

READING THE BIBLE
BY WILLIAM DON FELPS.

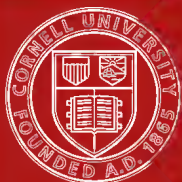
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READING THE BIBLE

By WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

ESSAYS ON MODERN NOVELISTS

ESSAYS ON RUSSIAN NOVELISTS

ESSAYS ON BOOKS

TEACHING IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

READING THE BIBLE

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ENGLISH ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

THE ADVANCE OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

THE ADVANCE OF ENGLISH POETRY IN THE TWENTIETH
CENTURY

ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

BROWNING: HOW TO KNOW HIM

A DASH AT THE POLE

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY THEATRE

READING THE BIBLE

BY

WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

LAMPSON PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AT YALE

New York

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1919

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PREFACE

THIS book is composed of three lectures, on the L. P. Stone foundation, delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary, on the third, fourth, and fifth of February, 1919. I wish to express to the professors and students at Princeton my hearty appreciation of the honour of their invitation, and of their delightful hospitality.

W. L. P.

YALE UNIVERSITY,

Tuesday, 11 March 1919.

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READING THE BIBLE

READING THE BIBLE

I

READING THE BIBLE

WHEN I was five years old, my mother offered me a dollar if I would read the Bible through, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation. I confess that my price has risen since then; but in my boyhood I had more leisure and less cash than I have now. My total income was six cents a week; and as I was expected to deposit one cent in the contribution box every Sunday, I always regarded my income as five cents, unconsciously prophetic of the modern income-tax law. I am glad that my mother bribed me to read the Bible, and glad that she forced me to pay my way in church. At first I thought more of the dollar than of the Holy Writ; but as I became interested, I found keener joy in the race than in the prize.

The best books for children are those that

never were intended for children. The ordinary child's Christmas book has an intolerable air of condescension like the ingratiating smile of the professional speaker to boys, who deceives only those in bad health. Even children deserve intellectual respect and profit by it. No better books for children exist than *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, the anteburtonian *Arabian Nights*, and the Bible. Apart from the mental discipline and emotional enrichment obtained from these books, there exists to a higher degree the same reason for the inclusion of classics in university education—the pleasure arising when educated people have the same background, a common storehouse of memory, from which current coin may freely circulate.

In the *Cornell Sun*, March, 1915, the venerable Andrew D. White, in response to a request that he should name the books that had given him most real profit and abiding pleasure, began his article with this paragraph: "First of all, like most American boys and girls of my time, I was brought up to read the Bible, and was nurtured in one of the religious bodies which incorporates into its worship very many

of the noblest parts of our sacred books. Of these, the portions which have always seemed to me to give the keynote to the whole have been, for the Old Testament, the grander Psalms, the nobler portions of Isaiah, and above all the sixth chapter of Micah; and in the New Testament, the utterances ascribed to Jesus himself, of which the Sermon on the Mount is supreme, with St. James's definition of 'pure religion and undefiled,' and St. Paul's description of 'charity.' In perfection of English diction, there is, in the whole range of literature, nothing to surpass the story of Joseph and his Brethren."

When I first read the Bible, I made up my own mind as to the moral value of certain celebrated achievements, and was encouraged to express my views in the family conversation. It seemed to me that the murder of the sleeping Sisera was treacherous and detestable; and I obtained no pleasure from the exultant song of Deborah—

The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

Many years later, while at an Episcopal church one evening, whither I had gone to hear one of my favourite preachers, the Rev. Harry P. Nichols, I was both surprised and pleased, to hear him say, at the conclusion of the reading for the day, which was this same Song, "We should remember that the glorification of this abominable deed came from Deborah, and not from Almighty God."

Yet Sisera was a scoundrel, and the result of his deletion was good; the land had rest forty years. Furthermore, if he had won the battle, we learn from the words of his mother—capable tigress for such a cub—that Captain Sisera would have treated the captured men and women even as the Germans treated the French and the Belgians.

Nor did I think highly of David's exploit in killing Goliath. All small boys like heavy-weight champions; and it may be I had a fondness for the big fellow. Anyhow, it seemed to me that David did not fight fairly. Goliath came out with the legitimate weapons for a stand-up fight; David stood at a safe distance and punctured his thick head with a slingshot. If he had missed the first time, he had four

more stones to throw; and if he had failed to make a hit with any of them, he would doubtless have run away, and Goliath, encumbered with his heavy suit, would have found it quite impossible to catch him. I felt that David was something like a guttersnipe, who, afraid to fight with his fists, throws stones from a coign of vantage; or like a man with a magazine gun, taking the measure of a hippopotamus.

David's affair with Goliath compares unfavourably with the exploit of Benaiah, narrated in that wonderful eleventh chapter of the first book of Chronicles, which celebrates the mighty men.

Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many acts; he slew two lion-like men of Moab; also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day.

And he slew an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits high; and in the Egyptian's hand was a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.

These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among the three mighties.

I had to comfort myself with the reflection

that on other occasions, David exhibited plenty of courage.

It is of course possible to regard David's victory as the triumph of brains over brawn: Goliath was conservative; he was naturally beaten by the younger antagonist who used more modern methods.

One day, by mere chance, I hit upon an expedient that not only helped me to remember the Bible stories, but which I heartily recommend to all parents and guardians who still wish to have the youth entrusted to their care become familiar with the Scriptures. I was drawing pictures. My prolonged and unusual silence in the room aroused the interest of my mother—"What are you doing there?" "Drawing pictures." "But don't you know this is Sunday? You must not draw pictures on Sunday."

Nobody ought to infer from this that my mother was grim. She and I were intimate friends, understood each other perfectly, and got along together beautifully.

Suddenly I remembered the Bible. "But mother, it'll be all right to draw *Bible* pictures?" She turned this suggestion up and

down in her mind, and found it good. I therefore set to work, and after another period of silence, I proudly exhibited to her a soldier, armed to the teeth, literally, for in addition to gun and pistol, he had a large knife in his mouth.

“Didn’t I tell you”—“But mother, this is Joab, captain of the host of Israel.” From this accidental Sabbatarian exploit, I conceived the idea of drawing a picture to illustrate every chapter in the Bible. And this method I recommend to the young, for if one draws a picture for each chapter, one must read the whole chapter through to find the best available subject, and in this way, much will be remembered. It is not necessary to possess even rudimentary skill with the pencil. I was obliged to label my pictures distinctly—a union of literature and art—in order that spectators might know whether the picture were animal, vegetable, or mineral—the invariable first enquiry in the game *Twenty Questions*.

In the process of illustrating the sacred volume, I got along excellently well in Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Kings; there were frequent fights. But when I plunged into the jungle of

Paul's doctrinal epistles, my advance was slow. It is not easy properly to illustrate some of the chapters in Romans. I remember reading through the whole eighth chapter and finishing in despair. Determined not to be beaten, I began to read it again, and was brought up with a turn at the twenty-second verse: "the whole creation groaneth." I set to work with an inspiration.

At that time I knew nothing of spiritual suffering; I supposed that people groaned only when there was something the matter with them. Like all small boys, I had eaten many green apples, sometimes with disastrous results. My conception of this passage was not altogether without a certain vast grandeur. I literally supposed that once upon a time every living person in the world had indigestion at the same moment; hence universal compulsory groaning. I therefore drew a picture of a large number of people standing in a circle, each in an attitude of anguish: and under it I wrote

THE WHOLE CREATION GROANETH

When I brought this picture to my mother, she looked at it and for some minutes was unable

to speak; she paid it that reverent silence which I suppose is the highest tribute to art. Then she told me that I had made an original contribution to New Testament interpretation, for no commentator in the world had ever thought of this explanation. I retired proudly. After I grew up, I mistakenly regarded my exegesis as absurd; and it was only a few years ago that my respect for it was restored by my friend President Hadley. I had narrated the story, and he immediately said that after all I was correct; for from the orthodox point of view it *was* the unauthorised eating of apples that made the whole creation groan.

Even before the printed Bible was known in England, manuscript copies were sometimes chained in the churches. There still exists at Hereford Cathedral a library of two thousand books, about fifteen hundred of them chained; some of these are in manuscript, and among them is a catalogue, also chained. Cromwell, as vicar-general, by injunctions in September, 1538, and King Henry VIII, by a proclamation dated 6 May, 1541, provided that every parish church should supply itself with a Bible; the book was of course chained in some public

place. There were some copies of the Bible in Holland which excited the anger of the Devil, as was proved by the marks of his claws upon them; the result of which was a law requiring them to be chained. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was frequently available in similar fashion, "not to be taken from the room."

The so-called Authorised, or King James Version of the Bible, published in 1611, is the most important and the most influential book in English literature; and although copies of it do not fetch an extraordinary price, it is a rarity. The New York Public Library and the Morgan Library both have one; university libraries certainly should obtain one while it is possible to do so. I do not know how many were issued in the original edition, but for the most part, whether chained or not, they were read "hard," and many of them fell to pieces or disappeared altogether. It is difficult to find one in perfect condition, the great desideratum of book-collectors.

In 1611 Robert Barker had the exclusive right to sell the volume. The size was 16 inches by 10¹/₂; the binding was full calf, with covers half an inch thick, hence called "boards."

It weighed 17¹/₂ pounds. It was printed in black-letter, with three styles of type. The headlines, inserted words, summaries at heads of chapters, references in margin to parallel passages were roman, and the side-notes giving alternative readings were italic.

The Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral in 1611 bought a Bible of the new issue for two pounds, eighteen shillings; it was probably in handsome binding.

Copies of the 1611 first edition vary, as was common with other books in those days. The earlier copies are known as the "he" Bible and later ones as the "she" Bible, because of an error in Ruth, III, 15, "and she went into the city," where in the earlier printing the word "he" was erroneously given. The "he" Bible is, in general, a better piece of mechanical work than the "she." The copies of the latter vary considerably, almost all showing combinations of sheets of two and perhaps three printings. To-day the "he" Bible is much more costly than the "she," although, as has been said, perfect copies of either are scarce. The Yale University Library is fortunate in having a perfect copy of the "he" Bible, and the same

Library also has an imperfect "she." The Princeton Theological Seminary has two good copies of the "she" issue, one of them presented by Henry van Dyke.

The size of the vocabulary in the Authorised Version is a matter of some interest, and Professor Albert S. Cook of Yale undertook the task of counting all the words. He says, "I compute the number of words in the Authorised Version to be 6,568. If to these were added the inflected forms of nouns, pronouns, or verbs, . . . the total would be 9,884."

The Authorised Version is incomparably the best both for the pulpit and for educated readers. I remember in the year 1881 that the excitement over the Revised Version of the New Testament was so intense that wheelbarrow loads of copies were sold in the streets, and one of the New York newspapers published the entire work in a Sunday issue. Many believed that the Revised Version would supplant the old; but after a few years, the people returned to the familiar book. There are some positive errors which were corrected in the Revised Version; but the nineteenth century scholars lost in beauty what they gained in

accuracy. There is no English in the world equal to that found in the 1611 Bible. The revisers knew more Greek, and less English. Whether the original text was inspired or not, I have never felt any doubt as to the divine inspiration of the version of 1611.

For the benefit of soldiers in military camps and on duty overseas, an interesting and successful experiment in condensation has recently been made. With the assistance of some colleagues, Professor Charles F. Kent of Yale has prepared a new translation and rearrangement of the text, called *The Shorter Bible*, of which the volume containing the New Testament appeared in 1918. All repetitions in the Gospel narrative are omitted; the subject-matter is logically and topically presented; the original is translated into dignified but strictly modern English, with the exclusion of archaic and obsolete words. In this convenient form, the greatest of all books seems born anew.

But except in special instances, and for special needs, the Authorised Version is the one above all others for the general reader. I was rather surprised to find in the Literary Supplement of the London *Times*, under date of the

fourth of July, 1918, a statement that British churches are supplanting the Old with the Revised. This testimony is cited here, not merely as a witness to a regrettable tendency, but as a fine tribute to the version of 1611.

And they constantly regret the increasing tendency, noticeable in our churches, to replace the Authorised Version, which gave us all, perhaps more than all, the poetry and moving quality of the original, by the Revised, which sacrifices these things to a grammatical pedantry of intellectual precision. It is safe to prophesy that if the Bible is ever to be restored to the place it occupied a hundred years ago in the hearts and memories of the English people it will not be through the medium of the Revised Version. It is poetry, not logical or grammatical accuracy, that moves and wins men, and that not only by its beauty, but by its higher and more essential truth.

It is worth remembering, that shortly after the appearance of the Revised Version, Matthew Arnold made a plea for the retention of the Old.

For those who wish to read the whole Bible, and every one at some time ought to read it all at least once, those of systematic habits can read it through—omitting the Apocrypha—in

exactly one year. There are 1,188 chapters, 928 in the Old Testament, 260 in the New. If one reads three chapters every week day, and five every Sunday, one will finish the undertaking just within the year. Or, if one reads only on Sundays, and five chapters of the New Testament each Sunday, one will complete this task on the fifty-second day.

