



SUNDAY READING

FROM THE JEWISH STANDPOINT.
What an Able Historian Says of the Persecution of Christ.

In a review, by the N. Y. Sun, of the second volume of Prof. Graetz's "History of the Jews," a tribute is paid to the work as "a scholarly, dispassionate and philosophical study of the subject of one who is himself an Israelite." The following gives an idea of the way in which Prof. Graetz deals with the trial and condemnation of the Saviour:

Of peculiar interest is the author's account of the causes of the prejudices which undoubtedly existed against Jesus in the Jewish capital and which led to the crucifixion. Prof. Graetz points out that the educated classes could not imagine the Messiah's saving work to be performed by an unlearned Galilean. Indeed, the idea that the Messiah, who was expected to come from Bethlehem, and out of the branch of David, should emerge from Galilee, overthrew the cherished conviction of many centuries. It is probably at this time, in the author's opinion, that the proverb quoted in the gospel of John arose: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The scrupulously devout took offence at his going about eating and drinking with sinners, publicans, and women of degraded class. Even the essences were displeased at his infringement of rules and customs. The Shammites were scandalized at his healing the sick on the Sabbath day, and could not recognize Messiah in one who even for a good purpose desecrated the Sabbath. He also roused the opposition by the disapproval he expressed here and there of their interpretations of the laws and of the conclusions they drew from them. The zealots, on their part, could not look to Jesus for deeds of heroism, for instead of inspiring his followers with hatred to Rome he advocated peace, and in his contempt for mankind admonished them to submit willingly to the Roman tax gatherers: "Render therefore unto Caesar those things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's." These startling peculiarities, which seemed to contradict the preconceived idea of the Messiah's character, caused the higher and the learned classes to be coldly indifferent to Jesus, and he consequently met with no friendly reception in Jerusalem. These various objections, however, to the mode of life and the tenets of Jesus afforded no ground for any legal accusation against him. Freedom of speech had, owing to the frequent debates in the schools of Shammai and Hillel, become so firmly established a right that no one could be attacked for expressing religious opinions unless he controverted a dogma universally conceived, or rejected the conception of the divinity peculiar to Judaism. It was just in this latter particular that Jesus laid himself open to accusation. The report had spread that he had called himself the son of God, words which, if taken literally, wounded the religious feeling of the Judean nation too deeply to allow him who had uttered them to pass unscathed. But how was it possible to ascertain whether Jesus had really called himself the Son of God, and to know what meaning he attached to the words? To bring the inner secret of his soul to light it was necessary to ask a traitor among his immediate followers, and that traitor was found in Judas Iscariot. A Judean account, derived from what is here described as a trustworthy source, seems to Prof. Graetz to place in the true light the use made of the traitor. In order to be able to arraign Jesus, either as a false prophet or as a seducer of the people, the law demanded that two witnesses should have heard him utter the criminal language of which he was accused, and Judas was consequently required to induce him to speak where two hidden witnesses might hear and report his words. The aim of the ensuing trial was, according to our author, to determine whether Jesus had really claimed to be, as the two witnesses testified, the Son of God. For it is pronounced impossible to believe that he was arraigned before that tribunal because he had boasted that it was in his power to destroy the Temple and re-build it in three days. Such a declaration, if really uttered by him, could not have been made a cause of complaint. The accusation, then, is assumed to have pointed to the assumed affirmation of Jesus that he was the Son of God. Upon an inquiry being put to him on that score, Jesus at first was silent, and made no reply. When the presiding judge, however, asked him a second time if he were a Son of God, he is reported to have answered, "Thou hast said it," and to have added, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." Our author holds that, if these words were really spoken by Jesus, the judges could really infer that he looked upon himself as the Son of God. From the accounts given by the Christian authorities themselves, there is no proof that, according to the existing penal law, the judges had pronounced an unjust verdict. All appearances were against Jesus. The Synhedrion received the sanction of the death warrant, or rather the permission to execute it, from the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, who was just then present for the festival at Jerusalem.

