

SERMON: -- THE CROWDED INN.

"Because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke, II, 7.

BY REV. J. F. THOMPSON.

Delivered in the Akron, O. Church, Christmas Sunday, and furnished for publication

THE story is that Joseph and Mary had made the pilgrimage from their Galilean home to Bethlehem, "where the Roman census was taken." The town was thronged with other travelers who had come upon the same errand, and either because they had journeyed slowly and arrived late, or because all the rooms were reserved for guests who could pay a greater price, this peasant husband and wife were unable to obtain lodging at the inn. It also appears that, although it had been the home of their ancestors, they had no acquaintances in the city whose hospitality they might share. Accordingly, as the only alternative to spending the night beneath the open sky, they sought shelter in some unoccupied corner of the stable. There their child was born; entering thus upon a career which, beginning in a manger, and ending upon the cross, was fraught from first to last with unrequited service and unmerited hardship.

I do not know that all the circumstances attending the birth and infancy of Jesus occurred exactly as they are recorded in the Gospel narrative. Indeed, it is seldom that we can be assured of the literal truth of all the traditions which relate to the early and obscure years of anyone, who afterward achieved fame. This much, however, is evident that, even as an allegory, the story fitly symbolizes the pathetic contrast between the mission and the fortunes of him whose experience was a supreme example of the world's inhospitality to those of its benefactors who minister to needs of which as yet it is not conscious. In other words, however it may have fared with him in his infancy, and when as yet he had established no other claim to the world's kindness than that which weakness always has upon strength and need upon abundance, it is certain that Jesus received a scant welcome at the beginning of his public ministry, and that from first to last those among whom and for whom his work was done, had but a small appreciation of its value. "He was in the world and the world knew him not; he came unto his own, and his own received him not." Such is the essential truth which the story of the crowded inn, the stable birth, and the manger cradle—whether it be fact or allegory—plainly teaches. Let us conclude that it did happen just as it is told, and that it was ominous of what should afterward befall him.

Another truth which our text takes in connection with the other incidents of the story pictures, is that of the different aspects which an event may wear according to the point of view from which it is regarded. The Bethlehem, inn which could not spare a birthplace for him who was destined to be the world's Saviour, had ample room for the magistrate, the priest, the merchant and the tax gatherer. These and their families were cordially received, and their slightest wants attended to. Nor is it probable that any one of all that company bestowed more than a passing thought upon a rumor which reached them in the morning that during the night a child had been born to the humble parents whom the innkeeper had turned from his door, and for whom the kindness of servants had secured a lodging in the stable. But we are told that, while it was impossible for the people in whose midst it happened to perceive the import of this seemingly trivial event, the angels fore saw its immeasurable influence upon the world's destiny. Therefore, while the doors of the inn remained closed, and those who should have been watchers slept, the portals of heaven were opened, and the shining ones, hovering in benediction above that sacred spot, sang their anthem of "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace and good-will toward men."

Ah! how imagination delights in picturing the scene. How the heart thrills with love and rapture unutterable often as the return of the Christmas festival renews our interest in the story that can never lose its charm while childhood, clasping at once God's hand and our own, unites the worlds of earth and heaven. That humble place where sheep and oxen were stabled, aglow with a splendor such as never shone in royal palace! Celestial messengers ministering to the needs that had failed to awaken human pity! Archangels waiting at the door as ministers of state wait to receive the tidings that an earthly prince is born. Cherubs with sinless faces, such as Raphael loved to picture, bowing in adoration before the divine child who was destined to guide mankind to a virtue better than their innocence. The good news of the life begun which should redeem the world passed onward from rank to rank of cherubim and seraphim; and then the glancing of bright wings; the minstrelsy of golden harps; and

the heart of heaven itself made vocal in that wondrous song whereof the joy of every Christmas-time is an eternal echo! "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace and good-will toward men."

