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Religious.

The Babler Silenced.

EXTRACT FROM THE NOTE-BOOK OF REV.
W. A. HOBBS.

It was six o'clock in the evening, and I had just sat down in the verandah, thoroughly wearied with the multitudinous engagements of a long busy day. The order had just been given to the khansamah to bring the dinner. Two young men with heads erect, and twirling their walking-sticks entered the garden-gate, advanced to where I was sitting and gave their salaam. Before I could say a word one of them, in tolerable English, thus addressed me: "Sir, my house is at Nisobindipore (a village six miles distant). I know English; my mind goes in a virtuous direction; day by day I search for the knowledge of God. I have read your Bible, but I do not like it; neither do I put confidence in it. It contains many things contrary to reason; it shows God to us in a horrible aspect—it abounds in contradictions—many parts of it are obscure; I have read some chapters ten times and cannot understand a fraction of it. I have come to discuss with you, sir, and I will be able to shew that your Bible is not more worthy of regard than the Veds in which Hindoos trust. Of course, every book has something good in it, but this is quite a different thing to maintaining, as you Christians do, that the Book was given to men by God." At this point I thought it well to stop him, for I felt that this volubility just at my dinner hour was all lost upon me, so changing the subject I quietly enquired, "Baboo, what time did you get up this morning, and how much work have you done to-day?" "I arose at seven," was his reply, "and at once walked here to attend a case I have in the Monsiffs court, after which I took some refreshment at the house of a friend." "Then it appears, Baboo, that I arose, had my morning walk, early breakfast, and conducted our worship, before you opened your eyes. Since then I have been busy nearly the whole day in the sun, and am now very tired and hungry. As a general rule I never do any more work after I take my seat in this verandah in the evening. To converse upon the subjects you have objected to would take half a day, so please come to-morrow morning at seven o'clock, and I will listen to all you wish to say, Salaam."

THE VISIT.—Bengalees are never punctual, except from absolute necessity; so next day, instead of coming at seven a. m., he made his appearance at three p. m. He brought two companions with him, one of whom understood English a little, the other not at all. He was very anxious to discuss in English, but, as I always replied to him in Bengali, he too soon found it necessary to do the same. After a few casual remarks I said to him somewhat suddenly, "Baboo, if an Englishman were to say that all Bengalees are a set of rogues, what would you think of him?" "Well, sir, I should think, first, that he had told a lie; and, second, I should think that Englishmen are more uncharitable and over-bearing than I had imagined them to be; what is your own opinion, sir?" "I should think, Baboo, that such a person ought to be content with exposing rogues wherever he found them, but not proceed to take away the character of a whole people because some of them were bad." "Just so, sir, in fact we were both crossing the river in one boat, but you jumped on the bank first; you have exactly expressed my opinion." "I am glad that we are thus far agreed, Baboo, but I want you to see why I asked you such a curious question. Last night you attacked our Holy Bible north, south, east and west. You said its statements are contradictory—God's character in it is presented to his creatures under revolting aspects—its teachings are contrary to reason,—and what more you would have said, but that I wanted my dinner and stopped you, I cannot tell. Now you are not justified in condemning the Bible in the wholesale way you have done any more than an Englishman would be justified in calling all your countrymen a set of rogues. If I am not interrupted, Baboo, I can spare you two hours; what portions of the Bible can you prove to be untrue?" "Sir, I could name

fifty objections in a breath." "Indeed, Baboo! your unbelief seems to be as strong as your memory is good. Please state your fifty objections, I will note them down and try and answer them all."