Here, however, Prof. Graetz proceeds to draw a sharp and deep distinction between the part taken by the Jewish authorities and by the Roman governor in the crucifixion and the incidents attending it. He denounces as purely legendary the notion that Pilate found Jesus innocent and wished to save him, while the Jews and determined upon putting him to death. We are reminded that while Jesus was scoffed at and obliged to wear a crown of thorns in ironical allusion to the Messianic and royal dignity he had assumed, it was not the Jews who inflicted these indignities upon him, but the Roman soldiers

who sought through him to deride the Judean nation. Among the Jews who had condemned him, there was, as our author insists, so little of personal hatred that he was treated exactly like any other criminal, and had given to him the cup of wine and frankincense to render him insensible to the pains of death. That Jesus was scourged before his execution proves that he was executed according to the Roman penal laws, for, by the Jewish code, no one sentenced to death could suffer flagellation. It was consequently the Roman lictors who maliciously scourged with fagots or ropes the self-styled King of the Jews. It was they also who caused Jesus to be nailed to the cross, and to suffer the shameful death awarded by the law of Rome. Such, says our Jewish historian, with an emotion evidently sincere, and but too well justified by history, was the end of a man who had devoted himself to the improvement of the most neglected, miserable, and abandoned members of his people and who, perhaps, fell a victim to a misunderstanding. How great, adds the author, has been the woe caused by that one execution. How many deaths and sufferings of every description has it not caused among the children of Israel. Millions of broken hearts and tragic fates have not yet atoned for that one death. Jesus is the only mortal of whom one can say without exaggeration that his death was more effective than his life.

WHO THE DRUIDS WERE.

Not a Special Family but a Selected Order of Priests.

As the secular side of things bore a rude resemblance to vandalism, so on the religious there was a similar anticipation of the Mediaeval Catholic church. The Druids were not a special family, like the Levites, nor in any way born into the priesthood. They were an order composed of persons selected when young out of the higher ranks of the community, either for speciality of intellect, or from disposition or by the will of their parents, or from a desire to avoid military service, from which the Druids were exempt. There were no tribal distinction among them. Their headquarters were in Britain, to which those who aspired to initiation in the most profound mysteries repaired for instruction, but they were spread universally over Gaul and the British Islands. They were the ministers of public worship, the depositaries of knowledge and the guardians of public morality. Young men repaired to the Druids for education. They taught theology, they taught the movements of the stars. They presided in the civil courts and determined questions of disputed inheritance. They heard criminal cases and delivered judgment, and, as with the church, their heaviest and most dreaded punishment was excommunication. The excommunicated person lost his civil rights. He became an outlaw from society and he was excluded from participation in the sacrifices. In the religious services the victims most acceptable to the Gods were human beings—criminals, it could be said; if not, then innocent persons, who were burnt to death in huge towers of wicker.

The tribal chieftainship and the religious organization of the Druids were both inherited from antiquity. They were institutions descending from the time when the Gauls were a great people; but both had outlived the age to which they were adapted, and one at least was approaching its end. To Caesar's eye, coming now upon them, the Druids were an established fact, presenting no sign of decay, but to a Gaul, infected with Roman manners, they existed merely by habit, exercising no influence any longer over the hearts of the people.

In the great struggle which was approaching we find no Druids among the national leaders, no spirit of religion inspiring and consecrating the efforts of patriotism. So far as can be seen the Druids were on the Roman side, or the Romans had the skill to conciliate them. In half a century they were suppressed by Augustus, and they and their communications and their flaming wicker works had to be sought for in distant Britain or in still more distant Ireland.

The British and Foreign Bible Society not long since made advances to the Bible Translation Society, the representatives of the baptist churches, with a view to a reunion of the relations that were had until 1833. A practical opportunity arose in the necessity for printing the recent translation of the Congo New Testament by the Rev. W. Holman Bentley. The Bible Society offered to print this rendering the Congo term for "immerse" and "immersion" in the text on the condition that the Greek term "baptize" and its cognates should be placed immediately after in brackets. The Bible Translation Society agreed to this, and now the Bible Society is printing this New Testament. Negotiations on similar lines are being conducted in regard to the Oriya version.

