

Sunday Reading.

THE SCRIPTURE ROCK.

The following is from the London News of late date and is particularly interesting just now. The reminiscence we gave a fortnight since of Mr. Gladstone's simple but full testimony to his estimate of 'the old, old story in an old, old Book,' as expressed in an address at Greenwich twenty years ago, has naturally created much interest. We may further call attention to an extract from a preface to an American work on bible history, written a year or two since by Mr. Gladstone, on the authority of the bible as the divine revelation of truth—the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture. It will render great service to those who have to deal with the frivolous and captious objections to the Scriptures raised by some who would, nevertheless, attach weight to the testimony of such an authority as Mr. Gladstone. The clergy might read it with great advantage from their pulpits; not a hearer would fail to listen. Mr. Gladstone wrote—

'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' As they have lived and wrought, so they will live and work. From the teacher's chair and from the pastor's pulpit; in the humblest hymn that ever mounted to the ear of God from beneath a cottage roof, 'their sound has gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.' Nor here alone, but in a thousand, silent and unsuspected forms they will unweariedly prosecute their holy office. Who doubts that times without number, particular portions of scripture find their way to the human soul as if embassies from on high, each with its own commission of comfort, of guidance or of warning? What crisis what trouble, what perplexity of life has failed or can fail to draw from this inexhaustible treasure house its proper supply? What profession, what position is not daily and hourly enriched by these words, which repetition never weakens, which carry with them now, as in the days of their first utterance, the freshness of youth and immortality? When the solitary student opens all his heart to drink them in, they will reward his toil. And in forms yet more hidden and withdrawn, in the retirement of the chamber, in the stillness of the night season, upon the bed of sickness, and in the face of death, the bible will be there, its several words how often winged with their several and special messages, to heal and soothe, to uplift and uphold, to invigorate and stir. Nay, more, perhaps, than this; amid the crowds of the court, or the forum, or the street, or the market-place, when every thought of every soul seems to be set upon the excitement of ambition, or of business, or of pleasure, there, too, even there, the still small voice of the holy bible will be heard, and the soul, aided by same blessed word, may find wings like a dove, may rise away and be at rest.'

We have seldom read anything more striking and practical, or more truly eloquent, than this expression of the heart's best feelings as to the precious inheritance we possess in the Word of God. Mr. Gladstone thus confirms the experience of the wisest of men in all ages, who have studied or digged into the bible as the miner digs beneath the soil for gold. They have found its treasures unsearchable—inexhaustible. 'The bible,' exclaims Boyle, 'is a matchless volume; it is impossible we can study it too much, or esteem it too highly.' 'We account the Scriptures of God the most sublime philosophy,' is the testimony of Newton. 'There are no songs,' says Milton, 'to be compared with the songs of Zion.' 'There never was found,' writes Lord Bacon, 'in any age of the world, either religion or law, or discipline, that did so highly exalt the public good as the Christian faith.'

What is needed is that 'each human soul,' as Mr. Gladstone says, 'in every crisis and trouble and perplexity of life should draw from this inexhaustible treasure house its proper supply of comfort, of guidance, or of warning.' Happy would it be for our country and the age if bible truth—by the teaching of the Holy Spirit engraved on the heart and witnessed in the conscience—became more and more a power in the life. We want to read it as our forefathers read it when Tynedale's New Testament became a 'Day-spring of Light' in England in 1526. We read of those times: 'In the parsonage and in the convent cells, but particularly in shops and cottages, a crowd of persons were studying the New Testament. The clearness of the Holy Scriptures struck each reader. It was the language of human life which they discovered

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in those divine writings. 'It is to me, for me, and of me that this book speaks,' said each one. 'It is I whom all these promises and teachings concern. This fall and this restoration—they are mine. That old death and this new life—I have passed through them. That flesh and that spirit—I know them. This law and this grace this faith, these works, this slavery, this glory, this Christ, this Belial—all are familiar to me. It is my own history that I find in this book. Thus, by the aid of the Holy Ghost—the alone Interpreter to the heart of the Divine Revelation—each one had in his own experience a seal to the truth of the Gospel.'

THE LEPEERS OF INDIA.

The Deplorable Condition of These Unfortunate, Afflicted Ones.

At every crowded street corner in the large cities of Central and Northern India, in every thronged thoroughfare, by the gates of the temples, or on the market place, they are to be seen; bent, decrepit, with haggard pain-worn faces, and clothed in miserable rags.

One has to conquer repulsion even to stop and talk with them, for they look still more forbidding at near sight. The black glazed stumps from which the toes have been rotted away, the maimed hands in all stages of decay, some with the first joints gone, some without fingers, and hardly able to grasp their rude crutches, and worse still the festering sores round with dirty rags; the marred faces and blinded eyes—oh, how the weight of human suffering and human misery presses upon one's soul as he realises the terrible condition of the lepers.