This is a chronological rather than a logical way of reading the Bible, but it has its merits. It is naturally much better to read a whole book, or a whole connected narrative in one sitting. I remember, when caught in the rain one Sunday in a small town in England, that I pleasantly celebrated being marooned by reading the Gospel according to Mark without rising from my chair.

The Bible is not only the foundation of modern English literature, it is the foundation of Anglo-Saxon civilisation. It seems a narrow and mistaken policy to drive it out of the public schools. When I was a boy, every day in school began with a chapter in the Bible and the Lord's Prayer; surely there is nothing sectarian about that. Merely in dignity, the Hebrew and Christian religions compare favour-

ably with the Greek and Roman, with which we were compelled to familiarise ourselves at school, and so far as I know, without protest from any source. If the Greek and Roman gods and goddesses were alive to-day, every one of them would be in jail.

American boys and girls know more about the Bible than was the case twenty years ago; at the dawn of the twentieth century Biblical ignorance among our youth and particularly among college undergraduates was by way of becoming a public scandal. Well-bred boys in many instances were innocent of even the penumbra of knowledge. Professor Lounsbury discovered a young gentleman in his classes who had never heard of Pontius Pilate. Twenty-five years ago I requested a Freshman to elucidate the line in *As You Like It*, "Here feel we not the penalty of Adam." He replied confidently, "It was the mark imposed on him for slaying his brother." To another I asked the meaning of the passage in *Macbeth*, "Or memorise another Golgotha." Seeing the blank expression on his handsome face, I said, "It is a New Testament reference." "Oh yes," he exclaimed, "it refers to Goliath." At about

this time, a young clergyman, obsessed with the importance of the "higher criticism," announced that if he accepted a call to a western church, he must be allowed to preach to the younger people about the second Isaiah. "That's all right," said the deacon cheerfully; "most of 'em don't know there is even one."

What with regular school and college courses in the English Bible, and the publication of many first aids to Biblical ignorance, we have made much progress during the last twenty-five years; but it is still true that the young generation to-day are not so familiar with the Bible as was customary a century ago. Ignorant as the boy, the girl, and the man in the street are, however, there is not the slightest indication of any falling away from knowledge among the poets, novelists, and dramatists. The Bible has been a greater influence on the course of English literature than all other forces put together; it is impossible to read standard authors intelligently without knowing something about the Bible, for they all assume familiarity with it on the part of their readers. But what particularly pleases me is that not only standard, but contemporary authors,

exhibit consciously or unconsciously intimacy with the Scriptures. So universally true is this, that to any young man or woman eaten with ambition to become a writer, I should advise first of all—"Know the Bible." Ibsen said his chief reading was always in the Bible: "it is so strong and mighty." Tolstoi knew the Scriptures like Timothy; it is quite impossible to read Dostoevski's novels—and everyone wants to read them just now—without knowing the Bible. For four years in the Siberian prison, the New Testament was his most intimate friend. His greatest stories are really commentaries. Andreev, giving a list of the books that had influenced him the most, put the Bible first. Kipling's finest poem, the *Recessional*, is almost as close a paraphrase of Scripture as the hymn *Nearer, my God, to thee*, which is a verse-translation of a passage in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis. Every modern novel, every modern play I read is almost sure to reveal an acquaintance with the great Book. And one of the chief features of twentieth-century drama has been the dramatisation of Bible stories, presenting to metropolitan audiences the revelation of human passion where it

may be found in its most powerful and convincing forms. In Stuart Walker's theatre version of the Book of Job, the sublimity of the speeches is impressive.

Within the last three years, three tributes have been paid to the Bible by three distinguished men of letters, who, curiously enough, seem to be the last three on earth from whom such a tribute would have been expected. The finest English novel produced by the war is *Mr. Britling Sees it Through*, by the apostle of scientific education, H. G. Wells; he could not have written it without a profound knowledge of the New Testament. The transcendent element in this story is its spiritual force, which he obtained directly from the Gospels. That arch Pagan, George Moore, who boasts that he has not even a grain of faith, and who, in an autobiographical sketch, put down as his chief recreation, *Religion*, wrote a long novel on the life of Christ; and although it is filled with sacrilege, it exhibits the sway over his heart and mind held by the greatest Personality in history. He found he could not escape from the Son of Man, and wrote this book to relieve his own mind, as old Burton wrote a treatise on

melancholy to cure himself of it. Finally, the wittiest iconoclast of our day, Bernard Shaw, in the long preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, has produced a carefully-written commentary of one hundred and twenty-seven printed pages, dealing with the Gospels in turn, with Acts, and the life and letters of Paul. It is a marvellous and reverent exposition of Christ's teaching as he understands it, and we have the spectacle of Bernard Shaw bowing his hitherto unconquered head in the presence of the King of Kings. He has been reading and rereading the Bible with close attention; he emerges from its study not only fascinated by the central figure, but with a sincere belief that only through following the teachings of Jesus can society attain salvation. He believes that Jesus knew more about human nature than any other person who ever lived; that He knew not only our diseases, but the remedy for them.

I am not concerned here with the truth or error of the religious interpretations respectively put forth by Mr. Wells, Mr. Moore, Mr. Shaw; but only with the plain fact that these three creative artists have been recently studying the Bible with extraordinary zeal.

The Bible contains every form of literature in the highest degree, except humour. The seriousness of the main theme—man's relation to God—and the serious cast of mind characteristic of the various writers, forbade the introduction of anything approaching hilarity. Yet there are adumbrations of humour here and there. In Stuart Walker's stage production, *The Book of Job*, there are a half dozen passages or situations that arouse audible risibility. I wish that we were able to interpret as humorous the famous passage (Job, XXXI, 35) "behold, my desire is . . . that mine adversary had written a book." No worse fate could be wished for one's enemy, as every writer of books knows only too well; but although the verse is often quoted lightly, I fear that in the original there is no pleasantry. I have always thought that the chronicler in Acts (XII, 18) intended the puzzlement of the soldiers to be faintly humorous: "Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter."

It is difficult to read the following verse in Proverbs without smiling: "He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the

morning, it shall be counted a curse to him." And the world-old joke about shrewish women comes on the heels of the inopportune friend: "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike."

The pessimist who wrote Ecclesiastes admitted that there was a time to laugh, but he apparently found no time for it himself. The Puritans had good authority for their dislike of laughter, and were forever citing the thorns crackling under the pot. Their view was well expressed in Proverbs—"Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful."

I cannot recall any occasion when Our Lord laughed aloud; but He must have been amused more than once. I am sure that He wanted to laugh when the mother of Zebedee's children fatuously requested that her two sons might sit, one on His right hand, and one on His left, in the kingdom. He settled that question and calmed the subsequent indignation of the Ten with divine tact.

Yet if there is little humour in the Bible, there is an immense amount of irony. The Psalms and the Prophetic Books abound with illustrations.

The Bible is full of both passion and sentiment, but it has no sentimentality. It is rather remarkable that there is, so far as I can remember, not one touch of false sentiment. In nearly all old books, the pathos that drew tears from contemporary readers often obtains either smiles or yawns from later generations; but the scenes of sentiment in the Bible are so deeply founded on human nature, that they impress the twentieth century with as much force as in the time when they were written. Four supreme instances, out of an uncountable number, may be given—illustrating the love of man to woman, the love of brother to brother, the love of man to man, and the grief of a father for a dead son.

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

In the marvellous story of Joseph and his brethren, when Joseph saw the lad Benjamin, his own brother, the situation is enough to tax the power of the most consummate artist; but the simplicity and dignity of the Bible narrative leave nothing to add, change, or omit.

And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother; and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

When David was informed of the death of Saul and Jonathan, his lament for the latter is unsurpassed in literature as a tribute to the strength of men's friendships.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. . . . How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

When King David awaits the news of the decisive battle of the civil war, he has only one question for both messengers, *Is the young man*

Absalom safe? Ahimaaz did not dare to tell the truth, when he saw where his master's interest centered; Cushie replied with matchless diplomatic tact, but to no avail. The king's passion of grief for his cruel son seemed merely an enigma to the two messengers, whilst to that seasoned fighting-hack, Joab, it seemed ridiculous and disgusting. But to us it is not only impressive beyond words, it reveals one of the qualities of the king that make us love him.

And the king said unto Cushie, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushie answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

There is no narrative style superior to that of the Old Testament historians. They included everything, both good and bad, never trying to make an idealised portrait. Now the most important thing in a king's life, both for himself and for the welfare of his subjects, is his moral character. Is it good or bad? This

statement is given first, for it deserves primacy; his personal appearance, physical endowments, accomplishments are all secondary.

In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

Out of these impartially written historical pages, where one fact soberly follows another, individuals leap to life with astonishing vividness. Agag, going delicately, and saying "Surely the bitterness of death is past"; the sprinter Asahel, "light of foot as a wild roe," who turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner, and whom Abner reluctantly slew pushing his spear back at him; Amasa, treacherously slain by Joab, "Art thou in health, my brother?" Many characters like the above, to whom only a few lines are given, are nevertheless unforgettable; whilst the more important personages, Jehu, Ahab,

Jezebel, Joab, are as real to us as the leading figures in American history.

Jonathan has been somewhat obscured by David, but he was the opposite of a weak character. He was a first-class fighting man. It took immense courage to defy a father like Saul, and let it be remembered that when Saul, in ungovernable passion, threw a javelin at Jonathan across the dinner-table, Jonathan showed no fear. The history says, "So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger."

As for David himself, he had many sins to answer for, including murder and adultery in their most malignant form; yet every one loves David, for he had a great heart. When Nathan stood up to him, instead of killing the bold prophet, he admitted his guilt; he was more interested in the welfare of Absalom than in the outcome of the rebellion against his throne; his attitude toward King Saul was a model of loyalty and forbearance; his personal magnetism was so powerful that mighty men loved to risk their lives for him. Sometimes I think the finest episode in his career was when he refused to drink the water brought to him by the three champions.

And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate! And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David; but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the Lord, And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing; shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it.

John Masefield, the English poet, in a memorable speech made in America in June, 1918, cited this incident as a parable. He said that after this great war is over, we shall feel unworthy of using the freedom bought by victory; for our liberty will come to us through the sacrifice of heroes.

And if the mature King David is splendid, the lyric David is one of the most radiant figures in history. Was there ever a finer description of a young athlete, than the following sketch of David? And remember that the whole account of his appearance and accomplishments is compressed into a part of one sentence, which is itself only a part of one Bible verse:

Cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.

This recommendation was naturally enough for Saul, and he sent for the young harp player.

Although paraphrases of the Bible are usually weak—I once owned a book that contained the Gospels told in rime, heaven knows why—many of the masterpieces of English literature have been founded directly on the Bible text. We need to think only of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, and of Browning's *Saul*. In Browning, David soothes the king by playing the old tunes of the pasture. Saul was a cowboy; he was rounding up his father's herd when the king-hunters came after him; many times amid the responsibilities of the monarchy, he must have been homesick for the free life of the hills. David knew what he was about when he played pastoral tunes.

The great prophets of Israel exhibited not only a zeal for righteousness, but plenty of common sense. I like the quiet way in which they settled minor questions. When Elisha was plowing, and Elijah cast his mantle on

him, the youth knew he was called to greater things than farm work, but he asked the man of God, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." And Elijah replied, "Go back again: for what have I done to thee?"

And the matter of courtesy toward a religious service in which we do not believe, was settled once for all by Elisha. After Naaman had been cured of leprosy, he told Elisha that of course the God of Israel was the only true God, and he would worship Him for the rest of his life. But he was troubled by a matter that might be called religious etiquette. He is going back to serve his royal master the king of Syria, and how shall he behave in the house of Rimmon where the king worships?

In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. And he said unto him, Go in peace.

Pastoral literature, which is a form by itself, has few good illustrations in native English, for

our pastorals from Spenser and William Browne down to the nineteenth century, are marred by artificiality and indeed by insipidity. I suppose the best pastorals in secular literature are the first, those by Theocritus. Yet even the Sicilian masterpieces are inferior to a specimen found in the Bible, the book of Ruth. This wonderful idyl of the farm, told in an impeccable style by the old Hebrew writer, must forever remain supreme and unapproachable. The economy of words is striking; in the narrative of David's great-grandmother, there is not a superfluous sentence. The suppressed passion in this tale has been felt by all intelligent readers; and Keats, with his genius for beauty of feeling and beauty of tone, has arrested the lonely figure of Ruth in the grain-field, where she stands in immortal loveliness like the images on the Greek urn.

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.

Epistolary literature in the New Testament reached its climax. There are no letters in the history of the pen like the letters of John, and

James, and Peter, and Paul. It would be difficult to improve on James's comment on pure religion, or on his account of that untameable creature, the tongue. Whilst the short letter by Jude is inferior to those written by the great four, it contains a description of certain ungodly men mightily effective.

Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Although there are no books in the Bible cast in the form of a play, there are not many dramatic elevations in literature loftier than the story of Esther, Haman, and Mordecai; of Samson, the strongest man in the world, easy prey to a woman; of Judith and Holofernes; of Ahab, Jezebel, and Naboth. These are pure drama. And in these dramas of terrific passion, there are natural, homely touches of surprising realism, that seem as if the events might have happened yesterday. The night when King Ahasuerus was wakeful, and after trying every expedient to induce sleep, finally did what so many of us did some night last week—he sat up in bed and read a book. He merely exercised

the royal prerogative, and had the book read to him.

The poetry of the Old Testament—especially in the books Solomon's Song, Job, Psalms, Isaiah,—excels in every variety of poetical expression, ranging from pure lyrical singing to majestic epic harmonies. The most conventional subject for a poem is Spring, and among the millions of tributes to the mild air and the awakening earth, none is more beautiful than the passage in the Song of Songs.

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing
of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in
our land;

The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the
vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise,
my love, my fair one, and come away. . . .

My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among
the lilies.

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,
turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young
hart upon the mountains of Bether.

As Browning began what is perhaps his greatest work—the Pope's speech in the *Ring and the*

Book—with an allusion to the story in Esther, so, in giving the Pope's tribute to the soldier-saint Caponsacchi, he borrowed some poetry from Job. It is worth while for a moment to compare the original and Browning's language, to see what good use Browning made of his Biblical knowledge.

Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?

Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? . . .

Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? . . .

His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. . . .

He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary. . . .

He beholdeth all high things; he is a king over all the children of pride.

Browning, in the Pope's speech, gives some advice to the teachers of young men. He bids them remember the strength, passion, and glory of youth, and not expect to tame adolescence with petty formalism, or with tiny devices. And suddenly the thought of Leviathan must have entered his mind, for the Pope speaks

Irregular noble 'scapegrace—son the same!
Faulty—and peradventure ours the fault
Who still misteach, mislead, throw hook and line,
Thinking to land leviathan forsooth,
Tame the scaled neck, play with him as a bird,
And bind him for our maidens! Better bear
The King of Pride go wantoning awhile,
Unplagued by cord in nose and thorn in jaw,
Through deep to deep, followed by all that shine,
Churning the blackness hoary; He who made
The comely terror, He shall make the sword
To match that piece of netherstone his heart.

If one reads the book of Psalms straight through, no matter how familiar many passages may be, the glory and splendour of the majestic poetry will come like a fresh revelation; and if one will read the last three Psalms aloud, one will feel how all the hymns of sorrow, delight, repentance and adoration unite in one grand universal chorus of praise.

Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl; Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth;

Both young men, and maidens; old men, and chil-

dren. . . . Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

Handel's *Messiah* is the greatest of all oratorios; sometimes I think it is worth all other oratorios put together. Handel was an inspired genius. When he wrote the Hallelujah chorus, he said he saw the heavens opened and the Son of God sitting in glory, and I have no doubt he really did. He was fortunate in being able to match deathless words with sublime music. Much of the grandeur of his work is owing to the poetry, and especially to the parts taken from the prophet Isaiah. Passages of stern authority alternate with ineffable tenderness.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: . . .

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

The poetry of the Bible is not only the highest poetry to be found anywhere in literature, it contains the essence of all religion, so far as religion consists in aspiration. In this way Job, the Psalms, and Isaiah contain an eternal element of truth, that no advance in the world's thought can make obsolete. Through such poetry rather than through any formal creed, man is lifted into a communion with the Divine Spirit. For in these immortal poems, which express a fundamental and universal passion, the human soul rises to that elevation which brings assurance and peace.

The Bible contains not only the finest historical prose, and the finest lyric and epic poetry; in philosophy, practical wisdom, and political economy it is also supreme. Modern pessimism, even in the great artist Schopenhauer, finds no more beautiful expression than in the book of Ecclesiastes; and the ancient pessimist has a better key to the riddle of life than asceticism.

His conclusion of the whole matter is to fear God and keep His commandments.

The political economy taught in the Gospels is not only better for humanity to follow as a practical guide, it is more deeply based on fact than the treatises of John Stuart Mill or any other classic authority. In the preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, Bernard Shaw says that humanity can never solve the problems of society, can never arrange the social structure properly, until the teaching of Jesus is followed. He believes that Jesus knew more about such things than any modern student. It looks to-day as though all progress was an attempt, naturally through much failure and frequent relapse, to apply the doctrines of Jesus Christ. And I think that in four or five centuries, say, in the year 2500, humanity will be nearer that goal than it is to-day.

Even those who do not believe that the Bible is the revelation of God, will admit that it is the supreme revelation of man. There is more revelation of man's weakness and strength, man's capacity for evil and for good, in the Bible than can be found in Shakespeare and all the dramatists of the world. It is the most

human of all books. And it is true in its depiction of human nature as naturally sinful; it does not flatter; men are instinctively bad, and therefore need not palliatives, but regeneration. The basest deeds of which men and women are capable are faithfully recorded; and the greatest Personality in history clearly set forth. Religion, in its combination of reverence and conduct, the attitude to God and the attitude to man, was understood by the old prophets; they had a passion for spiritual worship and a passion for right living. When President Eliot was requested by the authorities at Washington to select a sentence for a conspicuous place in the great Library, he said there was nothing in the history of literature more worthy than a pair of lines from the prophet Micah. Accordingly there they stand, as true in the twentieth century as when they were first uttered:

What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

The practical wisdom expressed in the book of Proverbs has not been surpassed by any of our modern wise men. Nor has it yet become stale. The wisest men to-day have nothing to

add in the way of a guide to life, to this collection of ancient Jewish wisdom, compiled from long observation and experience. Sensuality is still a guidepost to the grave, and a soft answer still turns away wrath. In the midst of the bewildering changes not only in women's garments, but in women's activities, the two-verse sketch in the last chapter of Proverbs still represents the ideal woman:

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

But of all the sagacity in this extraordinary book, the finest both in thought and expression, is to be found in the penultimate chapter. After enumerating four inexplicable problems, ending charmingly with "the way of a man with a maid," which has been the stock subject of the drama and the novel for many centuries, the allusion to the adulterous woman seems at first to be an anti-climax. But a little reflection convinces us that her self-satisfaction is after all the most inexplicable thing in the world. The things which *disquieted* (excellent word)

the earth then, disquiet it now: the servant reigning, and the handmaid heir to her mistress are ruining Russia, and disquieting the world; a fool with a hearty dinner inside his carcass is insufferable, and an odious woman when she is married becomes even more offensive. Then follow the immortal four illustrations of wisdom, unconscious examples of great ideas: the ants, who can their food in the summer: the feeble conies, who seek secure shelter; the locusts, who govern themselves constitutionally; the ugly spider, who lives aloft in palatial surroundings. Good things:—Foresight: Security: Coöperation: Aspiration.

For the last sixty years, the chief intellectual passion of educated men and women has been the passion for truth. Never has truth been so loved, and followed with such devotion. It is worth remembering that in the first book of Esdras in the Apocrypha, this passion for truth was expressed in final and impressive words, together with a picture of other forces as true to-day as then, and in one aspect amazingly applicable to the years from 1914 to 1918. The three young men who competed for the prize of declaring what was the strongest thing on

earth, wrote their opinions in secret, and defended them in public. The first wrote, *Wine is the strongest*: the second, *The king is the strongest*: the third, *Women are strongest: but above all things truth beareth away the victory*. The man who defended the second proposition might easily have been referring to Kaiser Wilhelm II, and to the organisation of his forces for war, some for fighting, some for the conservation of food:

If he bid them make war the one against the other, they do it; if he send them out against the enemies, they go, and break down mountains, walls, and towers.

They slay and are slain, and transgress not the king's commandment; if they get the victory, they bring all to the king, as well the spoil, as all things else.

Likewise for those that are no soldiers and have not to do with wars, but use husbandry, when they have reaped again that which they had sown, they bring it to the king, and compel one another to bring tribute to the king. And yet he is but one man: if he command to kill, they kill; if he command to spare, they spare;

If he command to smite, they smite; if he command to make desolate, they make desolate; if he command to build, they build;

If he command to cut down, they cut down; if he command to plant, they plant. So all his people and

his armies obey him; furthermore he lieth down, he eateth and drinketh, and taketh his rest:

And these keep watch round about him, neither may any one depart, and do his own business, neither disobey they him in anything.

Then the third youth, after a witty and piquant tribute to the power of women, began to speak of the truth.

Wine is wicked, the king is wicked, women are wicked, and such are all their wicked works; and there is no truth in them; in their unrighteousness also they shall perish.

As for the truth, it endureth, and is always strong; it liveth and conquereth forevermore. . . .

With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards.

Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty of all ages.

Blessed be the God of truth.

And with that he held his peace. And all the people then shouted, and said, Great is truth, and mighty above all things.

I would give much if I knew the tone of Pilate's voice, or the expression on his face, or his particular impelling thought, when he asked our Lord the question, *What is truth?* Jesus

had just spoken of the permanent importance of truth. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?" and immediately went out and declared that he found no fault in the accused person. Bacon begins his first essay with the words "What is Truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer." But I am not at all sure that Pilate was jesting; in the New Testament narrative, Pilate's bearing was serious and dignified. The Pilate of the Mystery Plays was at times jocose and it is more than possible that Bacon had the stage Pilate in mind, as Shakespeare had the stage Herod, though I have never heard this explanation suggested. Martin Luther, if I understand him correctly, regarded Pilate's question as coming from a practical politician. What good is truth in an emergency like this? What you want is not truth; what you need is some practical scheme to get you out of this fix. It would be I suppose like the complacency of the "regular" candidate: you may have the truth on your side, but I have the delegates.

Possibly all Pilate meant was to express his impatience tinged with dismay, that Jesus, in such a dangerous moment, should begin talking about an abstraction like truth. Then the question would simply mean, What is the use now of talking about truth? Pilate regarded Jesus as a harmless dreamer, and yet there was something puzzlingly impressive about Him. The Romans, exactly the opposite of the Russians, were eminently practical; pure theory had little interest for them, and to discuss an abstract question was at best a waste of time.

Some one has profanely remarked that even God Himself could not answer Pilate's question. At all events, it remained unanswered, and the answer would have been as incomprehensible to Pilate as the kingship of the speaker.

The scene is one of the most dramatic in literature. The powerful Roman official, with the whole force of the Empire behind him, is confronted by a quiet figure, unaggressive but unterrified, the only serene person in the hall. The words of our Lord are a divine echo of the famous testimony of the young man in the Book of Esdras.

As for the truth, it endureth, and is always strong: it liveth and conquereth forevermore.

With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards.

Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power and majesty of all ages.

The impotence of physical force to destroy truth has been proved many times, but it is a fact always impressive in retrospect. History is full of dramatic contrasts. After reading the scurrilous attacks made by Aristophanes on Socrates, one cannot help thinking to-day that the figure of the dramatist, piteously begging the Athenians for the prize, contrasts harshly with the solitary grandeur of Socrates standing before his accusers, perfectly calm in the contemplation of the grave. And the contrast between the friendless prisoner and the mighty Roman, who imagined he had final power over Him, imposes itself on every one who reads the Gospel narrative. I came into the world to bear witness unto the truth. This is God's world, not the Roman's nor the Jew's; He rules it. I die on the cross; but truth, honour, morality do not die; my death is a witness for all time to the supremacy of Truth.

II

ST. PAUL AS A LETTER-WRITER

THE fact that I have never studied theology or New Testament interpretation gives me a possible advantage in the darkness of ignorance. In one of the stories of Captain Marryat, an untrained man was compelled to fight a duel with swords against a trained opponent; his skillful antagonist, expecting the usual formal thrust and parry, was killed on the first lunge. So, in grasping the sword of the Spirit, I find myself unhampered by any theological or textual code. No one regrets my lack of learning more than I; but my method at all events has the advantage of simplicity. I shall take up the letters of Paul as I take up the letters of Emerson, and read them as examples of epistolary literature. I have no theory to establish and no systematic doctrine. At what date each letter was written, what corruptions if any have corroded the text, whether Paul wrote all or only some of them,

are for the moment questions of minor importance; what we know for certain is that we have before us, in the incomparable English of 1611, a collection of letters which discuss everything of human interest from God to overcoats, which reveal a brilliant, passionate personality, and which have had a prodigious effect on the development of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Dante, Milton, Bunyan have each and all helped to shape our conceptions of God, of the future, of sin and salvation; but the formative influence of Paul's letters has been and still is greater than that of these three writers combined. Paul arrived exactly on time to aid in the spread of the Christian religion; for he was both a philosopher and a man of action. He was a profound thinker and a persuasive advocate. He was devoted to introspection and liked to travel. His love of metaphysics did not prevent him from being a successful advance agent of Christianity, carrying with him everywhere an excellent sample of the article he wished to distribute. His letters are full of pure and applied religion. He deals especially with the practical problems that confront young students—the temptations of the mind

and the temptations of the body. He has been well called the "college man's apostle."