The presbyterians of the United States have the following force engaged in China; Ordained American missionaries, 52; total of American missionary laborers, 146; ordained natives, 27; total native agents, 326; churches, 57; communicants, 5,556; number added on confession of faith last year, 1,041; number of schools, 192; total of pupils, 3,688; a college at Tungchow with 98 pupils, and one largely under Presbyterian auspices at Canton. The latest reports from the Shantung Mission indicate that there will be over 500 communicants received up to December 31st, 1891.

Cardinal Gibbons has received the long-expected letter from the Pope on the school question, with the request to send copies of it to all the episcopal sees of the United States. The Cardinal says it is a long and luminous document, and is eminently worthy of the august head of the Catholic Church.

Sixty thousand Italian women led by the flower of the aristocracy of Rome, are petitioning the Chamber against divorce. They consider it a religious offence.

THE POPE'S GOLDEN ROSE.

Its History and the Ceremonial that Attends Its Bestowal.

Amongst nature-worshipping people the rose was the symbol of life and death. It was sacred to Aphrodite, but it was also dedicated to Dionysus. Naturally white, it was fabled to have taken its beautiful color, the color for which there is no other name, from the blood of the dying Adonis. Both Greeks and Romans made use of roses in their religious ritual. Brides were crowned with them, and their petals were scattered on the dead. The rose in its full freshness and sweetness was the type of youth and beauty, and figured, in the short duration of its loveliness, the fleeting nature of these charms. Thus, "in the hand of a conqueror it expressed not only his glory and joy but also his mortality and humility."

With the introduction of Christianity the rose festival, or *rosalia*, of the Romans was transferred to Whit Sunday, the so-called *Dominica de rosa*, when roses were scattered on the people from the roofs of the churches, and on the occasion of certain solemn processions, at the present day, the priests strew roses before the Host. The "queen of flowers" became sacred to the Virgin, upon whose altars the rich incense of its peerless perfume is ever present. It had been a practice of the Popes to send silver doves, consecrated and blessed, to royal personages; but at what period the custom of bestowing the Golden Rose began, there is no known record. At first these roses were simple flowers of red enamel, representing the natural color of the rose. Later the color was left white and a large ruby was put in the centre, the reflection of which gave a rosy tint to the petals. It is not until the twelfth century that we find Alexander III., who became Pope in 1159, sending a blessed Golden Rose to Louis the Young, as an acknowledgment of the honor with which he had been received in the course of a journey in France. "Subsequently the giving of the Golden Rose became an authoritative act, by which the Pope recognized the rights of Christian sovereigns." Thus in 1368 Urban V. gave the Golden Rose to Joan of Sicily, thereby preferring her over the King of Cyprus; and Pope Julius II. sent a consecrated Golden Rose, dipped in chrism and perfumed with musk, to Archbishop Warham, April 5, 1510, to be presented to Henry VIII. at high mass with the Apostolic blessing. Nor was this the only occasion on which this worthy defender of the faith received the Golden Rose, for Leo X. also sent him one, but at that time the doctrine of infallibility had not been insisted on.

Previous to the Reformation Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, received the Golden Rose. The value of the rose appears to have increased from time to time. We find Alexander VII. ordering one rose at 6,000 fr. and another at 4,000 fr. Pope Innocent XI had a Golden Rose made which weighed over eight pounds, and was ornamented with several sapphires, and represented a value of more than 10,000 fr. Towards the close of the last century the Golden Rose appears to have been given almost indiscriminately to any travelling prince who would pay a sum equivalent to about two thousand pounds in fees for it. The authors of the "Wanderings of Plants and Animals" regard the origin of the Golden Rose to be connected with the ancient symbolism of the flower referred to; but we elsewhere find it stated that the rose is said to be a symbol of the Creator, the splendor and richness of the metal representing the eternal light which surrounds the Divine presence, and the perfumes and spices which are placed in the vase by the pope symbolize the glory and resurrection of Christ.

