side, this higher plane of thought will at once become evident. Because of this many learned commentators have united in considering him as a type of Christ, although never being alluded to in this connection in the New Testament he cannot technically be recognized as such. But if not a type in the strict meaning of that term, yet it must be admitted that his history forms one of the most beautiful and perfect illustrations of Christ's work in redemption to be found anywhere in the sacred scriptures.

The home of Joseph was not probably very different from most other homes of his time. Jacob, who was the father of all, was more than 100 years old. He had many children, and every one he dearly loved. He was intensely anxious for their welfare. They had very marked traits of character, and the peculiarities of each were well known to him. He described them fully and accurately on his deathbed (Gen. xlix). They described them themselves as "twelve brethren, the sons of one man" (Gen. xlii., 13). Thus they recognized clearly one common fatherhood and brotherhood, but that did not make them either virtuous or happy.

Yet many modern reformers appear to think that all that is needed to solve most of the problems of the great family of mankind is simply a somewhat similar recognition of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. It is a very beautiful theory, but there is no gospel in it. It is an attempt to remove the suffering and sorrow of the world without providing for the sin of the world. It had no virtue in the household of Jacob.

For we find that in this household, whilst the father loved all of his children, most of them had no real love for him. They were dependent upon him, but they hardly gave him more than the merest outward reverence. They had no desire for his fellowship; and among themselves there was no real unity. Self-interest alone kept them together, and it is evident that they were "living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." (Titus iii., 3.)

To their father was brought only "their evil report" (verse 2). With one consent they left their home and "went to feed their father's flocks in Shechem" (verse 12), in the very place where he was most hated (xxxiv., 30). But they had no thought of him in so doing or considered that the flocks were his and not theirs.

This is a true picture of God's great human household. He is the Father over all, and men everywhere and in all time are His children. Their natural characteristics are fully described in Romans i., 21-32. No good report has come to Him concerning them (Psalm liii., 2-3.)

But in this household of Jacob there was one well-beloved son, of whom it is written: "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors" (v. 3). He was thus very near the father. His dress not only testified of his relation to the father, but it distinguished him everywhere from all others. It made it manifest that his father loved him, and that he loved his father, so that he could in very truth say, "I and my father are one." (John x., 30.)

Moreover, Joseph and his father were not only bound together by a common love for each other, but they were also one in their love for the brothers far away from home. They knew that this love was not reciprocated, but that did not quench it. It would have been very human, very like the brothers, if they had felt relieved, rather than concerned, because of the long absence of those whose conduct was only a grief to them. But it is not so with true affection. The father yearned after his absent sons. They were his children and he had watched over them with anxious solicitude from their earliest years. Now, whilst his heart clung with tenderest affection to "the son of his old age," his beloved son, he was deeply concerned for them. He knew that they were wayward children, and their "evil report" had often troubled him.

But now they were far away in the land of his and their enemies, and for a long time no tidings had come to him of their welfare. To hear from them he was willing even to be separated for a season from his beloved Joseph, and at once his beloved responded, "Here am I," (v. 13: "Lo, I come to do thy will.") So Joseph, without hesitation, willingly left his father's house to seek and to find the lost. It was because he loved both his father and his brothers. And Jacob could not, and did not, send a servant; but he sent his well-beloved son. In all this what a perfect representation is there of the great work of redemption! It had its origin in the love of the father and its manifestation in the love of the son.

So Joseph left "the vale of Hebron," where his father dwelt, "and he came to Shechem" (v. 14), seeking his brethren. Restlessly they were wandering from place to place, and were then encamped in Dothan. There, for a time, they were satisfied with its abundance of pure water and green grass. This was all that they wanted.

They had no thought of their father or of their home, and no wish to hear from either. So, when Joseph drew nigh, there was nothing in him or in his coming that they "should desire him" (Isa. liii., 3.) But "when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him" (v. 18). Thus "he came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John i., xi). Like the husbandmen in the parable, when they "saw the son they said among themselves, come, let us kill him." (Matt., xxi., 38).

This was their first thought, but Reuben interfered to prevent it. At his suggestion they cast Joseph into one of the dry pits in the neighborhood (v. 24). Reuben's idea was to deliver him out of their hands, but their thought probably was to put him to death by the slow process of starvation, without actually shedding his blood. At the time this expedient satisfied their consciences, but in after years the scene rose up before them again in all of its horrible reality, and they confessed to one another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear." (xlii., 21.)

