

Popular Ignorance of the Bible.

BY REV. J. T. SUNDERLAND, M. A.

A Bible is found in nearly every home in Canada. So, too, a Bible lies in every Christian pulpit, as the great book from which every preacher is expected to read religious lessons regularly to his people, and to choose texts on which to base his discourses. Not less in the Sunday school and the work of religious education is it the book everywhere made central and conspicuous.

Under such circumstances it would naturally be supposed that practically everybody must be well acquainted with the Bible—that whatever else anyone allows himself to be ignorant of, here at least he will be found intelligent.

Is this supposition true? Go about the land, among all classes of the people, and will you find a knowledge of the book corresponding to the outward deference paid it?

I very much fear not. I fear that much of the Bible display which we see is really a cover for Bible ignorance, and that many even of those who give the sacred volume the most conspicuous place in their homes, and would be most shocked by seeing a minister read from any other book in his pulpit, have little knowledge of what the Bible really is, where it came from, or what it actually contains. It is a great deal easier to make a fetish of a book than it is to become intelligent about it.

Few things have ever surprised me more than the revelations that have come to me again and again, in all sorts of ways, of the ignorance of the Bible that exists in the minds of men and women all about us.

Regarding this central book, not only of our religion, but of our whole Christian civilization, multitudes of persons—not only the poor and the comparatively illiterate, but the well-to-do, the cultured, graduates of colleges, persons who in other directions have read widely—manifest a want of knowledge that is extreme, that subjects them frequently to embarrassment, that puts them at a serious disadvantage in reading and in conversation, and that is wholly without excuse among men or women claiming even moderate intelligence.

Some one enquired of a colored man in one of the Southern States what progress he was making in learning to read. "Oh," he exclaimed with pride, "I'm getting along first rate. I'm out of the Bible and into the newspaper." It is to be feared that the majority of Anglo-Saxons get out of the Bible and into the newspaper sadly early.

Two or three years ago the president of an American college gave an account in The New York Independent of an experiment which he had just been making in his freshman class, with a view to testing the knowledge of the Bible possessed by young men entering college. There were 34 members in the class. He wrote out on the blackboard 22 extracts from Tennyson. Each one of these extracts contained an allusion to some Scripture event, or Scripture scene, or Scripture passage, supposably familiar to everybody. The young men averaged about 20 years of age. They were the sons of lawyers, teachers, doctors, preachers, merchants, farmers. They had grown up in well-to-do homes, and more than half of them were church members. What was the result of the experiment?

Nine of the 34 failed to understand the quotation, "My sin was as a thorn among the thorns that girt thy brow." Eleven did not know what was referred to by "the manna in the wilderness." Sixteen knew nothing about the "wrestling of Jacob with the angel." Twenty-six were ignorant of Joshua's moon, and 28 of "Jonah's gourd." Twenty-two were unable to explain the allusion to Baal. One thought that Baal was a priest who put Christians to death. Nineteen had apparently never read the idyll of Ruth and Boaz. Eighteen did not know the meaning of "Egyptian darkness." Twenty-four were unable to write anything about "Jacob's ladder." Sixteen could not explain what was meant by "the deathless angel seated in the vacant tomb." Thirty-two of the 34 young men had never heard of the shadow turning back on the dial for Hezekiah's lengthening life. One of them, trying to explain the matter, thought that Hezekiah stopped the sun. One young man explained the mark set on Cain by saying that he was a farmer, and had to work hard. And so it went on to the end.

Nor is this ignorance of the Bible confined to young men. I have just been reading the experience of a teacher of young ladies. Condensing her statement, it is as follows: History is a department constantly needing side lights thrown upon it from the Bible. When Babylon is to be studied, I always take a Bible into my classroom and give a reading about Daniel. But what I read about him, or about Belshazzar or Neuchadnezzar, is generally news to my pupils.

In connection with science I sometimes speak about the attempted reconciliation of the biblical and the evolutionary theories of creation. But what is all I can say but words, mere words, to young

ladies unacquainted with the story of creation in Genesis?

In geography, I chance to say of certain places that they are as far apart as Dan form Beersheba. But what does that mean to pupils who do not know Palestine?

Literature, of all branches, to be quickly appreciated, demands familiarity with the Bible. One day I said to my class, concerning some doubtful plays of Shakespeare's, that they were apocryphal, like certain Scripture books. But I found that only a small part of the class had ever heard of the Apocrypha.