At Rome, it was the practice of the church to bless the rose on a special day set apart, which was called Rose Sunday. The benediction of the rose is pronounced with particular solemnity on the fourth Sunday in Lent, the Holy Father, clothed in white robes, reading the formula from a book which is held by a bishop. Two other bishops, holding lighted candles, standing by his side. The high dignitaries of the papal court surround the Pontiff, holding the incense, the holy water, the spices and other perfumes, while another dignitary, kneeling, presents the rose to the Pope, who dips it in balsam, sprinkles it with holy water and incense, reads the prayer, blesses the incense, the spices, the perfumes, which are in turn presented to him by a cardinal. After putting these into the vase which holds the rose, the Golden Rose is blessed, and the ceremony ends. In modern times the Golden Rose had taken the form of a branch with several flowers, a natural rose which has been blessed by the Pope forming the centre. Quite lately the Golden Rose has been worth over 10,000 francs. Such was the rose which Queen Isabella II. of Spain received in 1856. It was planted in a magnificent vase of silver gilt, a splendid example of Roman workmanship. The Golden Rose is supposed to convey a blessing to its royal recipients, and even to churches and towns. Pio Nono conferred it upon the unfortunate Charlotte Empress of the equals, unfortunately Eugenie, late Empress of the French. When Queen Isabella II. was honored with the Pope's Golden Rose, it brought forth in the various newspapers many interesting paragraphs concerning the custom.

The "Great Road," which the Duke of Newcastle has recently presented to the church of St. Albans, Holborn, is the largest cross in any church in England. It is an enormous crucifix (the cross of which is over 25 feet in height), and hangs suspended from the chancel arch. The cross itself is coloured dead olive green, and the arms have terminals of fleurs-de-lis and Tudor roses. The Sacred Figure is painted and gilt, while on either side stand representations of St. John the Divine and the Virgin as "the Mater Dolorosa." The idea of the work has been chiefly borrowed from the road crosses to be seen still at St. Peter's, Louvain, and at Oplinter, in Brabant. Of crosses in churchyards, one of the largest is a remarkable specimen discovered in the parish of St. Teath, near Camelford, in Cornwall. In form it was Greek, that is, the four arms were of equal length. It was a massive granite monolith, but measured no less than 15 feet in extreme height; the upright shaft measuring in breadth at the base 21 inches by 15 inches, and beneath the fillet immediately below the cross, 13½ inches by 11½ inches.

Messages of Help for the Week.

Sunday.—Ecclesiastes xii, 1: Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

Monday.—v. 2: While the sun or the light or the moon or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain.

Tuesday.—In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened.

Wednesday.—And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low.

Thursday.—Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high . . . and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home; and the mourners go about the streets;

Friday.—Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

Saturday.—Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

THINGS OF VALUE.

No doubt the average woman sees much to admire in her fiancé, but in bringing up a son few mothers look upon a husband as a perfect model upon which to base their efforts.

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THOMAS W. PAYNE.

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Two lawyers on opposing sides seem to be ready to cut each other's throats, but when off duty they are as friendly as sister kittens. Lawyers, like the blades of a pair of shears, cut only what comes between.

There's a Bridge of Sighs at Venice, At Montreal a Bridge of Size; But Putnam's Emulsion is the Bridge of Health.

Which all sick men should prize. It does not follow because a wedding is "off," that the trousseau is of no use.

We know not exactly how low the least degree of obedience is which will bring a man to heaven but this we are quite sure of, that he who aims no higher will be sure to fall short even of that, and that he who goes farthest beyond it will be most blessed.—[John Keble.]