The year of his birth is not known, but he was probably about the same age as Jesus, for at the stoning of Stephen, he is called a young man. That might mean anything from seventeen to thirty-five. The rather important rôle he played in persecutions would seem to indicate manhood. On the other hand, the fact that at the murder of Stephen he took care of the clothes, just as small boys to-day hold coats for their big brothers, would indicate youth; and his zeal in persecution would harmonise with mental immaturity. I like to think of him as younger than Jesus, and I think of Jesus as forever young.

Paul was born at Tarsus, in Cilicia, in Asia Minor. It was a city of importance, both for its commercial industry and for its learning. Paul has every mark of being city bred; there is nothing provincial about his way of thought. The union in Tarsus of Greek culture with Yankee enterprise was typical of Paul's own temperament. His father was a Jew, and belonged to the narrowest sect of the Pharisees, so that probably Paul was educated as sternly

and strictly as our Puritan ancestors in New England. In austerity and alertness, he was a combination of Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin. His father was a Roman citizen; and so Paul was a free-born Roman as well as a Jew, a privilege which gave him a trump card in the game of life.

He seems to have made a journey to Jerusalem, with the intention of becoming a Rabbi; and in order to maintain himself while studying—analogous to the modern custom of working one's way through college—he learned the trade of a tent-maker, at which he turned many an honest penny in later years. Thus early he displayed the passion for righteousness and the passion for business characteristic of his race.

Jerusalem was the centre of Jewish learning; and the ambitious boy was fortunate in studying under a famous professor, Gamaliel. Although this wise man had a reputation for tolerance, Paul became a narrow and bitter Jewish partisan. Yet as every good teacher sows seed that sometimes comes to fruition only after many years, who knows but that in the marvellous words of Paul on Charity, we behold the green leaves of old Gamaliel?

The curriculum, like that of Oxford and Cambridge in the eighteenth century, was not broad, but it was decidedly intensive. It knew little of the elective system. It consisted of a study of the Old Testament, with commentaries thereupon. Paul obtained a sound and accurate knowledge of the Scriptures, which he turned to account in his later work among the Jews. His Letters abound in Biblical quotations.

Paul was graduated from Jerusalem a zealous, learned Jew. What does this mean? It means that he believed the only way to righteousness was to keep in detail the Jewish law; not only its moral precepts, but its technical formalities. This explains why Paul was so bitter against the dead Jesus and His followers. Like an orthodox party man in church and politics, he viewed with alarm the teachings of the disciples of Jesus, for he believed them to be not only heretical, but subversive, revolutionary. And his instinct, whether commendable or not, was correct; they were exactly what he thought they were, irreconcilable with the religious and social order in which he was brought up. A cardinal idea in the teachings of Jesus is that

righteousness is a matter of the heart; forms and ceremonies are relatively unimportant. The coolness with which the greatest Democrat of all time jettisoned the cargo of orthodox ordinances caused priests to hold up their hands in horror. Paul was convinced that the Christian sect must be exterminated; and he gazed admiringly at the torture of Stephen, feeling certain of the approval of Jehovah.

While seeking fresh worlds to conquer, he learned that the Christian disease had broken out in Damascus; he obtained credentials from the high priest, and started for that city, his object being to arrest and carry to Jerusalem all the criminals he could catch. When he came near Damascus, he saw a great light, and was converted. From the Christian point of view, what happened to him was natural enough; man does not always seek God, but God is forever seeking man, the sole object of the appearance of Christ on earth. The Hound of Heaven was on his trail, and caught him on the broad road to disaster.

Paul was not the man to do anything by halves. As soon as he was baptised, he became active, beginning with his neighbours in Damas-

cus, preaching for the new cause with the old vigour. The Jews naturally regarded him as a traitor, the inevitable fate of one who changes his convictions on any question of general concern. He escaped to Jerusalem, and had to escape from it. After his flight, he went back to his native town and stayed there for years. He seems to have lived quietly, but was evidently not forgotten, because Barnabas came after him, brought him to Antioch, and there the two friends worked together for twelve months.

Antioch was a large and famous city, and the new faith took such hold there that the disciples in this place were first called Christians.

Paul now went on a missionary journey, with Barnabas. He meant to work mainly among the Jews, but he received such cold treatment that he turned more and more to others, and thus after this journey he became the great apostle to the Gentiles. When the two men started out, it was Barnabas and Paul; when they returned, it was Paul and Barnabas. Paul's supremacy as a Christian preacher has never been challenged from that day to this.

Not only were many individuals converted to Christianity, but churches were founded; and by visiting them again on the way home, Paul succeeded in establishing them more firmly. On the second missionary journey, Paul went over into Europe, planting the faith in Western civilisation. The result of this expedition exceeded his wildest dreams, for he actually changed the currents of Western thought, and we are all different to-day from what we should have been had he restricted his wanderings. It was on this trip that he met Dr. Luke, and thus we get our account of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles. Obtaining little success with either the Jews or the educated Athenians, he came more and more into contact with the poor and lowly Gentiles, giving him much valuable training in clear exposition, and in knowledge of human nature.

Paul's lack of success with the cultivated Greeks is only what might have been expected. Browning has dramatically voiced it in the poem *Cleon*. The intellectual poet is vexed at the king's curiosity about an itinerant pedlar of religion. Yet though Cleon's armour of culture is impenetrable, he is a witness to the

rising tide of Christianity, making its way among the downtrodden and oppressed.

Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
 Hath access to a secret shut from us?
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O King,
 In stooping to inquire of such an one,
 As if his answer could impose at all!
 He writeth, doth he? Well, and he may write.
 Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
 Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;
 And (as I gathered from a bystander)
 Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

During the second missionary journey, Paul wrote the two letters to the Thessalonians, which were probably composed at Corinth.

His third missionary journey included a fifth visit to Jerusalem. At Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia Minor, Paul remained three years, fighting Paganism. Here he met the orator Apollos, who was one of the disciples of John the Baptist; and whose vigour in preaching showed that John's influence had not been cut off so easily as his head. The difference between the eloquence of Apollos and the eloquence of Paul was the same that, according to

Mommsen, separated the eloquence of Cicero from the eloquence of Cæsar. That of the former was characterised by rounded periods; that of the latter, by deeply-felt thought.

On his third journey Paul seems to have written the two letters to the Corinthians, the letter to the Galatians, and to the Romans.

Why he undertook the fifth journey to Jerusalem with such eagerness we hardly know. He had collected some money for the poor there, and perhaps wished to distribute it in person. Nearly sixty years old, worn out with almost incredible hardships, he met with prophets of evil along the road, who vainly tried to dissuade him from his purpose. He reached Jerusalem at the Feast of the Pentecost, a time when crowds of Jews had flocked to the Holy City. Excitement was running high; many of the pilgrims came from places where they had heard the new evangelist, and when they saw him in Jerusalem, their anger knew no bounds. Paul could not reasonably complain of their treatment; for that was just the method he had used with seditious Christians.

In Cesarea Paul remained two years in cap-

tivity, one of the best things that ever happened to him. He needed rest, and the only way he could get it was by going to jail. During this enforced idleness, his mind was active, as subsequent letters show. He might have been set at liberty at once, for Felix the Roman knew well enough that Paul was no criminal. Probably Felix hoped that a bribe would be offered, but Paul was not the kind of man to buy his way out of prison. If he had not been a Roman citizen, he would have been treated more harshly. His Jewish enemies watched him as a cat would watch a mouse in a cage. As soon as Felix was succeeded by Festus, they eagerly besought the new official to give him up. But Paul appealed to Cæsar, which left nothing for Festus to do but to send him to Rome. Paul had always wanted to go to Rome, and here was a chance to travel thither at the expense of the state.

It is interesting to remember what excellent and fair-minded Roman officials appear in the New Testament. Pilate displayed considerable wisdom and courage; Gallio refused to bother himself with sectarian controversies, being engaged in the business of governing the people,

and having no time for petty affairs; Felix, Festus, and Lysias were sensible and humane.

King Agrippa, in whose presence Paul was tried, was what Bernard Shaw would call a rubber-stamp King; an empty title, for he had little power, and even his thinking was done for him, as is still the fortunate custom in constitutional monarchies. This was no judicial trial, but rather a parlour performance, which Festus arranged for the entertainment of his guest.

At Rome Paul remained two years, living in practical freedom, although accompanied always by one soldier, who, I dare say, was often an agreeable companion. He preached and conversed, making many conquests among the Gentiles, among the Roman soldiers who guarded him, and even among Cæsar's household. He lived in his own hired house, and seems to have passed his days in cheerful activity. What became of him after this experience, nobody knows.

Every now and then the course of literature is disturbed by the appearance of a man who is something more and something greater than

a literary artist; some one is born who feels within him the voice of a prophetic mission. Such a person was Socrates: such a person was Thomas Carlyle. These men exert an influence on the history of thought merely by opening their mouths and talking. So great a master of oral speech was Carlyle that I feel sure that with a gifted amanuensis, he could have affected the modern world deeply had he never put pen to paper. Socrates talked to a few friends in Athens and people of all nations still listen to him eagerly. The supreme illustration is our Lord, whose brief addresses and intimate conversations have changed the history of the world. Everything must have a beginning; and the Christian religion began in the word made flesh and remade into the living word. Paul relied on oratory so long as the Church remained within narrow geographical limits; but when, owing to his various journeys, the new faith spread far and wide, he was naturally forced into epistolary activity.

No letters have ever been so influential as these; for although they were written to particular groups at particular times and for

particular reasons, thousands and thousands of men and women in the twentieth century read them as if they were addressed directly to themselves.

In everything except length, these letters are more like letters of to-day than like the polished literary efforts of the eighteenth century. Gray, Walpole, Cowper wrote familiar epistles in beautifully elaborate English, and often with conscious rhetorical effort; to-day, as some one has said, we do not write letters, we write only telegrams. Very few business or personal letters show any care for mere style; even the many letters written to the newspapers show less interest in the art of phrasing than the private correspondence of our New England forefathers.

It is often said that cheap postage is the cause of the degeneration of epistolary style; but it is not cheap postage, it is rather the lack of time that makes it difficult to write a good letter. The reason why journalism is a synonym for bad writing is not because the journalists do not know how to write, it is because they never have time to consider their sentences; hence they dress thought in ready-made clothes,

like "all was bustle and confusion," "dull, sickening thud," and that familiar headline

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containing a verb one never hears and seldom sees outside of the newspapers. It is an interesting fact that just as the invention of labour-saving machinery meant the employment of more men in production instead of less, so the invention of time-saving devices always leaves those who use them with less leisure than before. Man has never been so busy as he is now, when he talks through a telephone, dictates to a stenographer, and travels in an automobile.

Paul's literary style, except at moments of exaltation, lacks grace and finish; it is clumsy, involved, twisted. Sometimes it winds itself up in many folds, like a boa constrictor; sometimes it is as brittle as a Western Union night letter. These faults must be charged to him, and not to his English translators; the original loses nothing in the version of 1611.

Paul was too busy to spend much time on the style of these epistles; they were written at various places, in moments snatched from days

and nights of chronic activity. Possibly when he wrote "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," the actual dawn was breaking, and from the streets sounded the songs of home-going drunken revellers. They are offhand and impromptu, composed under the exigency of some crisis in the particular church he was trying to strengthen in the new faith. His custom was to dictate, and then when he signed his name, to add a few words in his own writing. The letters form no distinct body of articulated doctrine; the theologians who came after him tried with more or less success to codify his rules. Paul evidently meant to settle special cases as they came up—and he settled them all, not by the old laws, but by the new idea of universal love.

What his style loses in finish and grace, it gains in vivacity and vigour. The style has behind it the impelling force of white-hot sincerity. Occasionally it rises to vertiginous heights. What are now called the thirteenth and the fifteenth chapters of the first letter to the Corinthians are peaks of such lofty grandeur that they tower above everything else in the world's literature except the actual words of

Jesus in the Gospels. The eminence of Jesus in literary art is as unique as his eminence in morality.

After one has read all the letters of Paul, the character of the writer appears with clearness. Although he adapted each letter to the particular needs of the recipients, the letters taken together reveal a portrait vivid enough to arouse the envy of John Sargent. We get a better idea of the true nature of the apostle from these letters than we do from the account in the Acts written by Luke, and the doctor was an excellent chronicler. Schopenhauer said that we can obtain a more accurate conception of the character of a man by reading one of his letters than we can from a personal interview. Most men in Schopenhauer's day wore beards; and the great pessimist said the beard was intended by nature to conceal the mouth, the one feature of the face that betrayed the intentions of its owner. He added that with women beards were unnecessary; for with them, dissimulation was inborn.