"Ah! think we listened there?"
"With open heart and ear?"
"And heard in truth as these men say they heard?"
"On flock and rock and tree,"
"Raining such melody?"
"Heaven's love descending in that loveliest word."
"Peace! Not at first! Not yet!"
"Our earth had to forget!"
"Burden of birth, and travail of slow years!"
"But now the dark time done!"
"Daylight at length begun!"
"First gold of sun in sight dispelling fears!"
"Peace beginning to be,"
"Deep as the sleep of the sea,"
"When the stars their faces glass?"
"In its blue tranquility!"
"Hearts of men upon earth,"
"From the first to the second birth,"
"To rest as the still waters rest,"
"With the colors of heaven on their breast."

For my own part, believing that the world of human affairs is providentially governed, and that there is gladness in heaven over any event that shall be fruitful of blessing to mankind, I say that whatever imagery the Gospel writers had seen fit to employ would have fallen short of the essential fact. No symbolism of a light such as never shone before on sea or land; of wise men following from afar the radiance of a guiding star; of celestial heralds who brought "Good News" to wondering shepherds; or of the firmament aglow with angel forms and faces and vocal with angelic minstrelsy, could fully picture the nearness of heaven to earth on that first Christmas eve. The birth-miracle which occurred that night was the incarnation in a single personality of that perfect type of religious thought and character which had been begotten of the contact between the human soul and the spirit of God, and with which all the ages of spiritual love and longing and worship had been in travail. If all this was true—and the event has proved that it was—who can doubt that those angels of God, among whom there is gladness when one sinner repents, foreseeing the greatness of the salvation about to be achieved, left their celestial home and hastened earthward to sing their noblest song above the birthplace of Him who through wisdom and love was destined to bring all souls at last to God? So, whether Mary and Joseph saw them or not, the shining ones were with them that night; and whether the shepherds heard them or not, the multitude of the heavenly host did sing their anthem of praise and gladness above the star-lit plain of Bethlehem.

I have said that the story of the circumstances attending the birth of Jesus, whether truth or fiction, is at least an apt metaphor of his subsequent fortunes. This holds true even in respect to the contrast between the earthly and the heavenly attitude toward the event of the Nativity. The first symbolizes the view taken of his life and ministry by the people of his own time; while the last corresponds to the aspect which his work assumes for us who behold it through the perspective furnished by the two thousand years of Christian history.

In those days there were many things which the world regarded as of transcendent importance. At Rome statesmen and warriors were intriguing and fighting for control of the empire that promised to endure forever. In Greece artists sought to immortalize their names by the beauty of the statues which they carved and the temples which they reared. At Athens and Alexandria the various schools of philosophy were endeavoring to establish the structure of human welfare upon a foundation of knowledge; and in Judea the advent of a political messiah was impatiently expected. These were the great and absorbing interests of the age, in comparison with which the ministry of Jesus appeared altogether too insignificant to merit the scholar's attention, the historian's record, or the poet's eulogy. Nevertheless, the Roman Empire has passed away; the Jewish dream has not been realized; the art of Greece survives only as a glorious memory; the Alexandrian wisdom is obsolete; and we can almost say that the only vital influence which has persisted through the ages is that of the life and Gospel which enriched the world with a new idea of human greatness and happiness—ushered in a new type of civilization, and seems destined to achieve at last the perfection of the race on earth and the individual in heaven. In other words, we are beginning to see things now as the angels saw them then.

But one of the thoughts which I chiefly had in mind when I selected this theme for my Christmas sermon was that it is quite possible for us, in our attitude toward the Christ of today, to imitate the selfishness of those who on that first Christmas eve re-

fused to make a brief sacrifice of their own comfort in order that the divine child whose advent the angels heralded might have a better birthplace than the stable afforded.