THE OBJECTIONS.—This, taking him at his word, evidently discomposed him, however he bravely made the attempt; the following was the medley presented:—"1. Everybody knows that the sun is the source of light. The Bible says that on the first day God said 'Let there be light,' and there was light; we read of morning and evening being the first day; yet, further on in the same chapter, we find that God did not make the sun, and moon, and stars until the fourth day. Sir, a child can see that this is a downright contradiction." "Go on, Baboo." "2. The Bible says that Moses was on the top of a mountain with God for forty days and ate nothing. It is impossible! no man can go without food more than eight or ten days." "Go on, Baboo." "3. The Bible says that Noah was the only righteous man on earth and so God sent a flood. Now if all were bad except Noah, why were not all his family drowned as well as other bad persons. To believe the Bible would shew God to be partial. Who can trust in a partial God?" "Go on, Baboo." "The Bible says that the sun stood still once over some valleys. Such a sentence is opposed to mathematics." "Go on, Baboo." "5. Some parts of the Bible are full of venetual sentences quite inconsistent with the character of an all-merciful God." "So is the penal code, Baboo, but you know it is good for Bengal nevertheless." After a little delay he proceeded. "6. There is something about three men being thrown into a fire and not being burnt. This is evidently untrustworthy, for it is against all experience. I have heard that some christians have burnt others occasionally; why did not God preserve them too?" "I cannot tell, Baboo; if I give you land rent free am I bound to give all my land rent free? but go on, Baboo. You said the Bible revealed God in a horrible aspect to his creatures, what did you refer to?" "Ah, sir, that is my strong castle, I must not forget that." He continued:—"7. 'Sir, you are a merciful Englishman. If at the time of the mutiny, your countrymen had destroyed the whole nation of the Hindoos because some of the husbands and fathers had rebelled, what would you say to such wild beasts?' "I will tell you presently, Baboo, go on." "8. 'Sir, can you live without air?' "That is an abrupt question Baboo, why do you ask it?" "Because, sir, my next question depends upon the answer you give." "Then allow me first Baboo, to ask you can any creature live without air?" "No, sir, the atmosphere is essential to all life; when creatures cease to breathe they cease to live." "So you say Baboo. Let us see if the boat you have built will sink or swim. When the bear becomes dormant for half the year, insensible to hunger and lost to consciousness, does he breathe? In places where the sea is four miles deep, the bed of the sea is covered with myriads of little living creatures who live in the mud, do they breathe? if so it is evident that in certain conditions of existence very little air suffices, then why could not Jonah in some mysterious way breathe through the fish? for this I fancy is the objection which you are labouring to bring out." "Yes, sir, you have guessed rightly, but your questions so puzzle me that I do not wish to press the point." "Very well, Baboo, then please go on to the next objection; as yet you have only given ten per cent. of what you promised." "9. 'The account of Christ's birth is puzzling and unnatural, moreover there was no need for it, God is not tied down to a set of regulations, he can pardon sin if he chooses without any Jesus Christ. I cannot recollect any more objections just now, sir, but I have heard of many more which to me seem very powerful.'"

ANSWERS.—"Well, Baboo, half-an-hour is gone already, let us now get to work. I will take your objections in the order in which you have given them, lest, if I make a selection you should think that I was anxious to pick out the easiest of them; your first objection was in regard to what you consider a contradiction in the first chapter of Genesis. You say that the sun is a source of light, that God created light (so the Bible says) on the first day, yet it was on the fourth day that he

made the sun. This seems to you to be a contradiction, so you conclude that the Bible cannot be true. Now, Baboo, listen to my explanation; this is not the first time that I have had to shew Bengalees that they do not understand this subject. Everybody knows (or may know) that the sun is 1,384,000 times bulkier than our earth; moreover many of the stars, though they appear so small, are even larger than the sun. Now, to imagine that all the stars and the sun were created simply to light up our little world seems to be unreasonable, for the stars give scarcely any light, though some of them are a million times larger than our earth. Now if any one were to tell you that a city 1,384,000 as large as Magourah was built to supply Magourah with food and necessaries, and that in addition to this huge city 10,000 others existed for this sole purpose, scattered over the various nations of the world, would you not laugh at such statements and conclude that the man was mad? Just so, it is not surprising that learned people should smile when they hear any one contend that the sun and all the stars were created simply to give light to the earth. The fact of there being morning and evening from the first to the fourth day shews that the world had light from the first day; morning and evening is produced by the revolution of the earth on its own axis; we cannot conceive of day and night being brought about in any other way. The inference is that the course of the world has been always as it is now. If so, then, it was so from the first day to the fourth, which proves demonstrably that the sun was made before the first day. But you will here urge then why does the Bible state, in the history of the fourth day's work, that God made two great lights and all the stars to give light to the earth? I will tell you, Baboo. There is nothing much amiss in the words God made two great lights, though it would have saved much discussion had a more definite word been used instead of the word made. The simple matter of fact is that you have limited the meaning of the word 'made' to created, forgetting that whilst it does mean created, it has other common meanings beside. This is common to all languages. Take the Bengali word 'goon,' the dictionary gives 14 different meanings; the word bhab has a quarter of a hundred; the word tejash has 34. A very common meaning of the word 'made,' is to appoint, and 'God appointed two great lights' is the meaning of the words which you regard as making a contradiction. If you were to hear that Joynath Shein had been made judge of Kooshtee, you would not imagine that the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal had just created him for that work, but that he had appointed him to the office of a judgeship. The Bible (at least the Old Testament), was originally written in Hebrew, and the English and Bengali are only translations. If there is any doubt about the meaning of any word in a translated Bible, we turn to the Hebrew Bible and get the exact meaning. The exact meaning of the Hebrew word in the passage we are talking about, and which in the English version is printed 'made,' is not created, but 'appointed.'