There are some among the people of India who do not insist on the lepers leaving the home, but for the most part they are outcasts, wandering beggars, without friend or shelter. At times they can work as watchmen, but for the most part their disease forbids all manual labor, and they are thrown on the cold charity of unfeeling India.

In the city of Ujjain where they congregate in such great numbers on account of its being a holy city, their haunts are the shallow stone alcoves down by the river-side, through whose unprotected openings the damp mist pours in during the rainy season, and on whose inhospitable floors with nothing to cover them but their thin cotton rags they have to spend the long nights of the cold season.

Even this miserable shelter is at times denied them, and out on the bare stones or pressed up under the eaves against the wall their fevered bodies seek slight protection from cold and rain.

It is computed that in some parts of India one out of every two hundred people is a leper, and when one remembers that as a rule they leave the villages and congregate in the centres of population, it is easily seen how numerous in some of these centres they oftentimes must be.

Few sights are sadder than the leper groups, especially in the ragged, dirty and poverty stricken condition in which India's people have left them. Can you wonder that men have felt the sight of them haunting their minds for days and that human nature turns from them in disgust.

And yet Jesus did not. The 'unclean, unclean' had no terrors for him. His heart went out to them in their sorrow, he stretched forth his hand and touched them.

There seems a hunger in these poor souls for the Christ message and a readiness to receive it, and the results among them are often quick and true. They had been teaching a number of them every morning at the Mission Hospital, Ujjain, and it was my great privilege one day to be called up as a member of session to examine six of them for baptism.

We questioned them carefully and closely and decided to baptize them all. Mr. Jamieson tells of the day on which they were baptized, of how they stood up trembling and afraid, for, however much

they despised them, the Hindus did not want even lepers to become Christians, and had filled their minds with the stories of the awful things that would happen them on the day of baptism. Fearful and yet determined they rose and with their stumps of hands pulled off their turbans to receive the visible sign of union with Christ, surprised and yet joyful at its simplicity.

The persistency with which these converts, dull witted on account of their disease, pored over their letters till they learned to read, their regularity at church services, their reverence for their bibles which they would wrap up so carefully in a cloth for the purpose, their desire to proclaim the message and have others share in their joy, were surely a sufficient reward for the hours spent in teaching them and leading them to Christ.

But to treat them properly and carry on this work most successfully the lepers should be segregated. Not only are they thus better cared for and made more comfortable, but they are away from outside influences, away from the grasp of caste and more ready to follow the Spirit's guidance.

For the sake of others also, that the disease may not spread, is this segregation necessary. To this end leper hospitals or asylums have been erected in many places throughout India, some under government and some under missionary control. The ideal home of the leper, however, is that under Christian influence.

A pathetic story is told of several lepers coming to an asylum and not being admitted by the native doctor, because they were Christians. For eight days they sat out on the roadside, unwilling to deny their faith, till at last their constancy was rewarded and the doctor gave in through fear of his conduct being reported to the authorities.

Nor could anything be more ideal than some of those comfortable yet inexpensive leper hospitals which have been built. Good food, comfortable shelter, and clean surroundings, with these and the blessed gospel to cheer and bring its message of hope, life is renewed to the poor sufferers.

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Their Little Ways.

A lady was telling her husband about a recent passage-at-arms with another woman. 'You see,' she said, 'I've known who she was all my life, but I'd never met her until the other day at the house of a common friend we were introduced.'

'Oh, Mrs. A.' she cried, 'I'm delighted to meet you. Miss B. has spoken of you to me so many times.'

'Now, although I have the misfortune of knowing Miss B., I don't much fancy the notion of her posing as one of my friends, and I suppose I showed it. At all events, the woman froze at once. But she got over with me the next time we met, for she pretended not to see me, and when she could no longer evade bowing, she said:—

'Dear me, Mrs. A. I thought you were Mrs. C.'—Mrs. C. being, as you know, one of the plainest women in town.'

The husband smiled thoughtfully. 'How well you women understand each other,' he said. 'Well, it's a good thing that you do, for it is certainly more than anybody else does.'

DYSPEPSIA.