In other words, when we make wealth or fame, or social distinction or frivolous amusement, rather than righteousness, the chief business of our lives; when we spend freely of our time, our energy and our money in the service of other interests, while grudging the slightest sacrifice which we are asked to make on behalf of the church or other institutions through which the Christian Gospel seeks to promote the world's highest welfare, then we banish Christ from our lives, just as long ago the selfishness of the magistrate, the merchant and the tax-gatherer, who monopolized the warmest rooms and the softest beds, excluded him from the Bethlehem inn.

And this we do with far less excuse. As we have seen, the indifference which the people of his own time manifested toward the advent and ministry of Jesus is explained, and in part excused, by their ignorance of what his life and ministry were destined to achieve. Could they have foreseen all that to us is accomplished history they would have acted differently. The utmost sin with which we can justly charge the people who refused to make room for the mother and her child is that of withholding kindness from those whose only claim was their need of it. They were ungenerous, but not unthankful. Had they anticipated, as the angels did, the greatness of the debt which the future would owe to this child, who as yet had done nothing to deserve the world's gratitude, it is more than probable that even the most selfish among them would have been glad and proud to render him all needful service. But what was hidden from them has been revealed to us; what then was potency is now accomplished fact; and of those peerless blessings whereof his life became fruitful we are the richest inheritors. Our civilization is related to the life of Jesus Christ as plant to seed and as stream to fountain. To us have been bequeathed the choicest benefits of an intellectual, a social and a moral progress inspired by his character and guided by his thought. To him and through all the agencies which derived their initial impulse from his ministry, we owe all that is best in the home, the school and the State. Since, then, Christ has done all this for us, how trivial seems the selfishness that once denied needed shelter to an unknown mother and child in comparison with the ingratitude of a life which confesses, if not by word, at least by deed, that within the realm of the many interests to which it is loyal there is no room for that service which he requires at our hearts and hands.

I want to remind you of still another truth which is, that the recognition of the authority of Christ may take a form that is worse than absolute denial. Imagine that the people of the inn had heard the angel song that night; that being thus instructed as to the meaning of what had happened, they had gone out to the stable to bow in formal worship at the manger shrine; and that, finally, having finished their devotions they had said to Joseph and Mary: "We should be glad to take you and the child back with us to the inn; but there really isn't any room, so we shall return to our comfortable quarters, and leave you to the care of the angels,"—what a mockery that would have been! And yet, need I say that this which we have just imagined is quite similar to the fashion in which very many people treat the Christ of today? They worship him at Christmas time and on Sunday; but exclude his church and cause from the list of things in which they have a practical interest. They say: "We will acknowledge him as our Lord and Master; but his claims must not be allowed to interfere with our pleasures, our business, or our politics. We need our dollars for the political organization, the musical society, the lodge, and the social club. To all these we will give generously; but the church must be satisfied with our pennies—and our prayers. If it asks for more than these we will call it a beggar." And yet these same people profess to believe that those interests which the church seeks to promote are of greater importance than all other things; and that our richest blessings are those for which we are indebted to the Gospel of Christ!

Happy is the church whose sincerity of profession has not been eaten away by the canker of this fatal inconsistency. My desire is that we at least shall be not only in part, but altogether free from it. God forbid that I should urge it as your duty or my own to abandon all other interests and narrow our lives to this one thing. He who is interested only in religion is not likely to have any true conception even of that. But I do insist that next to the home the church, as an organization, in which we are banded together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of Christ,

has the foremost claim upon our love, our service, and our generosity. Only as we believe this, and prove our faith by our works—as we shall if it is sincere—are we true disciples of Him whose birth the angels celebrated with their anthem of "peace and good-will," and whose memory the world honors in the Christmas festival.

THE APOTHEOSIS OF DEATH.

BY JAMES MARLIN.

Editor of The Universalist: I have no such claim on your columns as a member of your church would have; I merely ask a privilege. I ask room for some thoughts in dissent from Rev. J. B. Saxe's letter in your issue of Dec. 14.

I feel sure that my dissent is based on no lingering Presbyterian prejudice. I think it rests on purely philosophical considerations. I consider Mr. Saxe's notion of the relation of the body to the soul profoundly unphilosophical.