It is a pleasure for me to hold up Macaulay as a master of style. All goes well until I begin to call attention to his frequent and masterly use of Scripture quotations and Scripture allusions, and then a blank and helpless look begins to creep over the faces of more of my students than I like to confess.

I note in the popular magazines some Bible allusions, such as "driving like Jehu," "smiting as Samson did the Philistines," "Jephthah's vow," "Jeremiah," the "friendship of David and Jonathan," and "Mordecai at the gate." One would suppose that these allusions would be familiar to every intelligent girl of 14. But I have taught girls of supposed intelligence, much older than 14, to whom nearly every one of these Scripture references would be like speech in an unknown tongue.

Do we think that the experience of this teacher of young ladies is unusual? I very much fear it is not; as I very much fear that the experience of that college president with his young men could be paralleled in a great many places in this country, inside of institutions of learning and outside.

I call attention to this widespread ignorance of the Bible, because it is a serious matter. It is serious both in its intellectual effects, and in its moral and religious.

The Canadian Order of Foresters.

The following table gives the standing of the society since its organization in 1879, as to number of members, claims paid, increase in reserve, and total reserve, and is well worth the careful perusal of all desiring life insurance. The growth of the society has not been of the mushroom character, but has been steady and substantial:

Year.	Members.	Claims Paid.	Increase in Reserve.	Total Reserve.
1880	859	\$ 5,833 50	\$ 888 50	\$ 888 50
1881	1,710	5,000 00	2,158 50	3,047 00
1882	2,119	11,000 00	601 50	3,651 50
1883	2,900	15,000 00	563 78	4,215 28
1884	3,500	11,000 00	2,737 59	6,952 87
1885	4,305	23,000 00	31 66	6,984 53
1886	5,131	23,000 00	9,539 82	16,524 35
1887	5,758	28,000 00	14,789 34	31,313 69
1888	7,291	30,000 00	25,901 63	57,215 32
1889	8,625	41,000 00	23,473 16	80,688 51
1890	10,282	51,800 00	27,728 49	108,416 00
1891	12,514	60,200 00	36,219 65	144,635 65
1892	14,208	69,000 00	46,974 78	191,610 43
1893	16,395	74,600 00	64,574 04	256,184 47
1894	18,641	88,000 00	70,473 09	326,657 56
1895	20,791	105,647 10	70,207 02	396,864 58
1896	22,651	104,647 10	82,976 73	479,841 31
1897 mos	24,092	69,156 15	48,658 12	528,499 43
1897	27,165	152,352 33	67,587 08	596,086 51
1898	30,789	143,937 06	108,407 24	704,493 75
1899	35,657	158,035 81	136,087 91	840,581 66
1900	40,142	195,628 99	144,767 06	985,348 72

As will be noticed in 1900, over \$144,000 was carried to the reserve fund, after paying over \$195,000 out in death claims.

The order issues policies for \$500, \$1,000, \$1,500 and \$2,000, the latter sum being the limit of insurance carried on any life.

The premiums, payable monthly in advance, are as follows:

Between the ages of	On \$50	On \$1,000	On \$1,500	On \$2,000
18 to 25	35	60	90	120
25 to 30	40	65	98	130
30 to 35	45	70	105	140
35 to 40	50	85	128	170
40 to 45	55	100	150	200

After paying upwards of one million and three-quarters in death claims, the Order had a surplus in the insurance department of \$1,082,000 at the end of August last, all of which is invested in gilt-edged securities in Canada, or is on deposit in the best monetary institutions of the country. Not a dollar of the moneys collected for the insurance fund is or has been used for the expense of management. The society's business being confined to Canada the death rate is very low. The death rate per 1,000 of membership in 1898 was 4.56, for 1899, 4.43, and in 1900, 4.88, and since the organization of the society, the average death rate has been only 4.93.

The society now has a membership of upwards of 43,000.

The Sick and Funeral Benefit Branch, although an optional feature, is a very popular department and upwards of 22,000 of the members of the society are participating in this feature of the order. The benefits are \$3.00 per week for the first two weeks of illness, and \$5.00 per week for the following ten weeks, altogether \$56.00 during any one year, besides a funeral benefit of \$30.00. In case of continued illness \$56 is paid each year in sick benefits. The fees, payable monthly in advance, are as follows:

Between 18 and 25 years	25 cents
" 25 and 30 years	30 cents
" 30 and 35 years	35 cents
" 35 and 40 years	40 cents
" 40 and 45 years	45 cents

During the year 1900 over \$63,000 were paid out in sick and funeral benefits.