The first letter to the Thessalonians was written at Corinth, during the second missionary journey, and perhaps either in the year 50

or 52. Thessalonica, or as it is more tragically known in the twentieth century, Saloniki, had been visited by Paul just before he made his visit to Athens and Corinth. In this latter city Silas and Timothy came to see him, bringing the latest news from Thessalonica; and he was prompted therefore to write the earliest of his letters which have come down to us. The second letter was probably written a few months after the first, while Paul was still at Corinth. He wrote it to correct some misunderstandings that had been caused by the preceding epistle, chiefly with regard to the Second Advent.

At that time Greece was divided into two parts—Macedonia and Achaia. Thessalonica was the capital and chief city of Macedonia. It was a highly important town, and particularly important then and now, as a seaport. One of the chief manufactures was and is the making of goat's-hair cloth. This enabled Paul to find steady employment during his sojourn there.

He begins the letter in his usual diplomatic fashion by congratulating them heartily on the excellence of their work, for which he thanks

God. He exhorts them to refrain from sensuality, and to become good citizens; and then he speaks of the second coming of Christ, warning them to be ever on guard, like faithful sentinels. The all but universal antipathy to hard work caused the Thessalonians to argue, that if Christ was coming again so soon, there was no particular reason for industry of any sort; and a second letter became necessary, in which he told them not to be weary in well doing. After he had finished dictating the letter, he added in his own writing,

The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

The Thessalonians were not the only people who used the imminence of the second coming as an excuse for shirking work. During the famous Dark Day in Connecticut, May 19, 1780, a group of legislators were assembled in Hartford, to transact business for the Commonwealth. When the darkness deepened, most of the statesmen were terrified, and some fell on their knees. I have always admired one man, who spoke out loud and bold, saying,

“This is either the second coming of Christ or it is not; if it is not, we are all making fools out of ourselves. If it is, the Lord cannot find us in any better attitude than attending to the work for which we are here. I move that the candles be brought in, and that we proceed to business.”

The two letters to the Corinthians were probably written during the third missionary journey, in 57 or 58 or possibly earlier. The first he wrote at Ephesus, the second at Philippi or in some part of Macedonia. Only a few months came between the two, and there is apparently a third letter which is lost. As we have seen, Paul was at Corinth some five years previous to the composition of these epistles. In 57 and 58 he was at Ephesus, where he was visited by a deputation from Corinth, bringing him news from the local church; and he sent a letter back with them. In the missing letter, he had made a severe attack on sensuality, the besetting sin of Corinth, as everyone knows. This sin had actually been made a form of worship, and the church needed some rather emphatic language from Paul on the subject, and got it.

One of the most interesting things in this great letter is the picture it gives of the apostolic church, often held up by zealots as a model for twentieth-century imitation. This early church was no Paradise, and if it existed in New York to-day, would probably be suppressed by the police. Some of the church-members lived openly dissolute lives; they fought each other in the courts; they were quarrelsome, lustful, avaricious, and gluttonous; misunderstanding the institution of the Lord's Supper, some of them got drunk at the Communion table. *Nous avons changé tout cela*, and still there is room for improvement.

Those of us who, like myself, are sore distressed by the weaknesses and imperfections of the modern Church of Christ, and still more by its lack of the qualities of leadership in the world's social organisation, ought to remember that although the Founder of Christianity was divine, the Church is neither more nor less than human. It is as human as a political party. It is the result of human effort to follow and imitate a Divine Example, and is naturally therefore far from ideal. It contains, like any political combination, men and women of the

highest type, and also some that help to disgrace it in the eyes of outsiders. If the majority of its members were not better than the average of those without its pale, and if its influence in society were not on the whole an elevating one, it would be a complete instead of a partial failure. But its history is inspiring. The Church has purged itself of many cruelties, sins, and follies as it has climbed upward through the centuries. Yet to-day it is true to say that the organisation still needs the teachings of Jesus and the letters of Paul; and the best thing about it is that both Jesus and Paul find in the hearts of priests, ministers, and lay-workers a more immediate response than in any other group of men or women. As Browning says,

This it is to have to do
With honest hearts: they easily may err,
But in the main they wish well to the truth.
You are Christians; somehow, no one ever plucked
A rag, even, from the body of the Lord,
To wear and mock with, but, despite himself,
He looked the greater and was the better.

We must not expect too much of the Church. When we remember that the teachings of its

Founder and Chief Apostle are directly opposed to human instincts, the wonder is that any real progress has been made. And I believe that in some thousands of years the Christians may be in the majority instead of in their present minority.

The Corinthian Church submitted all sorts of questions to Paul as referee. How about marriage—the gift of tongues (I imagine there were many fakers)—the position of women—the relations of church-members with outsiders? It needed not only wisdom on Paul's part to settle these disputed points, it required some patience; and I suspect he wrote the famous words on Charity as much to help himself as for those who were just learning to walk in the new and difficult road. After a careful explanation of the situation, together with a persuasive plea for hearty coöperation in which he used the metaphor of the human body, he said he would show them a more excellent way. This way is not the way of the law; it is not based on a system of rules, or petty prohibitions; it is the way of the Gospel, the way of affectionate sympathy. It is a pity that the nineteenth-century revisers changed

the old seventeenth-century word *charity* into the too general word *love*. They changed it because "charity" had come commonly to mean cheque-signing. For what Paul meant is clearly the necessity of charity for the minds of others, for their points of view, for their weaknesses, and misunderstandings. If we have this divine gift of charity, we shall have the key to human nature and the key to the religious life; we shall have the greatest thing in the world. As Henry Drummond used to say, it is significant that the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, was written, not by John, but by Paul. It gains in eloquence, it gains in intensity, by being the reasoned view of a man who had originally little of this article of charity in his nature, and who owed all he had to the grace of God. It was his experience of humanity that taught him the overwhelming necessity of this virtue.

What a pity that our Puritan ancestors, who exhibited so bravely the sterner sides of the Christian faith, never agreed with Paul that Charity was greater than either faith or hope! It would have saved their own souls—which in many cases acutely needed the remedy they so

earnestly advertised—and it would have made their reverberating pulpit oratory resemble something other than sounding brass.

After advising the Corinthians to insist on decency and order—two things of which they had only an elementary conception—Paul suddenly rises to the heights of sublimity in speaking of the resurrection of Christ, and of our assured victory over death and the grave. A party in the church, under the influence of Greek teaching, had denied the Resurrection, even as some ministers deny it now. Paul showed that it was the fundamental basis of the Christian faith; without it, we are of all men most miserable, not because the Christian life is valuable only for its future reward, but because we should all have been gulled; and there is perhaps no man on earth more pitiable than one who is deluded.

To affirm no resurrection of the dead, wrote Paul, is to deny Christ's resurrection, and thus to destroy the edifice of Christianity. Gnostic speculation grew like a fungus around the trunk of the tree of faith; starting with the idea that matter had always evil in it, the Gnostics claimed that if the body rises again,

it must still contain evil. Paul is replying to these objections in his remark about the spiritual body. He appeals also to the witnesses that actually saw Christ. All that he says is still persuasive, still eloquent, except his argument, "what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead?" It is to be hoped that this point seemed more important to Corinthians than it does to Americans; there then prevailed in the Corinthian church the curious, and as it seems to me, silly custom of baptising living persons for some who had died without baptism. Paul seems to have believed in the efficacy of this superstitious rite.

It is important to understand the meaning of the word *mystery* in the phrase, "Behold, I shew you a mystery." In the seventeenth century this word often meant *secret*,—and what Paul is saying is not "I am about to exhibit some hocus-pocus," but rather, as we say to an expectant child, "I'll tell you a secret."

The conclusion, as always with Paul, is practical rather than mystical. Don't let

Greek philosophy and paganism unsettle your minds. Have solid convictions. Remain steadfast. Keep busy.

It is a good thing for the early churches that they had for leader one who was not only a man of God but a man of sense. What would have become of them if they had had as their spiritual adviser somebody like A. Bronson Alcott? Or the monk Rasputin? Think what a following Rasputin would have had in Corinth!

The second letter to the Corinthians was written immediately after meeting Titus in Macedonia, who brought him the latest news from Corinth. This letter is a hot defense against accusations that a faction in the church had made against Paul.

No one knows where the letter to the Galatians was written, but the time seems to have been during the third missionary journey, perhaps either in 57 or 58. This letter is unique among his works, being written not to one church, but to all the churches in Galatia. On the second missionary journey, Paul had traveled through that country, founding churches; on the next trip he went through Galatia again,

and became alarmed at the fickleness and instability of the flock. Now while he was at Ephesus or at Corinth—it really doesn't matter which—he received news that the Jew faction had nearly ruined the Galatian churches, and were cleverly undermining Paul's teachings. This made him both alarmed and indignant, and he immediately dictated this fiery missive. It is an important letter, for its purpose—apart from relieving his mind—was not to give general advice, but to settle a fundamental question. Whether he settled it for the Galatians or not, we shall never know; but he certainly settled it for the general body of Christians from that day to this, whether they live in Cape Town or in Michigan. This letter therefore may be considered epoch-making in the development of Christianity—both in theory and in practice. The question was the same one that made trouble for Paul on his previous journeys and in all his early preaching. Should Gentiles who became converted be compelled to conform to the Jewish law, including circumcision and other details? Three different views were held: the Judaistic party insisted on the strictest conformation; the regular apostles

took a middle course, following the law themselves, but not compelling the Gentiles to do so; Paul, who always belonged to the extreme left, insisted that the law was of no consequence whatever; believing in Christ fulfilled the law and hence made it obsolete. Paul's doctrine was so radical, so clear, and so influential that it ultimately enabled Thomas Carlyle to speak lightly of the Ten Commandments.

The attitude of the apostle explains the hatred which the Hebrew party had for him, and their persistent efforts toward undercutting his teaching in every church founded by him. No sooner had the sound of his eloquence ceased in the new communities, than the Jews began their countermine. It is not necessary to suppose that their work was done by men sent from Jerusalem; the Jew faction existed everywhere.

In the Galatian churches, the Jews had made an impression on the people chiefly by three arguments. First, that Paul was not a genuine apostle, but an unauthorised demagogue. They felt no more bound by him than a twentieth-century Episcopal bishop feels bound by the theology of Billy Sunday. Second, that the

Jewish Law was sacred and divine—Christ himself being the Messiah, not of the Gentiles, but of the Jews. Third, that Paul's attitude toward the Law meant absolute license, the destruction of holiness. No doubt the Jews were sincere in this.

To these three powerful arguments the letter to the "foolish Galatians" was addressed. It is a masterpiece of force, knocking down every shelter his enemies erected. The epistle may be divided into three parts: a defense of his credentials, the exaltation of Christ over the law, a vindication of the ethical value of liberty. The world has yet much to learn about the value of this third idea, and has lately been engaged upon a universal war in the endeavour to settle it once for all.

Paul is so excited that he forgets or neglects his usual custom of beginning with congratulations; contrariwise, he rebukes the church-members sharply, pronouncing a curse on those who teach any other gospel than that of Christ. He said he had not hesitated to rebuke Peter face to face for his cowardly yielding to Jewish public opinion. Soon he tries to carry his own point by a brilliant flank attack. He starts

with the premisses of his antagonists, boldly claiming Abraham as a witness to his own side of the case, even as Lessing, in another controversy, claimed that the liberty-loving Shakespeare was really a better follower of Aristotle than the classicists who condemned him. If you belong to Christ, you are the true heir of Abraham; if you stand by the law, you are his bond-servant, not his free son.

The conclusion of the letter is a magnificent defense of spiritual liberty. Instead of freedom meaning license, it creates a better character than can be formed by the Law. The true sons of Christ need no set of rules; by following Him they will produce the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control: with these Paul contrasts the fruits of the flesh, that is, the results of the condition of man before the truth has made him free; and we have an impressive but not exaggerated roll-call of deadly sins.

In a bitter sarcasm, the apostle says that he wishes the sticklers for circumcision would go a little farther, and cut themselves off the earth.

God is greater than the moral code; in releasing ourselves from a troublesome list of formalities, we are more than ever bound to obey the great natural law of life—whatsoever a man soweth, that will he also reap.

As usual, Paul closes the letter with a few words in his own writing. He is so deeply moved by the condition of the Galatians, regarding them as bewitched, that he writes the postscript as it were in capitals, making even the shape of the words emphatic. "See with how large letters I have written unto you with mine own hand." And then, with that superb combination of spirituality and common sense, he brushes away forever the cobwebs of ritualism, centering all his force on the one supreme thing, the thing that really makes the difference between slavery and freedom: "for neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

The importance of the letter to the Galatians can hardly be overestimated; it settled forever what should be the essential element of Christianity. Paul's words are needed in the twentieth century: they still form the best answer to those who seek salvation through elaborate

ceremonies or through elaborate dogmas. True character must be formed within, springing from cheerful obedience to the spirit of Christ's teaching.