The gist of his whole article seems to be fairly contained in the following quotations: "It is absurd to infer that because we are sinners in this life we shall be in the next. The directly opposite inference is the true one. Here the soul acts through a defective, disordered and depraved material organ, the brain, and must needs go wrong or at least is certain to." And again: "Acting then as it [the soul] will through this glorious body [the spiritual] instead of the corrupt and depraved one which it has laid aside, the soul will rise * * * above the plain of sin." It [sin] was not to exist in the after-death life, because the necessary conditions were not to exist.

Now what does this mean if not that even a healthy, normal brain is so "disordered" that no soul can use it without incurring guilt?—that sin is merely the result of the union of soul and body? May we not then ask how in such circumstances a soul can incur moral guilt at all? Or is there such a thing as moral guilt?

May we not moreover ask if mere physical death be not the only savior needed, if our disordered brain be all that makes us sin?

There are those who regard the characteristics of the brain as at least in part resulting from the characteristics of the soul. This seems to me a much more philosophical notion than that the healthy, natural brain is merely an incubus to the soul. It makes mind dominate matter which is surely the order of the universe.

I have ever regarded the dogma of Westminster, that "the souls of believers are at death made perfect in holiness," as a most unphilosophical device to avoid a difficulty. I have termed it the apotheosis of death. For does it not clothe death with the god-like power of determining human character? I never could understand why the converse idea, that the souls of unbelievers are at death made perfect in unholiness, should not be asserted also.

In like manner I do not understand how to think with Mr. Saxe of death relieving us from one set of propensities and not from another. Thus a certain man is untruthful. He has a propensity to lie. This, let us say is due to a "defective, disordered and depraved material organ, the brain," from which death will set him free. Very well. Here is another man prone to tell the truth. His propensity is that way. To what is this due? Can we show that untruthfulness any more than truthfulness is due to the brain? If, however, Mr. Saxe really means that the good propensities are of the soul while the evil propensities are of the brain, can that be likened to anything that we call philosophy in this age? Unphilosophical as it is, I admit that some "texts" can be adduced in its favor, but to use them we must assume the attitude of abject literalism that characterizes "orthodoxy."

I beg leave to suggest that the root of the whole error lies in a wrong conception of what sin is. We may, indeed, think of a single act of wrong doing as a positive thing. But sin in the abstract must be thought of as a negative, if we are to think clearly.

Righteousness is attainment; sin is failure. If, then, a disembodied soul can attain, it can also fail. Indeed, fail in some degree it always must, for it is finite. "Sin," that is failure, may indeed be inherent in the brain, not because the brain is material, but because it is finite. For the very same reason sin, that is failure, is inherent in the soul itself, for the soul too is finite. God only is infinite. God alone is sinless.

Is such a view discouraging? No. It is the fullest expression of the grandeur of Universalism. It binds the whole universe in one. We in common with all the universe are climbing. What is there discouraging in the thought that we have room to climb forever? Compared with God we shall forever fail and therefore sin. Compared with ourselves we may forever attain and therefore be righteous.

An illustration may make this clearer: Christ has shown us the example of a perfect self-sacrifice. If we may venture the daring corollary may we not infer from Christ's revelation of God's character that God has a love that would if necessary lead him to forego all good for Himself that others might be blest? At any rate Christ's revelation means to me that righteousness consists in giving up good that others may have good. Now is it not clear that a soul independent of any material body may follow this example of Christ or fail to follow it in any assignable degree, except that a human soul being finite cannot do anything to an infinite degree. I can see no escape from this except by assuming that the soul is a thing with no characteristic or propensities at all. Lord Byron wrote of a soul as

"Above all love, hope, hate or fear,
All passionless and pure,"

which to me seems equivalent to no soul at all. It is unintelligible as Nirvana.