During the temporary absence of Reuben a band of Arabian merchants drew near. They are called both "Ishmaelites" and "Midianites" (vs. 25, 28). Both were descended from Abraham. (Comp. xvi., xv. and xxv., 1-2.) At the suggestion of Judah, Joseph was taken up out of the pit and sold to these merchantmen. The price paid for him was only twenty pieces of silver" (v. 28), but it was sufficient in their eyes. It relieved them of his presence and all concern for his welfare. They supposed that it was the last that they would ever hear or see of him, little dreaming that one day they would stand before his judgment seat craving mercy at his hands. This is the feeling, and the mistake, of many who reject Christ, even in our own day.

When they had completed this transaction Joseph's brothers "killed a kid of the goats and dipped" his coat of many colors in its blood (vs. 31-32). With this in their hands and with a lie upon their lips, they returned to their father. And when he was overwhelmed with grief, with one accord they "rose up to comfort him." (v. 35.) With seeming affection they called him "father" and sought to commend themselves to him by outward devotion and services. But it was as true then as it was later, when One greater than Joseph said, "he that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him." (John v., 23.)

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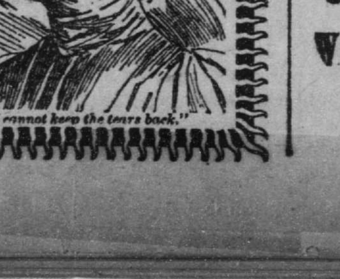
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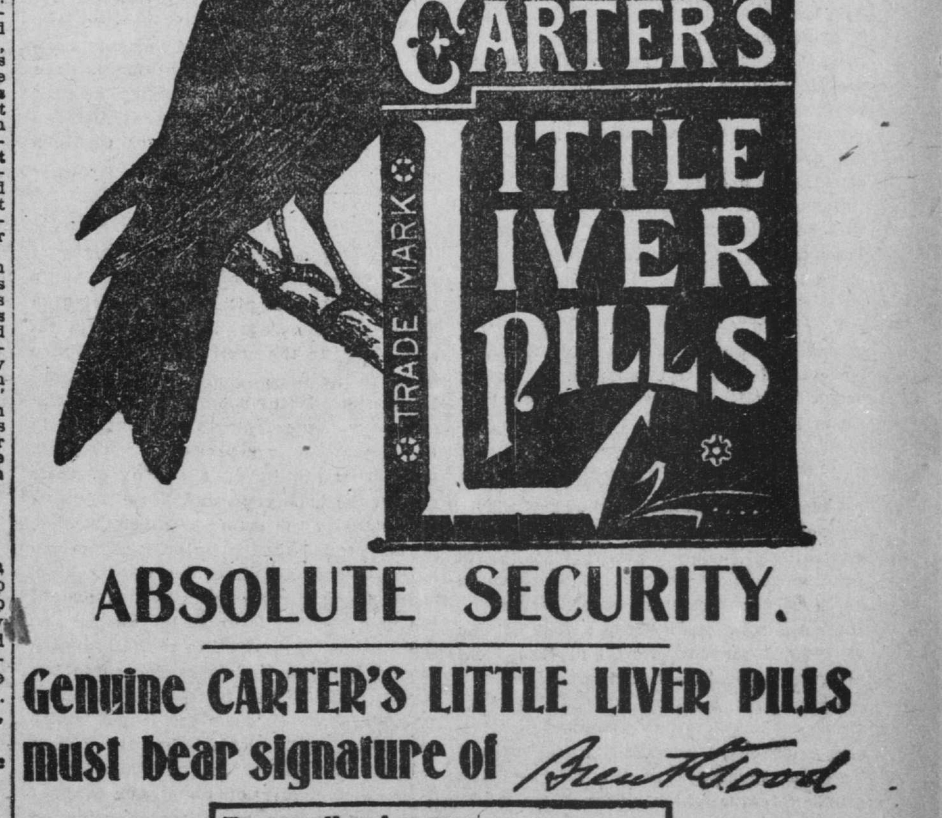

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