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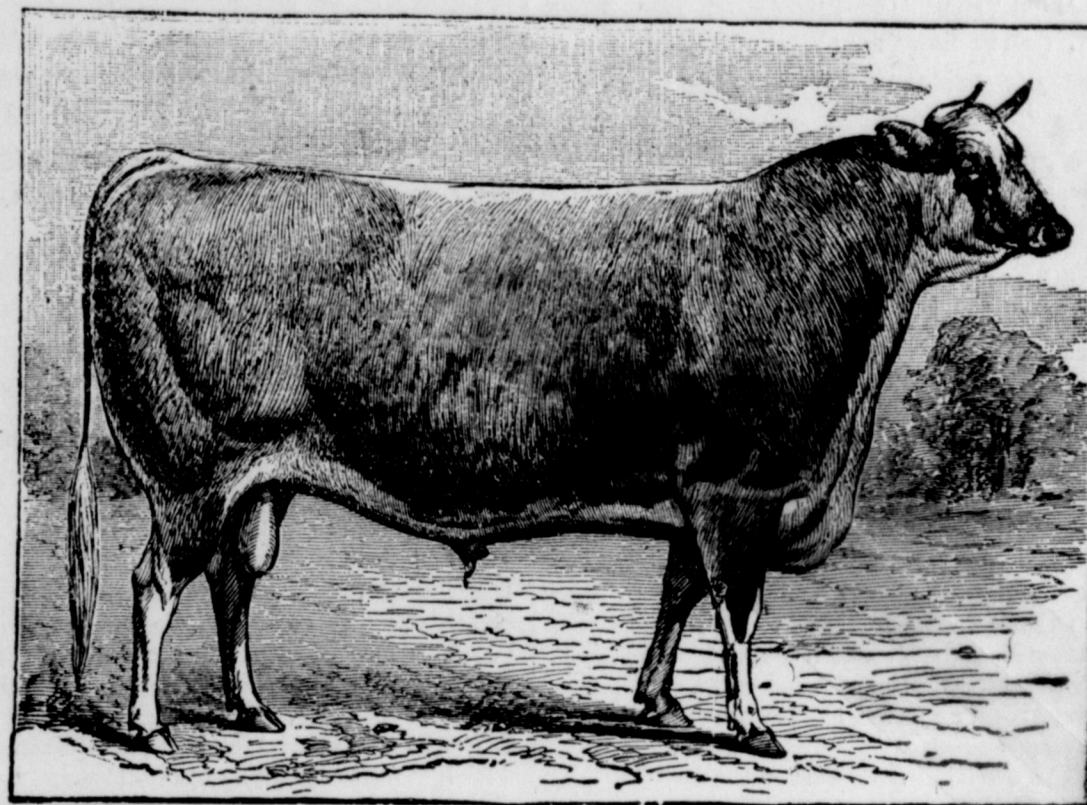
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FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE.

Courage and Tact Will Get a Man out of Danger.

To show that courage, self-command, and tact will generally get a man out of a dangerous situation or an awkward predicament, Emily Mayer Higgins has collected a number of true incidents (in Lippincott's for April.) Here are a couple:

Many years ago, the late Dr. Shippen, of Philadelphia, left his house in the early morning and was hurrying down the street, when he noticed a singular and ferocious-looking man, whose gaze was fastened upon him. With instinctive politeness and bonhomie he smiled, raised his hat, and past on—when suddenly he heard a shot. Turning, he found that the stranger had just left his home with the insane intention of killing the first man he met. He was the first man; but his absolute fearlessness and constitutional as well as cultivated courtesy had put the man off his guard, and the next passer-by had caught the bullet intended for him. That smile and bow had saved his life.

When the country was a century younger, and the Indian was yet in the land, a gentleman upon the frontier was hunting with friends. He got separated from them, and completely lost his way. Every effort to retrieve his steps led him still farther into the wilderness, and night overtook him in a dense forest. Overcome with fatigue, he lay down under a tree, and slept profoundly. In the morning he awoke with a start, with that indescribable feeling that some one was looking at him, and, glancing up, he saw that he was surrounded by hostile Indians, and that the leader of the band, in war-paint and feathers, was bending over him in an amiable mood. He took in the situation at a glance—knew his immediate danger, and had no means of averting it; neither did he understand a word of their language. But he was self-possessed, knew the universal language of nature, and believed that even

under war-paint and feathers 'a man's a man for a' that.' He fixed his clear, bold eye upon the Indian, and—smiled! Gradually the fierceness past away from the eye above him, and at last an answering smile came over the face. Both were men—both were brothers—and he was saved! The savage took him under his protection, brought him to his wigwam, and after a few days restored him to his friends.

The Friends of Trees.

In Nice, France, there is a society called 'The Friends of Trees.' The forests and mountains being almost completely devastated and denuded in the Maritime Alps by the axe of the peasant, a price is given to landowners who plant trees on vacant spots, and an annual Alpine fête gives a donation of £20 to the society or individual who plants the largest number.

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