It may seem tiresome to the orthodox mind, this thought of never being "made perfect in holiness." Doubtless every finite being gets tired of being limited, but unless we can succeed in displacing the Infinite from his throne we shall not escape our necessary limitations. If he charge his angels with folly, as I am told he does, I cannot reasonably expect a time when he cannot justly charge me in the same way. As a Universalist it is enough for me to know that God's perfections are infinite and his Fatherhood co-extensive with his creation. He is not only the universal Father but the eternal Father. The orthodox seem to hinge their hope of future safety on the word everlasting which they find in the Bible. Rev. Mr. Saxe seems to hinge his on a promised deliverance from material organs. Would it not be better to rest our hope on the assurance that God, the all-wise educator, will in all worlds as in this world, be "faithful and just to forgive us our sins?"

BLOOMINGTON, IND.

PROBLEMS FOR ATHEISTS.

If you meet with an atheist do not let him entangle you into a discussion of side issues. As to many points which he raises you must learn to make the rabbi's answer, "I do not know." But ask him these six questions:

First. Ask him where did matter come from. Can a dead thing create itself?

Second. Ask him where did motion come from?

Third. Ask him where did life come from, save from the finger tip of Omnipotence.

Fourth. Ask him whence came the exquisite order and design in nature. If one told you that millions of printer's types should fortuitously shape themselves into the divine comedy of Dante or the plays of Shakespeare, would you not think him a madman?

Fifth. Ask him who gave you free will.

Sixth. Ask him whence came conscience.

He who says there is no God, in the face of these questions, simply talks stupendous nonsense.—Canon Farrar.

THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH.

The reports presented at the recent annual meeting of the League of Institutional Churches in Philadelphia shows that the principles and methods involved in the "institutional" movement are meeting with increasing favor among the most earnest, determined and progressive religious workers of the time. There is no apparent reason why they should not meet with the approval of all who are concerned in the advancement of practical and applied Christianity, for this is the aim of the churches in this League.

Institutional churches have been objected to in some quarters on the ground that they are traveling out of the true orbit of religion, and diverting to other ends means and energies which should be used solely for the conversion of souls and the enlargement of the purely spiritual life of men. It is no part of the business of the Church, it is said, to amuse people, young or old, nor to conduct loan agencies and employment bureaus; these things are worthy and excellent in their way, but they are wholly secular and worldly in their aims, while the kingdom of Christ which the Church was set to establish among men is not a worldly but a spiritual kingdom. This is plausible reasoning, and it weighs heavily with some minds, but it is a reasoning which will not bear the analytical test of common sense. All the difficulty here comes about through the mischievous and utterly false distinctions which have been made in days past between things sacred and things secular, between things belonging to the spiritual life and those belonging to the common life of men. In this erroneous view it is as if Christianity were designed only to be dipped gently down here and there into the current of human affairs, drawing

little circles about particular times, places and seasons, setting off little isolated areas of duty and service, and saying if you are religious here and there, it is no concern of yours what is done outside of these times and areas. It is precisely such teaching as this, practically applied, which has brought reproach, confusion, and disaster upon the Church in centuries past, and opened a chasm between it and the masses of Christendom which will take many years if not centuries to close up or bridge over. In the new, truer and nobler conception of Christianity now fast gaining sway, all honest work is sacred and all right life divine. "Each of the various functions which we fill," says Canon Freeman in a recent sermon, "is a priesthood; the service which we render in them a holy sacrifice; the materials which we employ are sacraments and signs of the spiritual life within." This is a true definition. In this view there is nothing rightly pertaining to the life of man here as well as hereafter, whether it be the development of his physical, moral or mental being, to the rounding out of his character, to the promotion of his rational enjoyments, in which the Church should not intimately and continually concern itself.—Christian Work.