The letter to the Romans was probably written in the year 58 and from Corinth, while he was on his third missionary journey. This great epistle was directed to a community that Paul had never seen. He had always wanted to go to Rome, and while at Corinth he was nearer to Rome than to Jerusalem. He regarded Rome as the centre of the civilised world, and wished to conquer this citadel for Christ. He contemplated making a long Western trip, including Spain, and wanted to make Rome a base of operations. His zest for Rome was sharpened by the fact that he was a free-born Roman citizen. It would have interested him considerably could he have looked into the future, and beheld Rome as the centre not merely of civilisation, but of the Church of Christ.

Phœbe, a Christian woman, was about to start for Rome, and she may have carried this letter. Paul dictated the epistle in Greek, the stenographer being Tertius, who naïvely added

a line himself. At the close there are many individual greetings; a long list of names is given, and Tertius, not wishing to be omitted, inserted "I, Tertius, who write the epistle, salute you in the Lord."

This letter was to prepare the Roman Church for Paul's coming visit; but unfortunately we know nothing of the condition of the organisation, and the letter does not tell us definitely. Were they mainly Jews or Gentiles? We do not know. It is possible that the two parties were openly hostile, and Paul wished to unite them.

The main aim of the letter is fairly clear. Paul, knowing that he was about to reach the centre of the Western world, wished to make evident to the Gentiles the nature of his free Gospel. They must understand that they had fully as much right to Christianity as the Jews. His letter is accordingly a platform of Christianity, both in theory and practice.

He seems to have taken more pains than usual in composition; writing to those whom he had not seen, he studied the principles of clearness and conciliation. The keynote is Justification by Faith. All, both Jews and

Gentiles, are equally justified by faith. The Jews may think themselves safe because they have the law: yet not *having* the law, but *keeping* it, is the important thing. Even in that there is no clean righteousness, hence Jews and Gentiles both stand in need of the grace of God. Considering Paul's rough treatment from the Jews, and the way they had insidiously attacked him in the Galatian churches, one might naturally expect that in this letter he would furiously assail them. On the contrary, his tone toward the Jews is affectionate. His heart bleeds for his brethren; he even says he could wish himself damned for their sakes. He writes that they have a great natural advantage over the Gentiles, because they have been entrusted with the oracles of God. But the core of the letter is this: all men are alike condemned by the advent of Christ in the world, and all must have faith in Him to be saved.

Have Paul's ideas undergone a process of development? Yes. He says little about the second coming, which occupied so much space in the letters to the Thessalonians. The seventh and eighth chapters reveal his amazing skill as an expounder of the theory of sin and re-

demption; the twelfth chapter reveals him as a master-guide toward the elevation of daily conduct.

Whatever may be thought of Paul's knowledge of the nature of Christ, there can be no doubt of his profound acquaintance with the nature of man. Every man, woman, and child will find the seventh chapter an accurate mirror of the human heart. When Faust told Wagner that he had two souls within him, one lifting him aloft and the other dragging him down, he was simply making a poetic paraphrase of the immortal analysis by Paul. The following words might serve as a truthful autobiography for anybody: "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." It is just as certain that the human mind recognises Truth, Beauty, and Goodness as desirable goals, as it is certain that the instincts of human nature pull in the opposite directions.

The four letters to the Philippians, to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, are sometimes called the Prison Epistles, because it is thought that they were written while Paul was under detention at Rome. His imprisonment there probably lasted from 62 to

64. Paul had visited Philippi during the second missionary journey in 51-54. It was the first city in Europe in which he preached, and although he had been persecuted, his work was highly successful. This was where Paul and Silas were jailed, and their conduct during the earthquake—like that of the Salvation Army on the sinking steamer—caused some immediate conversions. Philippi was then a Roman city: hence the famous remark by the writer, "Our citizenship is in Heaven." Paul's lively interest in this church had been quickened by a personal tribute. The members made up a collection of money and gifts for Paul, and sent them to him by Epaphroditus. Any loving remembrance touched Paul deeply—for he had plenty of the other kind—and immediately upon the receipt of the presents he composed this letter. He lays no particular stress on any doctrinal or ethical point—a wide difference from the letter to the Galatians. Of all the epistles, this is the most affectionate, the most letter-like. He simply thanks them, talks over affairs in general, and gives such advice as happens to rise to the surface of his mind. This is one reason why the style is so disconnected

and so human. The keynote is Joy. He says tranquilly that the presents are most acceptable, and adds, "not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content."

The church at Colossæ, a town in Southern Phrygia, southeast of Ephesus, Paul had never seen. A new heresy was poisoning the members—a combination of Judaism and Gnosticism. The object of the letter was to fight this peril. As we might guess from its name, Gnosticism taught the supremacy of Knowledge. Faith will do well enough for children, invalids, and old ladies, but the intelligentsia need only science. In this sense Bazarov, Turgenev's nihilistic hero, was a Gnostic. Like all philosophers, they concerned themselves with the problem of evil, because evil is the most evident fact of all the facts in the world. They tried to relieve God of the responsibility for it, like some later philosophers; God could not therefore have immediately created the world. They thus propounded the following theory, and let it always be remembered that no one can invent a theory so absurd but that some can be found who

will believe it. I do not know which is the easier—to propound an absurdity, or to secure disciples for it. The Gnostic idea was that God produced one being, that another, and so on until the divine ingredient, becoming constantly weaker by dilution, like Puritanism in the New England twentieth-century blood, could scarcely be detected at all. Then one of these emanations was base enough to connect with matter and create the world. Thus there was a graduated series of Beings between God and the World; which gave the philosophers the welcome task of arranging a systematic hierarchy of angels. The origin of evil is not in man, but in matter; and as a necessary result, the way of salvation was through complete asceticism.

Mingled with this Gnosticism at Colossæ was Judaism, with all its ritual of laws, feasts, Sabbaths and other restrictions. News of these difficulties came to Paul. Apparently he first wrote a letter to Laodicea which has been lost, and then this one to the Colossians. His style, except for one grand outburst, is confused, possibly for two reasons. He is not very well up in Gnosticism, and he has never seen the

people he is addressing. At the end of the letter he wrote in his own hand

Remember my bonds.

The letter to Philemon is the only one written to an individual on a private matter. This is no church affair. It is exactly such a letter as one man would write to another on business. Perhaps Paul wrote other similar letters which are lost. This one shows the apostle in a natural, intimate vein. Onesimus, the slave of Philemon, had run away, and, in leaving his master, like Jessica, he had taken care not to depart empty-handed. Escaping to Rome, he had been attracted by Paul's teaching, had become converted, and apparently wished to do the square thing. He had a dog-like devotion to Paul, and had evidently made himself useful in a thousand ways. The apostle wanted to keep him; but he naturally felt it was his duty to return him to his owner, and the whole letter is a tactful intercession for the slave. The style is marked by courtesy, refinement, and consideration for both master and man. It is needless to add that all attempts to make of this epistle a type of the plan of salvation

are as absurd as to twist the passionate love lyrics of Solomon's Song into a symbol of Christ and the Church.

The epistle to the Ephesians, like that to the Colossians, is a circular letter: they are companion pieces. This is addressed wholly to the Gentiles. The subject is Church Unity. Reconcile all difficulties—both theological and social—and get together on the basis of devotion to the person of Christ. Observe how steadily Paul has grown in breadth of view, and in tenderness. Instead of scolding, he pleads. He grew in grace to the last day of his life.

This has sometimes been called the profoundest of his letters. He was writing to philosophic folk, who could understand deep thinking and metaphysical ideas. The style, like that of most philosophers, is confused and involved, much more so than in the letter to the Colossians; but it rises in a superb passage toward the close, where he enumerates the complete outfit for the Christian soldier.

The epistles to Timothy and to Titus are called the Pastoral Epistles, because they were written to these men in their capacity as Pastors of Churches. Many scholars think they were

not written by Paul. Ignorant of New Testament interpretation as I am, it would be an impertinence for me to express an opinion on this point. All I can say is, I am glad we have them, and I hope Paul wrote them. They were intended to guide Titus and Timothy in fundamental matters concerning Church government. They differ in language from the known epistles of Paul; but it is possible that Paul, like some other writers, occasionally went outside of his customary vocabulary. It is difficult to fit them in to any known period of our apostle's career of which we have definite information; and it seems as though the Church spoken of here had been more completely organised than is supposed to have been the case in Paul's lifetime.

Perhaps Paul, in a visit to the island of Crete, had tried to consolidate and strengthen the young Church. He seems to have left Titus behind to complete this work, and the letter gives the necessary directions. Titus was not a Jew. He was a Gentile whom Paul had run across years before. He was a Greek, and was one of the first Christian converts not circumcised. On Paul's memorable visit to Jerusalem,

when the question of circumcision was to be settled, Paul took Titus along as an example.

Titus seems to have had difficulties at Crete. The church was weak and filled with heretics and slackers and sensualists and scandal-mongers. Even one of their own prophets had said, "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." Paul's advice is definite and sensible, and contains a phrase that many who read the Bible only when they are sick or in danger, greet with recognition mingled with surprise. "Unto the pure all things are pure."

Timothy had been intimately associated with Paul, and is first mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of the Book of the Acts. His mother was a Jew. She had brought up her son in a good knowledge of the Scriptures. His father was a Greek. Although addressed to an individual, the letters to Timothy are not at all private in the sense of the word which fits the letter to Philemon. Paul evidently meant to have his advice read to the Church.

I confess without shame that the reason why I hope they were written by Paul is not because of their admonitions but simply because of their personal allusions, which bring the great

writer very close. I have always admired Montaigne's curiosity about the tastes and little peculiarities of men of genius. Winter was coming on; Paul was an old man, and felt the approaching frost in his bones. Thomas Gray wrote in one of his last letters, "Now I even tremble at an east wind." Paul wants his overcoat. "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee." He is not only cold, he is lonely. "Only Luke is with me." Perhaps Doctor Luke had occasion to employ his professional skill, for Paul writes under the shadow of death. "Take Mark, and bring him with thee." But above all, he wants to see Timothy again, and twice he implores him to hurry up. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me," and then, after much miscellaneous information, he writes again, "Do thy diligence to come before winter."

Instead of talking about the second coming of Christ, he talks about his own death, which he, like many other once hopeful adventists, finally is forced to face. But although there are moments of despondency and weakness in these last words, the trumpet blast in the

presence of the angel of death is like the clear tone of the slughorn of Childe Roland. It is a noble farewell from an old veteran, who has fought a good fight; it is a valediction forbidding mourning.

III

SHORT STORIES IN THE BIBLE

MUCH has been written in recent years about the art of the Short Story. One of our foremost contemporary American critics and men of letters, Professor Brander Matthews, in an interesting and penetrating discussion of the subject, has differentiated this form sharply both from the novel and from "the story that is short." Excellent examples of stories that are short are *Silas Marner*, *Daisy Miller*, *Taras Bulba*; but not one of these masterpieces could strictly be called a short story.

Those late Victorian Britons, Stevenson and Kipling, who were also poets and novelists, and who were saturated in the Bible, approximated perfection in the art of the short story. When I first read Stevenson's *Beach of Falesà*, I seemed to hear a strange throbbing undertone, an inexplicable accompaniment to the flow of the narrative. I stopped to discover what this

sound might be—it was the beating of my heart Many of Kipling's short stories are modern illustrations of the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs; he is fond of Biblical titles, and his familiarity with the Scriptures appears again and again.

American writers have excelled more often in the field of the Short Story than in any other. In novels, in poetry, and in drama, we are far behind England and the Continent; but we have contributed so many admirable specimens of the Short Story to the world's literature that in this department we may confidently challenge comparison. Professor Barrett Wendell says that American men of letters have had a more conscious sense of form than the British. We are perhaps closer to Continental models than they. And in the Short Story the sense of form is all-important.

The art of the Short Story seemed to come naturally to Americans. Washington Irving, our first distinctive man of letters, wrote tales of technical excellence. There are many pages in the longer works of Irving that have become obsolete; his pathos is thin, and his moralising flat. But *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of*

Sleepy Hollow are as good to-day as when first printed. Edgar Allan Poe has to his credit more than a score of masterpieces, the beauty of which cannot apparently be dulled by time. Nathaniel Hawthorne, with all of Poe's originality and inventive power, wrote a long list of short fictions, founded on the depths of moral truth, and rising from these foundations into the spiritual atmosphere of the fourth dimension. No novelist has gone more profoundly into the nature of sin than Hawthorne in the tiny sketch called *Ethan Brand*—in fact, I think a fine essay might be written by a student of theology on Hawthorne's conception of sin. A large portion of Bret Harte's work has already gone to limbo; but *The Luck of Roaring Camp* and *The Outcasts of Poker Flat* are as vivid and impressive to-day as when they first startled the world with their poignant pathos. Henry James is best known for his long novels; but he was also a master of the Short Story. In our own time no one has excelled the best work of O. Henry. He wrote in the twentieth-century vernacular; but he had the genius to combine an intense localism with a universal appeal. If any one doubts the greatness of this

American, one should reread *The Furnished Room*.