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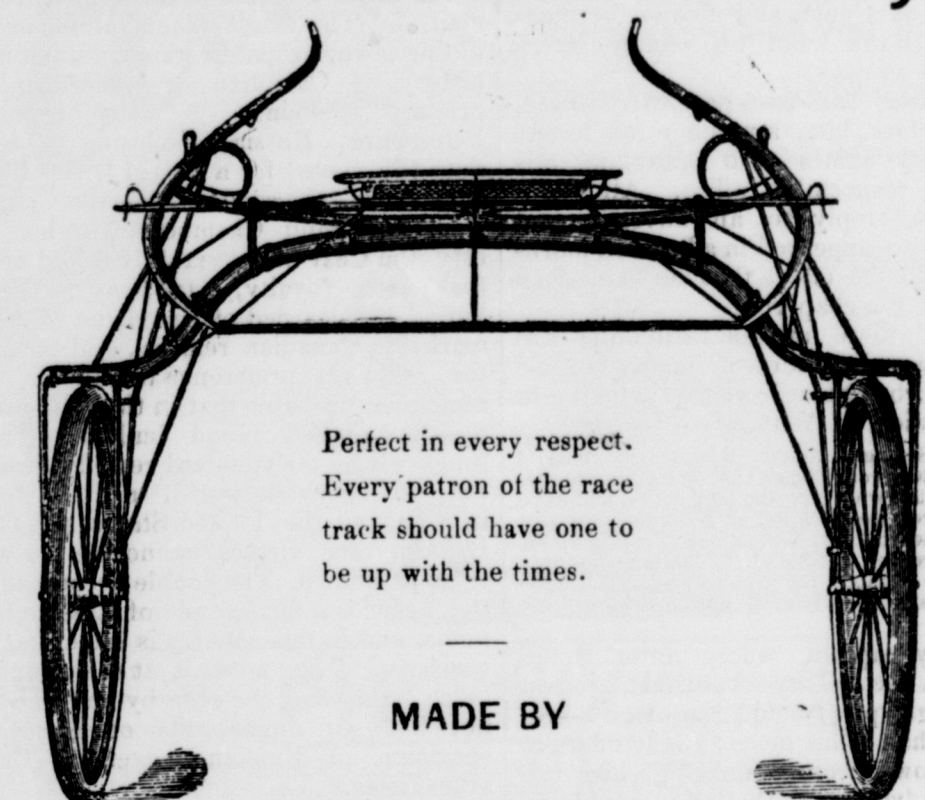
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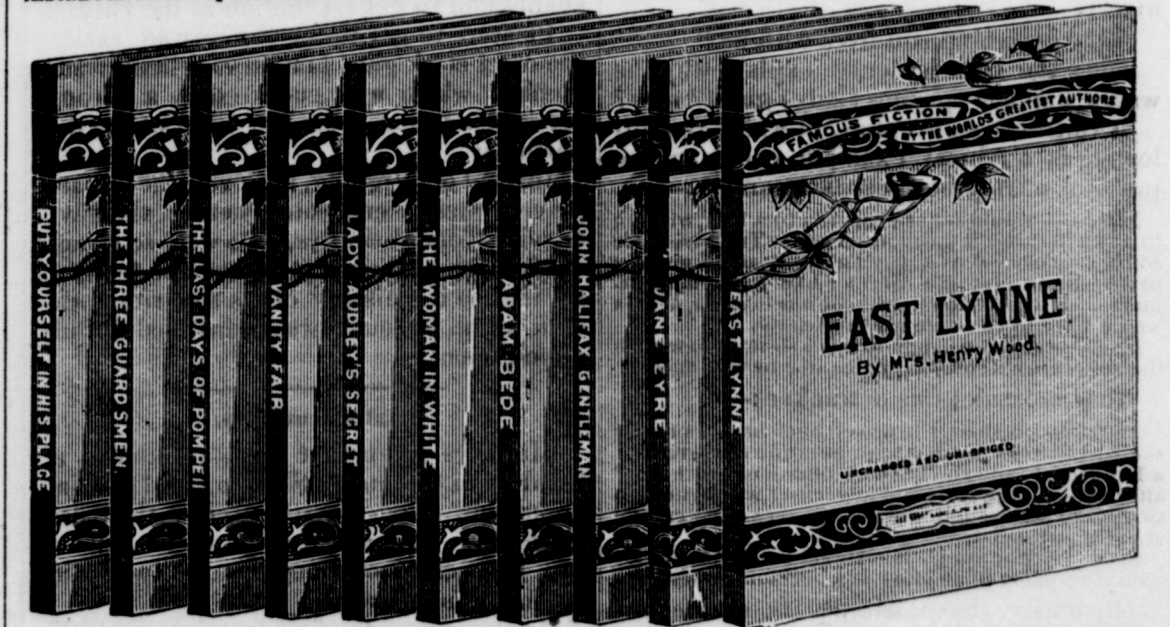
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