All physically and morally qualified males, between the ages of 18 and 45 years, who are not debarred on account of occupation, are accepted for membership.

For further particulars enquire of any of the officers or members of the Order, or address,

R. Elhott, H. C. R., Ingersoll, Ont.; Thos. White, High Secretary, Brantford, Ont.; Ernst Gartung, S. O., Brantford, Ont.; or W. J. Cameron, 294 Gerrard street East, Toronto, Ont.

The self-made man was speaking. He said: "My father was a raiser of hogs. There was a large family of us." And then his voice was drowned by applause.

Menace of the Monroe Doctrine.

One has to realize what Europe would give to have South America as defenceless as Africa, before one can gauge the spirit in which it views the Monroe doctrine. To Europe that edict is the most domineering mandate issued to the world since the days of imperial Rome. It is an abridgment of their national rights, enforced, as they regard the matter, simply in the interests of the dog in the manger. The United States will neither take South America for herself nor let any one else take it. She does not colonize the country with her own people; she has no trade with it worth mentioning; she admits no responsibility for the outrages, disorders, and financial freakishness of her proteges. But she insists that South America is within her sphere of influence; that such European holdings as exist there shall neither be extended nor transferred; that immigrants who settle on its soil must make up their minds to leave their flag behind them; and that in the event of trouble between a European government and one of the half-breed republics under her patronage, satisfaction must be sought, if at all, in a mere financial indemnity—never in the seizure and retention of South American territory.

Do Americans seriously believe that Europe will lie passive for ever under such an edict? Any one who has looked into the bloody and tangled history of South America, and kept an eye on the steady stream of European immigration into Brazil and Argentina, can imagine at least a score of incidents any one of which would bring the Monroe Doctrine to a decisive test. Put on one side the implacable loyalty of Americans to their famous policy, and on the other the congested state of Europe, which would make expansion a necessity even if it were not all the fashion, the military spirit of the Continent which will never show England's compliance to American wishes, the extraordinary inducements to colonization offered by South America, and the spirit of revolutionary turbulence that broods over the country from Patagonia to Panama—and one has a situation which it will take a miracle to preserve intact for another fifty years.—[Sydney Brooks in the Atlantic Monthly.

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The Rev. C. F. WELLS, of Villa Ridge, Ill., says: "Your trial bottle of Asthmalene received in good condition. I cannot tell you how thankful I feel for the good derived from it. I was a slave, chained with putrid sore throat and Asthma for ten years. I despaired of ever being cured. I saw your advertisement for the cure of this dreadful and tormenting disease, Asthma, and thought you had overspoken yourselves, but resolved to give it a trial. To my astonishment, the trial acted like a charm. Send me a full-size bottle."

Rev. Dr. Morris Wechsler,

Rabbi of the Cong. Bnai Israel.

NEW YORK, Jan 3, 1901.

DR. TAFT BROS' MEDICINE CO.,

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AVON SPRINGS, N. Y., Feb. 1, 1901.

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Gentlemen: I write this testimonial from a sense of duty, having tested the wonderful effect of your Asthmalene, for the cure of Asthma. My wife has been afflicted with spasmodic asthma for the past 12 years. Having exhausted my own skill as well as many others, I chanced to see your sign upon your windows on 130th street, New York. I at once obtained a bottle of Asthmalene. My wife commenced taking it about the first of November. I very soon noticed a radical improvement. After using one bottle her Asthma has disappeared and she is entirely free from all symptoms. I feel that I can consistently recommend the medicine to all who are afflicted with this distressing disease.

Yours respectfully, O. D. PHELPS, M. D.

Feb. 5, 1901.

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I underwent a treatment for catarrh, for three months, without any success, consulted a number of physicians, among others, the most eminent ear specialist of this city, who told me that only an operation could help me, and even that only temporarily, that the head noises would then cease, but the hearing in the affected ear would be lost forever.

I then saw your advertisement accidentally in a New York paper, and ordered your treatment. After I had used it only a few days according to your directions, the noises ceased, and to-day, after five weeks, my hearing in the diseased ear has been entirely restored. I thank you heartily and beg to remain Very truly yours,

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