PART AND PRESENT.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

In looking over the records of the Ohio Universalist Convention under its various names, during its early existence, we find mention made of churches or "societies," as they were generally known in those days, in almost every important town and village in the State. But when we consider the comparatively small number of organizations now enrolled upon our lists, the inquiry comes up,—Where have all those organizations gone to? Why are they not living and prospering now? There can be but one answer in regard to the majority, and that is, they have gone out of existence, very largely because of the lack of complete organization on the Christian plan of co-operation. They were fearful of "authority," and each church or society wanted to be independent, except for purposes of fellowship. Had the introduction of Universalism been followed up by compact organization, whereby mutual interest and co-operation could have been fostered and encouraged, it is not reasonable to believe that many of those earlier organizations would still have been "letting their light shine?" We will not say their influence has been wholly lost and no good accomplished. While there has been progress made toward that thorough organization and discipline essential to permanent success, the evil effects of former lack in this direction still exist and are still obstacles to our rapid growth as a denomination. We have churches that are weak and unable to support pastors singly, that could have regular and more frequent services by uniting in securing the best man (or woman) available; and by thus working together would grow stronger. But while this difficulty is still in our way, we are glad to notice an improvement, which we trust will continue, until the spirit of co-operation shall be firmly established. There is not a church in the State worthy of that sacred name, that could not have regular services were this plan adopted and adhered to, and under this plan, the pastor should be comparatively near at hand in all times of joy or sorrow.

BOSTON, '95.

We have read with great interest and delight the full report of the proceedings of the Sixth Annual Convention of the National Y. P. C. Union held in Boston, June 10—14, 1895. When we consider the success of this organization during its brief existence; the enthusiasm it has developed not only among the young people, who are marching "Onward" under the banner dedicated to "Christ and his Church," but also among those of more advanced years who have "renewed their youth," and are filled with a larger spirit of devotion to the interests of the Church, we can ascribe the movement to no other than a divine source. Were it in the rapid development of the missionary or church extension spirit, that has come largely from this movement of the young people, which has not only quickened the vitality in behalf of local work, but has its monument concentrated energy in the church at Harriman, which will soon be supplemented by churches at Atlanta and other important points. We are glad to know that spirit of distrust which many entertained in regard to the future of the Union has largely disappeared, and that in most cases all lovers of our church are glad to accept the assistance of the young people in promoting the welfare of the church. No one who has a genuine interest in the progress of the church will fail to rise from the perusal of the minutes of "Boston '95" without feeling a larger inspiration to work for the spread of the "faith once delivered to the saints." The minutes are neatly printed, and form a volume of one hundred and forty-nine pages, which is illustrated by engravings of prominent workers in the Union; the churches where the great meetings were held, and other buildings and objects of interest. Send twenty cents to Rev. Harry L. Canfield, 30 West Street, Boston, and receive a copy of this most interesting book by return mail. Do not delay your order, as the edition is limited.

J. W. H.

—Miss Frances Power Cobbs, who recently celebrated her 73d birthday, was the first woman to do regular office work on the editorial staff of a London daily. When "The Echo" was established she was engaged to write leaders for it.

NOTED MEN AND WOMEN.

Anecdote and Reminiscence.

—A memorial tablet to Mary Queen of Scots, has just been placed in Peterborough cathedral. It has been subscribed for by ladies in England bearing the Christian name of Mary.

—Herr Jahnke tells us that so great was Prince Bismarck's fear lest his letters should be opened that he would frequently drop into some small stationery shop on his daily walk, ask for a package of cheap envelopes, put in his letters, and then request the clerk to address them, as it would be too much bother to an old man to take off his gloves.

—Ferrari, the celebrated composer, relates the following anecdote in his memoirs: On a cold December night a man in a little village in the Tyrol opened the window and stood in front of it, with hardly any clothing to his back. "Peter!" shouted a neighbor who was passing, "what are you doing there?" "I'm catching a cold." "What for?" "So I can sing bass to morrow at church."