No better Continental model for the Short Story can be found than the work of French authors; they have had an army of pupils, and even the mighty Russians, who are not given to playing the game of follow-my-leader, learned something here. With the single exception of Dostoevski, all the great Russian writers, from Pushkin to Andreev, have practiced successfully the art of the Short Story. Chekhov's productions are amazing in their number, and in their high level of excellence. Sologub's are remarkable for their condensation, in that one respect resembling the specimens to be found in the New Testament: some of them fill only a page. Tolstoi's are directly founded on the Gospel narrative, and his masterpiece, *Where Love is there God is also*, is the nearest approach in modern times to the incomparable parables of our Lord; just as two novels by Dostoevski, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *The Idiot*, might fairly be taken as a Russian expansion of the Gospel according to John.

The Short Story must have unity, whereas some of the greatest novels, like *Anna Karenina*,

manage to do without it. The Short Story must be based on one event, or, as Professor Matthews expresses it, on a "series of emotions called forth by a single situation." The lyrical poems of Robert Browning are short stories told in verse; he probably invented more plots than any other writer, and it is interesting to recall the remark of one of the shrewdest cinema managers of our time, who emphatically declared, "Robert Browning is the greatest writer for the movies that ever lived."

Now as the Bible excels all other books in poetry, in prose historical narrative, in prophetic eloquence, in philosophy, political economy, and in worldly wisdom, so the finest Short Stories are to be found in the Bible. And these brief tales illustrate every phase of human nature. Just as I have repeatedly wished that I might go to the theatre and see a Shakespearian play without being familiar either with the plot or with the name of the author, so I heartily wish I might read for the first time the Bible stories, and judge them apart from the years of childhood training and instruction. An interesting and amusing illustration of the effect produced when these narratives salute

men's ears for the first time, was given in the *New York Times*, January 8, 1919. The Rt. Rev. John N. McCormick, Bishop of Western Michigan, who had been overseas in Red Cross Work, is quoted as follows:

"One of the chaplains in France told me that although every soldier had a small New Testament which went into his pack, he was having constant demands for the whole Bible in English. He had scoured the country for Bibles and the supply was not equal to the demand. Finally he asked a private why he wanted the whole Bible.

"'Because I want to read about the wars,' came the reply. 'The Old Testament is full of wars and I want to read those stories.'

"When one of the transports went over last Spring, the Chaplain, finding a group of men sitting together on the deck, with nothing to do, began to tell them stories. He just told them for their brilliant value as tales. And he told the story of Paul's shipwreck and those fourteen days in a typhoon when he was making his famous voyage to Rome. When he had finished, a man called out to him: 'Who was that guy?' The story-teller replied that it was

a man named Paul. The soldier went below and aroused his bunkie. 'The Chaplain was telling us a story up on deck about a fellow named Paul, and he was some man.'"

A few years ago a newspaper offered a prize for the best answer to the question, "Which is the finest short story ever written?" The prize was awarded to a well-known English writer, who voted for the story of the woman taken in sin. I find that this tale, as told in the Gospel by John, contains two hundred and five words.

I do not think any small boy ever forgets the story of Jacob and Esau. Nothing rankles in a boy's mind like injustice, unfair treatment. Furthermore, in spite of the intense blood-affection that unites brothers—instantly shown when any of them is attacked by a person outside the family—there is invariably a certain jealousy between two brothers of nearly the same age; and this jealousy is particularly sharp in the difficult matter of paternal distribution of awards. This ugly trait in human nature is the basis of the story of Jacob and Esau, and the story of the Prodigal Son. The most dangerous foe to parental discipline as to the discipline in

a boy's school is any suspicion of favouritism; and when the normal boy reads the story of Jacob and Esau, the trick played by the mother for Jacob's benefit, and the cruel disappointment of honest Esau when he arrives too late, the boy in his own heart identifies himself with the deceived huntsman—he *is* Esau. No amount of exegesis, no reminders of the historical importance of Jacob, no recital of Jacob's subsequent sufferings can ever make a boy forget Jacob's sinister methods; Jacob from that time forth is a swindler, and the boy must look elsewhere in the Bible for a hero. Observe how in this tale the height of dramatic power is reached with severe economy of words.

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold, now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison,

and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: and she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn;

I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau

his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times; he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given unto him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother: and it shall come to pass

when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

Esau inherited a good appetite for food from his father. Both were hearty eaters, and both were swindled through the love of eating: Isaac once, and Esau twice.

There is no better story in the Old Testament than the tale of Joseph and his brethren. Everyone is interested in clothes—boys and girls, old men and women; and the coat of many colours which Joseph wore when he was seventeen years old, is the first picturesque touch in a picturesque career. This gaudy plumage stimulated the envious hatred of his brothers which his vivid dream enlarged beyond endurance; when they threw the boy into the pit, they stripped the coat off, and added one more colour to the famous garment, the colour of blood, which was too much for old Jacob's nerves. The subsequent adventures of Joseph in Egypt are dramatic in the extreme; and it is an interesting commentary on human nature, that Joseph's emphatic refusal to betray his benefactor has given him from that time to this an undeserved reputation for priggishness that he will never live down. The

very name Joseph savours of pious rather than honourable behaviour—consider Joseph Surface, no doubt deliberately named. It is worth remembering, too, that Potiphar's wife is one of the first and most skillful of all the blackmailers recorded in criminal history.

Joseph became the Herbert C. Hoover of Egypt. He had the control of the food supply when food was short, and apparently had the sole power of determining rations. It was this official position that brought his brothers back to him, all unconscious as they bowed down and made obeisance that they were fulfilling the early dream. The passionate excitement of Joseph at the appearance of Benjamin and his inability to control his feelings, show how much stronger is family affection than any pride of place or any political honour. This is one of the greatest of all the great recognition scenes in literature; and the happy reunion of the whole family, father and brothers together, is one of the brightest pages in a book filled with tragedies of sin and pain.

After the city of Gibeon made peace with the children of Israel under General Joshua, the enemies of the latter were considerably

disquieted, and formed a league of nations against the invader. It was a formidable coalition; the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon made a solemn compact, encamped against Gibeon, and invested the town. The people of the besieged city managed to get word through to Joshua, who by forced marches arrived suddenly upon the scene and drove the enemy into confusion. While these battalions were in full retreat, they were attacked by celestial airplanes, or in other words, they suffered severely from a terrific hailstorm, which caused more casualties than Israel's weapons. Now in order that the curtain of night might not conceal the flying hosts, Joshua commanded the sun to stand still.

Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.

Here the chronicler, thinking perhaps the story may seem incredible to future readers, remarks conclusively, Is not this written in the book of Jasher?

So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day.

It must have seemed indeed a terribly long day to the discomfited hosts of the league of kings.

There are only two references in the Bible to the Book of Jasher—and they are tantalising, for no one knows what has become of this work, nor what kind of a work it was. It must have contained some splendid literature, judging from the citation here, and the one in the first chapter of the second book of Samuel.

Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.

Then follows the magnificent lamentation of David over Saul and Jonathan.

The obedience of the sun to Joshua is often regarded as a stunning miracle. But some years ago, while I stood reverently in front of the statue of Copernicus in Warsaw, I could not help thinking how much more enduring is his influence over the sun than that exercised by the famous fighter. Joshua commanded the sun to stand still for one day; but Coperni-

cus, after ages and ages in which the sun had regularly revolved around the earth, commanded the sun to stand still for the rest of time; and the obedient sun has not moved from that day to this.

The story of Gideon is as interesting as the story of Gibeon; and it is not only on adolescent examination-papers that the two are confused. I remember many years ago, when the authors of *The Unseen Universe* were in activity, they were attacked by some scientific authority, who, in ridiculing the old Bible narrative, spoke of the sun going down on *Gideon*. The delighted Bible apologists cheerfully admitted that such an event would indeed be a miracle; at least, they could not see how the sun could go down on Gideon without at least causing great personal inconvenience to that hero.

While Gideon is in many ways an attractive character, I think his courage has been overpraised. I am more impressed by his caution, by his racial capacity to drive a shrewd bargain, by his reluctance to move until success was assured. Gideon was the son of Joash, and when we first see him, he is threshing wheat secretly by the winepress, to hide it from the

powerful Midianites. To his amazement the angel of the Lord appears and salutes him as follows: The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. Gideon's reply is thoroughly characteristic: Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. Then follows divine reassurance; but this is not enough for Gideon. He demands a sign, and soon receives one that ought to have convinced the most skeptical mind in the world. But Gideon, the true ancestor of all those who come from Missouri, puts a fleece of wool in the floor, and suggests that if the dew fall only on the fleece, while all the earth beside is dry, then he will believe. On the morrow the miracle has happened; he wrings a bowl-full of water out of the fleece, while all around the ground is dry. One can see the expression on his face as he makes the further request that on the following night everything be *wet* except the fleece. The divine patience is inexhaustible, for now the fleece becomes a little island in a

sea of dew. After this triple trial of the Lord's message, Gideon goes along with his host, and the three hundred men are selected by the famous experiment of lapping the water. The impartial Bible chronicler narrates without comment the following facts, which prove that uncertainty and fear yet lingered in the soul of this chronic doubter.

And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it unto thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant, down to the host: and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host.

After the overwhelming victory, Gideon followed the two kings Zebah and Zalmunna, with his three hundred men, who, as the historian remarked in a phrase that was to be memorable, were faint, yet pursuing. As the people of Succoth declined to give his little army any bread, Gideon adopted a stern pedagogical method.

And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

Tennyson alludes to this switching in his sonnet on Buonaparte.

at Trafalgar yet once more

We taught him: late he learned humility
Perforce, like those whom Gideon school'd with briers.

Zebah and Zalmunna spoke well and behaved well in the presence of death, and their regal speech and manner should not be forgotten. Gideon asked them,

What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks.

Gideon had many wives, seventy sons, and in the Bible language, died in a good old age. As soon as he was dead, the children of Israel forsook all his teachings and worshiped Baal. His illegitimate son, Abimelech, while not an admirable character, for he slew his seventy legitimate brothers on one stone, had more natural courage than his father. He was a desperado, and had the qualities of his defects. He was besieging a city, and there was a strong tower within the walls: thither fled all the men and women, barred the gate of the tower, and stood together on the top, looking down at furious Abimelech. He, who had formerly brought Birnam wood to Dunsinane, attempted to set fire to this edifice, perhaps in the same fashion.

And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armour-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

There is something about this villain that compels admiration.

The story of Jephthah's daughter has made an indelible impression on the world, although her ultimate fate still rests in doubt—was she slain, or merely condemned to remain unmarried? Byron, who wrote one of the worst of the many poems inspired by this girl, refused to be drawn by a correspondent into a controversy on the subject. "Whatever may be the absolute state of the case," said the poet, "I am innocent of her blood." And on another occasion he remarked, "Well, my hands are not imbrued in her blood!" The fearless realism of the narrator in the book of Judges and his impartiality are plainly shown in the first verse that begins this famous tale:

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.

Certainly one of the most dramatic scenes in the Bible is where the captain's daughter—his only child—came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances. The captain rent his clothes, and cried, "Alas, my daughter! thou hast

brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.”

No angel intervened, as in the case of Abraham and Isaac; and this splendid girl met her fate with resolution, thinking more of her father's victory than of her own sorrow. It is curious, that although she is one of the most familiar characters in history, the historian neglected to mention her name.

That tedious old fool, Polonius, who, according to Coleridge, is “the personification of the memory of wisdom no longer possessed,” had apparently forgotten the old story; when Hamlet quoted the English ballad on the theme, the aged counsellor was quite at a loss.

It is a fair surmise that Shakespeare in his own mind condemned Jephthah for keeping the vow; for in the play *King Henry the Sixth, Part III*, Clarence impetuously declares

I will not ruinate my father's house,
Who gave his blood to lime the stones together,
And set up Lancaster. Why, trow'st thou, Warwick,
That Clarence is so harsh, so blunt, unnatural,
To bend the fatal instruments of war
Against his brother and his lawful king?

Perhaps thou wilt object my holy oath:
To keep that oath were more impiety
Than Jephthah's, when he sacrificed his daughter.

Faust is the story of the man who regretted his compact with the Devil; Jephthah regretted his compact with Jehovah.

Perhaps among the innumerable references to this tragedy that mark the pages of English literature, the finest tribute to the heroine is to be found in Tennyson's *Dream of Fair Women*.

“Leaving the olive-gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

“The light white cloud swam over us. Anon
We heard the lion roaring from his den;
We saw the large white stars rise one by one,
Or, from the darken'd glen,

“Saw God divide the night with flying flame,
And thunder on the everlasting hills.
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief became
A solemn scorn of ills.

“When the next moon was roll'd into the sky,
Strength came to me that equall'd my desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire!

“It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father’s will;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

“Moreover it is written that my race
Hew’d Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minneth.” Here her face
Glow’d, as I look’d at her.