EXPOSITIONS.—"Bearing this in mind let us look at the 1st chapter of Genesis and see if really there is any contradiction. We find "1. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, but the earth was without form, and void, and covered with darkness and water.' We are not to suppose, however, that darkness existed because there was no sun (the earth could not have existed in its orbit without the attraction of the sun) but probably by reason of the dense fogs which hung perpetually over the world's vast marsh."

"2. When God on the first day said 'Let there be light,' at his command the beams of the sun began to penetrate the mighty fog banks, and a kind of daylight broke in upon the world."

"2. On the second day the action of the sun formed the firmament of clouds and the sun's rays penetrated further still."

"4. On the third day the atmosphere was brighter still."

"5. On the fourth day the mists were effectually broken up. The body of the sun, moon, and stars were seen, and God knowing that in two days more he would create man, and that the years of foggy eclipse had gone

for ever, appointed these beautiful lights to regularly bring about day and night, and be to the men on earth for signs and for seasons and for days and for years.

"What is there irrational about this, Baboo? Is it not just as an intelligent man would conclude that it should be?" The Baboo, who with his friends had been listening with fixed attention, seeing that I had concluded, smilingly rejoined—"Sir, I am delighted, we have never had such an explanation before. Pray, is this explanation known to any other English Padre Sahibs, (Missionaries), or is it an interpretation which you have discovered?" "No, Baboo, I have not discovered it, I learned it from others wiser than myself." "And did the gentlemen who taught you, sir, believe that the word 'made' ought to be printed 'appointed?'" "I really cannot tell you, Baboo; why are you so very anxious to know?" "Because, sir, the magistrate will not be bound by the statement of one man, he wants two witnesses." "If that is what you want, Baboo, if you will sit here for five minutes I think I can find a second proof to give you." After an absence of ten minutes I rejoined them, remarking, "Baboo, you know English, look at this book, it is entitled 'Scripture and Geology.' Its author is Dr. John Pye Smith, a teacher of young Padre Sahibs. You may judge of his great learning by all the letters appended to his name, D.D., L.L.D., F.R.S., F.G.S. If he says the same as I have told you will you be satisfied?" "Yes, sir, two learned gentlemen would not say the same thing if there were not good reason to think it true." "Be that as it may, Baboo, listen to what he says, he is speaking of the sun and moon being made on the fourth day (p. 256). 'The heavenly bodies are represented not as being at that time created (for the word which occurs in verses 1 and 27 is not used here), but made, that is constituted or appointed to be luminaries, for such is the meaning of the word used.' Are you satisfied, Baboo?" "On this point, sir, the sun of knowledge has shone into my mind, my objection has been thoroughly repelled. Indeed, sir, I speak truly." "Very well, Baboo, then let us push on with the next on the list."

The Negro capable of cultivation.

There have been many conjectures as to the capability of the Negro mind receiving as high cultivation as the other varieties of mankind. In subjects connected with the use of language they have been long known to excel, but in mathematics it has been doubted if with equal advantages they were able to stand beside the Caucasian race. The following article from the N. Y. Tribune would seem to decide the question, so far as it concerns those receiving instruction in the Institution referred to:—

If that large class of Americans, imported and native, who have been educated to express their hatred of equal rights and their prejudice against the race by mouthing with hot rage, or airy contempt the word "Nigger!" could be compelled to visit in detachments the Philadelphia Institute for Colored Youths, on Shippen street, they would speedily get cured of the false ideas upon which slavery in the United States sought a logical and lawful foundation, and which now inspire the opponents of impartial suffrage to resist the extension of the ballot to the black man.—We visited this school last week, and for two days witnessed its annual commencement exercises. We saw there abundant evidence:

I. That under the management and instruction of colored teachers, male and female, there is in Philadelphia a school for the education of girls and boys in the Latin and Greek Classics, the Mathematics, History, Geography and Composition, which is fully equal to the best of the endowed academies of Massachusetts and New Hampshire. This is saying a great deal, but we will stand by it.

II. We saw that under the development of this culture, favored by the strong social position which the colored population in Philadelphia have attained in that freest of our great cities, there were one hundred and eighty-one boys and girls of African descent as intelligent, as self-respectful, as well-mannered, as well-dressed, and as promising as the same number of school children in any of the best schools in New England. To be more