—Says Dr. Edward Everett Hale: "When Canon Farrar left us some years ago—a most charming and intelligent visitor—he told Phillips Brooks that he was going to give a farewell lecture on his impressions of America. Brooks, who was a thorough American and a person of excellent common sense, said to him, promptly: 'Don't do any such thing. In the first place, you have no impressions; and in the second place they are all wrong.'"

—One day a stranger approaching the late John Boyle O'Reilly from behind, mistook him for a friend whom he had not seen for some time. In his enthusiasm he stepped up, slapped his supposed friend on the shoulder, and greeted him with some particularly hearty expression. Many men in O'Reilly's position would have felt at least a momentary annoyance. Not so with the poet. Turning about he stretched out his hand. "I'm not Jack," he said, "but I'm glad to shake hands with any man who is as glad to see an old friend as you seem to be."

—It is stated that the \$50,000 paid to Puvion de Chavannes for the decoration of the new public library of Boston is the largest price he has ever received. For his decorations in the museum at Amiens, which are said to be his best work, he got only \$10,000. Marseilles got two of his decorations for \$2,000. Lyons got four decorations for \$8,000. Rouen got three decorations for \$4,400. For the work in the Sorbonne he received only \$7,000, for that in the Pantheon, \$10,000, and for various decorations in the new Hotel de Ville of Paris, \$32,000.

—George Rockwood, the New York artist, contributes this amusing anecdote of the Carey sisters: "It is well known that the gifted writers, Alice and Phoebe Carey, declined matrimony, yet were always letting off their wit at their spinster condition. One Sunday evening Horace Greeley, Frank Carpenter and other friends were dining with them, when Phoebe had so stirred up Mr. Greeley with her fun that he said, 'Phoebe, we'll have to put a curb on you.' 'Not a bit,' she said, 'I would rather have a bridal.'"

—Our favorite authors are more and more becoming our most popular readers and lecturers. Olive Thorne Miller talks as charmingly as she writes about the birds which come about our doors or sing from the summer thickets. Ruth McNery Stuart captivates all hearts with the quaint grace of her interpretations of Southern life and dialect. Christine Terhune Herriek is scoring a brilliant success as a teacher and lecturer on the fine art of chaffing-dish cookery. Elizabeth Custer's audiences simply bow down before her in enthusiastic approval.

—Dr. Murray, of the British Museum, tells the following characteristic story of the famous Professor Owen: "One day when the Professor was passing through the room of Greek and Roman bronzes, I happened to be at work there. He stopped to speak, and while speaking, observed close beside him the well-known bronze head of Hypnos, with the wing springing from one of its temples. The form of the wing caught Professor Owen's eye, and he asked: 'Have you observed that this is the wing of a night bird which flies noiselessly?' Then he added: 'It was a beautiful idea of the Greek to give the God of Sleep wings which would enable him to visit his patients without a murmur of sound.'"

—Mr. Henry Russell, once so popular as the composer and singer of "Cheer, Boys, Cheer!" "To the West, to the West!" and other songs, has just published his reminiscences. In them, he tells how the great tragedian Edmund Kean, once gave him some golden advice in a nutshell—advice well worth attention by every ministerial student. "My dear boy, you will never become a great singer unless you learn to speak every word distinctly and clearly. Unintelligibility and slovenliness in speech are the curse of the profession." Mr. Russell profited thoroughly by this advice. For years he delighted audiences. One can honestly say that one wishes all preachers also took Kean's advice.

—"I think," says Hall Caine, the novelist in McClure's Magazine, "that I know my Bible as few literary men know it. There is no book in the world like it, and the finest novels ever written fall far short in interest of any one of the stories it tells. Whatever strong situations I have in my books are not of my creation, but are taken from the Bible. 'The Descent' is the story of the Prodigal Son; 'The Bondman,' is the story of Esau and Jacob, though in my version sympathy attaches to Esau. 'The Scapegoat' is the story of Eli and his sons, but with Samuel as a little girl. 'The Maxman' is the story of David and Uriah. My new book also comes out of the Bible, from a perfectly startling source."