She lock’d her lips; she left me where I stood:
“Glory to God,” she sang, and past afar,
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning-star.

The first great illustration of a modern fashion in literary art is the dramatic story of Rahab, who hid the spies on the top of her house, and was duly rewarded in the day of reckoning. She is highly complimented in the Epistle to the Hebrews, by being included among those who triumphed through faith; while this writer mentions her as an example of faith, the apostle James calls her to the stand as one justified by works. Possibly our Lord had Rahab in mind when He declared with terrible force to the chief priests, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go

into the kingdom of God before you. The professional religious hypocrite is placed lower in the moral scale than the professional sinner.

It is curious that many who attack the Bible to-day attack it for the very virtues they praise most strenuously in modern writers—I refer to its calm realism and unashamed presentment of all the facts in the lives of Old Testament characters, where no attempt is made to win the favour of the reader by the suppression or glossing over of gross and heinous faults. Samson is surely a sympathetic character; every reader loves him. Milton did not hesitate to make a superb protagonist out of him, and Delilah has been a synonym for wickedness, treachery, and deceit. But the Bible narrator does not defend Samson; his downfall was his own fault for being such an idiot. In reading Milton one would imagine that Samson was some holy elder in the church who, despite his sharp self-accusations, had been cruelly deceived; but the Bible is more objective, and puts down the good and the bad in this giant's career without comment. One naturally feels a certain sweetness in his revenge when he pulled the building upon his jeering

enemies. Perhaps it is not impertinent to recall the jest of our American humorist, John Kendrick Bangs, who said that Samson was a famous practical joker and that his last joke brought down the house.

The story of Balak and Balaam is one of the first instances in history where a political boss discovers to his chagrin that he cannot control his most influential orator. With bribery and flattery he invited Balaam to come and denounce Israel; but Balaam, as has happened more than once since then, will not play the rôle assigned to him, because he hears an inner voice of duty louder than the blandishments of Balak. The modern political analogy is complete; for after two severe disappointments, Balak said unto Balaam, *Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all*—I don't know why I find that remark so amusing, except that I can hear Balak's tone so plainly—"If you find you can't help me, do at all events stay neutral, keep your mouth shut." But the disappointed impresario is to regret even more bitterly that he drew this obstinate speaker into the campaign; Balaam will be neither an advocate nor silent, but pours out a flood of oratory for the

other side, winding up with the rather strange invitation to Balak to come and visit, "and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days." The invitation does not seem particularly alluring, yet Balak, who is one of the few men in the Bible characterised by undeviating stupidity, seems to have accepted it.

The famous story of Ahab and Naboth's vineyard reminds us of the towering insolence and uncontrolled greed of the German Emperor, William II: and the answer of Naboth, who knew he was no match in power with the king, reminds us of the reply made to a certain request, by Belgium—And Naboth said unto Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

Peevish King Ahab went on a hunger strike, but Jezebel knew how to manage both the executive and the judicial departments of the government. Whatever of truth there may be in Kipling's general assertion that the female of the species is more deadly than the male, there can be no doubt that Jezebel was a more formidable foe than Ahab. Like Macbeth, he let I dare not wait upon I would; but Jezebel

was even bolder than Lady Macbeth, for instead of trusting her husband to carry out her plans, she attended to the matter herself. The sequel to this story of avarice and murder is fittingly tragic. Elijah prophesies that Jezebel's body shall be eaten by dogs, but the Bible narrative turns aside to discuss so many other matters that we forget—as perhaps Jezebel did—the fate foretold. Suddenly, many chapters farther along, when the reader is absorbed in the story of Joram and Ahaziah, Jehu appears on the scene. His furious driving is an indication of his imperious and impetuous temperament.

And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. And Joram said, Take a horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, Is it peace? So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again. Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? And Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the watchman told, saying,

He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously. . . . And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three. . . . And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses, and he trode her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet, and the palms of her hands. Wherefore they came again and told him. And he said, This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant, Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel, shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel.

The recent conquest of Palestine by the British army under General Allenby, has brought vividly to the minds of many not only the famous prophecies in Isaiah and in other books, but the old stories. To imaginative soldiers, Jerusalem, Jezreel, and other places must have seemed full of ghosts. This idea is

the inspiration of a poem by Thomas Hardy, published in the London *Times* in 1918.

JEZREEL

Did they catch as it were in a Vision at shut of the day—
When their cavalry smote through the ancient Es-
draelon Plain,
And they crossed where the Tishbite stood forth in his
enemy's way—
His gaunt, mournful Shade as he bade the king haste
off amain?

On war-men at this end of time—even on Englishmen's
eyes—
Who slay with their arms of new might in the long-
ago place,
Flashed he who drove furiously? . . . Ah, did the
phantom arise
Of that queen—of that proud Tyrian woman who
painted her face?

Faint-marked they the words, "Throw her down,"
rise from Time eerily
Spectre-spots of the blood of her body on some
rotten wall?
And the thin note of pity that came: "A king's daughter
is she."
As they passed where she trodden was once by the
chargers' footfall?

Could such be the hauntings of men of to-day, at the
cease

Of pursuit, at the dusk-hour, ere slumber their
senses could steal?

Enghosted seers, kings—one on horseback who asks
“Is it peace?”

Yea, strange things and spectral may men have be-
held in Jezreel!

One of the most simple and beautiful of the short stories in the Bible is the account of the mighty man Naaman, and how the little maid, an Israelite captive among the Syrians, gave witness to the power of the man of God in the household of His enemies. Then after the cure of leprosy was complete, and the great physician had refused any fee, and had settled the question of religious courtesy for his distinguished visitor, the charming story has a tragic close, all the more stern and solemn because the reader is unprepared for such a conclusion. Never shall I forget the first time I read this chapter, and my horror at the last sentence:

And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Elijah and Elisha were pitiless when the occasion seemed to demand drastic methods; and

I am afraid that their treatment of persons who did not pay sufficient respect to their dignity had a not altogether salutary effect on the bearing of our Puritan ancestors. Elijah did not hesitate to burn alive two companies of men along with their captains; but I think the most depressing page in the Bible is the conduct of Elisha, who, having worn his new honours only a short time, receives a fusillade of personal comments from the little gamins who came out of the city streets. The type is eternal; these boys are the same in all countries and in all ages.

There came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head: go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

I remember how this story affected me in my childhood; and how my mother, who seemed for some reason to feel it necessary to defend *all* the acts of the prophet, reasoned with me in a way that certainly did not convince me and which I am now sure did not convince her. Honest, faithful, realistic Bible, putting down

with appalling bluntness the good and the bad in a man's life! Even professional prophets had their off days—and lost their temper with unfortunate consequences to those in the immediate vicinity. But can't you see the Colonial Puritan reading aloud this incident at morning prayers, with a final look over his glasses at the children?

The book of Esther, the book of Daniel, and the Apocrypha abound in admirable specimens of the art of the Short Story, where, as is commonly the rule elsewhere in the Bible, dramatic intensity is gained by the absence of rhetorical flourishes. In the famous story of the writing on the wall in the book of Daniel, the fairness of the doomed king ought to be recorded to his credit. Belshazzar announced that if Daniel could interpret the writing, he should be clothed in scarlet, have a chain of gold about his neck, and become the third ruler in the kingdom. Daniel's interpretation was not only uncomplimentary to the king's character, but also a stern prediction of his ruin. Yet although Daniel, with studied insolence, had declined the rewards in advance, no sooner was his indictment completed than it is followed

by the simple words, Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Let us remember that if this royal Pagan could not keep his kingdom, he kept his word.

Although the Old Testament is filled with short stories of great power and beauty, it is when we turn to the New Testament that we find the supreme examples of the art. The supremacy of our Lord as a spiritual teacher is cordially recognised even by many who do not believe in His divine mission; but he was supreme in other ways as well. The distinguished American playwright, Augustus Thomas, has in an admirable essay, emphasised the physical prowess and endurance of Jesus Christ; from every point of view He is not only the Teacher, but the Model for all men. We should remember also that He was a supreme literary artist. The short stories that He produced with such colloquial ease are the finest in the world; they are, indeed, the despair of all professional men of letters. No tales ever written combine such

amazing power with such impressive economy in the use of words. The parables are the perfection of realistic art; the tremendous paradoxes are driven home with a simplicity that has the apparent unconsciousness of a flower. The Mediæval Church made a liturgical drama out of the story of the wise and foolish virgins; the supper at Simon's house is as though it happened yesterday; the three famous parables dealing with money are all equally vivid,—I mean the woman who lost the piece of silver, the men who were entrusted with the talents, and the labourers who were hired for a certain sum. No one can forget the two men named Lazarus; Lazarus who died and went to heaven, and Lazarus who died and returned to earth. The resurrection of Lazarus has had an astonishingly germinal effect on literature from that day to this. Tennyson pauses and reflects about him in *In Memoriam*; one of Browning's greatest poems deals with his spiritual transformation; our American poet, Anna Branch, was inspired by this tale to write one of her most dramatic pieces; and no one who reads Dostoevski's marvellous novel, *Crime and Punishment*, will fail to be im-

pressed by the scene where Sonia with choking voice reads aloud the story of Lazarus to the despairing criminal.

Sonia opened the book and found the place. Her hands were shaking, her voice failed her. Twice she tried to begin and could not bring out the first syllable. "Now a certain man was sick named Lazarus of Bethany," she forced herself at last to read, but at the third word her voice broke like an overstrained string. There was a catch in her breath. Raskolnikov saw in part why Sonia could not bring herself to read to him and the more he saw this, the more roughly and irritably he insisted on her doing so. He understood only too well how painful it was for her to betray and unveil all that was her *own*. He understood that these feelings really were her *secret treasure*, which she had kept perhaps for years, perhaps from childhood, while she lived with an unhappy father and a distracted stepmother crazed by grief, in the midst of starving children, and unseemly abuse. . . . "And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth." She read loudly, cold and trembling with ecstasy, as though she were seeing it before her eyes. . . . She still trembled feverishly. The candle-end was flickering out in the battered candlestick, dimly lighting up in the poverty-stricken room the murderer and the harlot who had so strangely been reading together the eternal book.

Jesus not only raised Lazarus from the dead—He did more: He gave him immortal life on earth, in all languages and in all nations.

The parable of the Prodigal Son is not properly named. The word “prodigal” occurs nowhere in the Bible. The reason why this is called the Parable of the Prodigal Son is because most readers still suppose it to be merely a story of sin, repentance, and fatherly love. But it is really the story of a certain man who had two sons; and there is just as much emphasis on the elder as on the younger brother. The Puritan conception of sin was generally so narrow that our ancestors actually believed that the rich farmer had two boys, one of whom was bad and one good. Now as a matter of fact he had two bad sons, both very bad, of whom the elder was the worse. Let us grant the selfishness and debauchery of the younger. Perhaps he would never have come home at all if his money had not given out, sharpening the importunate spur of hunger. And it was by no accident that his father met him on his return. The father was sure that the boy would come home again, and who knows how many days he had gone forth to await his

appearance? When the ashamed lad tried to apologise, the father made him feel at once that his motive in returning was of no importance compared with the overwhelming joy of the fact. If we could have back from the grave those that we love, should we care very much what motive brought them?

Now to regard the elder son as good and his brother as bad is surely to misunderstand profoundly the true significance of this marvellous story. The elder brother was so case-hardened by selfish respectability that no force of love could break through his armour; his petulance is the outward sign of ineradicable and incurable vice. When did I ever transgress thy commandment? When have I ever done anything wrong? . . . That negative conception of virtue has been responsible for the error of all errors concerning the beauty of holiness. Is virtue then negative? If his father had not been so obstreperously happy in his boy's return, he might have asked this cold-hearted prig some embarrassing questions.

Our Lord's matchless stories are the purest realism; and in the strange book of Revelation we find the wildest romanticism. In the year

1918, the sudden fame of Ibañez's novel set everybody to rereading the sixth chapter of the most mystical work in the Bible, where the four horsemen of the Apocalypse appear.

And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow: and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth: and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

And I beheld, and lo a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.

As the vision of the four horses inspired a popular twentieth-century novel, so the story of the One who had on his vesture and on his thigh written, *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, gave to the verse of the twentieth century a thrilling poem by that modern mystic Francis Thompson, the poem called *The Veteran of Heaven*.

The story of the famous Beast has set many would-be mathematicians to weary months of calculation, in the attempt to find a fulfillment

of the oracular description. Mr. Birrell somewhere alludes to that large and highly interesting class of persons who prefer statistics to poetry. It is curious to reflect that the chief interest of many in the book of Revelation is to juggle with figures, just as there are those whose main energy as they read the pages of Shakespeare is to hunt for a cipher.

As the Bible day by day exerts its regenerating and vivifying spiritual influence on the souls of men, so its sublime and homely poetry and prose recreate new masterpieces in all literatures, which rise from the inexhaustible spring of living water in the Word of Life.

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