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ARTICLE III.

THE BIBLE AND LITERATURE.

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WE have been accustomed to credit the Grecians with a genius for art, a development of faculty and taste for the beautiful which stamped their whole life. Even the rigorous Spartans could not wholly divest themselves of this expression. So, to the Romans of old we grant a genius for government equaled by none of the later nations. The whole people bore this mark. Wherever the Roman went he was the embodiment of law and authority; and he found a practical way of holding the allegiance of outlying peoples while yielding to their local customs and using their local administrations in the exercise of government.

In the same way the Jewish people had a genius for spirituality. Their history was the outworking of religious problems, because that was the tendency of their thought. They were used as the medium of developing the thought and spirit which has been that of Christian civilization, because they were so fitted by nature. From whatever source it came, this is the fact. Perhaps Father Abraham left the impress of his spirit upon his descendants more powerfully than other founders of peoples have done. Perhaps the unity of life through the family development until Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt had knit them into exceptional oneness. Then their isolation even in their prosperity, deepening to

the exclusion of their enslavement, stamped permanently their character.

Whatever the reasons, — and these, with the personality of the founder of the nation, must have been among them, — the fact is that no other nation ever showed such a characteristic. They were religious above all things. They developed the highest type of monotheism among peoples who were vastly more powerful than they and who were all polytheists. They claimed a relationship to the one God, Jehovah, different from the relationship boasted of by other peoples with their gods. They were his chosen people, with whom he entered into covenant, and to whom he had committed a promise, concealed in form at first, which should be fulfilled for the glory of the nations of the earth.

Their teachers developed an ethical standard higher in its demand, more searching in its application, than even the Egyptians knew. They rose to the conception of Jehovah not only as the one God whom they were to worship, but as the Lord of all the earth, before whom the gods of other peoples were but as figments of the imagination, and who exercised dominion over all peoples and demanded obedience and reverence from them. They came to a spiritual consciousness which is of the universal man. The Psalms of David are the songs and prayers of every nation who believe in the God of the Bible. The trying of spiritual law in their experience, personal and national alike, is in terms that fit human conditions everywhere. Only a people gifted above all with a genius for spirituality could have done this. It marks them as much as artistic ability or administrative genius marked the Grecian and the Roman.

The history of the Jews was a religious history. Their religion was the center of their life. They were covenant-

keepers for humanity. God was developing through them a knowledge which was meant to be the redemption of the world. Hence their leaders subordinated all their life to the interests of this purpose. Responding to this organization, the people were brought to test by their religion. All their history is developed on this theme. When they obeyed Jehovah and walked in his statutes, they prospered. When they rebelled and followed their own ways, disaster came to them. So deeply was this wrought into their consciousness that their historians never deviate from the theme. The Bible is concerned with their affairs wholly from this standpoint. Such other history of their own as we have is to the same effect. If the evidence is to be credited, they were a people whose religion was the chief factor in their life, coloring their thought and affecting all their conduct, making them feel that they were in immediate relation with Jehovah, and that the variation of their ways had quick result in the display or withdrawal of his favor.

This is not to say that they were peculiarly a people of high ethical life. They seem to have been turbulent and restless, with inevitable yieldings to the call of nature worship around them and to compliance with the customs of the peoples with whom they traded—a tendency which ultimately worked their overthrow. But, even so, they are the people from whom the spiritual impulse has come into the life of the world, after, through their torturing experiences, it had been purged of all provincialism and refined from every taint of earthliness. All this, their story and their gift, is our Bible.

As a work of literature the Bible is unique in the majesty of its style. It is interesting to put beside the Bible some of the writings which have claimed to be properly parts of it, like the Apocryphal Gospels, or some of the sacred books of

other peoples, and see the difference in this regard. Nor is this wholly due to that noble translation, made when the English language was at its acme of purity and classic use, and made by men who were masters of our tongue and of the languages in which the Bible was written. There is in any translation of the Bible a dignity and command which set it apart in the literature of the world.

This unique quality is not confined to one part of the Bible. It pervades it throughout. Prosaic history and dry proverbs reveal it as certainly as the agonizings of Job and the loftiness of the Psalms. The same clear spiritual consciousness appears everywhere; and, despite the difference of subject, the thought of Jehovah, God of Israel and of nations, is always the background and makes the atmosphere. Elijah thundering from his mountain retreat against the waywardness of Israel, and Ahab cringing in his palace from the word of the prophet, or hunting him throughout the nation to compel him to withdraw the edict of famine which God had authorized him to issue against the land, indicates a setting which affects every part of the Bible and gives its every expression an atmosphere and a solemnity which are wanting in all other books.

The Bible covers the whole field of spiritual experience. There is not a phase of conduct, individual or national; not a type of character, not a form of spiritual trial, but is set down in its pages. You may take from the world all the other religious books which have been produced, and leave the Bible, and you will not have robbed mankind of one principle, of one helpful picture of experience, of one precept vital to the spiritual life. All there is in all of them of value is in the Bible, and, besides, that which makes the Bible different in itself and in its effect, which enables it to give life

to the world. This, we have seen, is what makes the Bible the world's book. It is of interest to the world not because of the history which it gives of the Jewish people. There were many other nations which bulked larger in world life than they; and only a curious interest would attach to their history if that were all it meant to us.

The history of the Jews grips our attention because in it the religious problems of mankind, of man regardless of his nationality or other accident, are brought to issue in the atmosphere of universal humanity. The experiences of the Jew, his thoughts and strivings of desire and purpose, all his spiritual life, are wrought in terms that mirror the life of man everywhere and at all times. All this, too, is in the conduct of the loftiest intellectual life. Conceptions of the Deity, of the nature and destiny of man, of the meaning and possibilities of this life, of the relationships of men with God and with each other, are the things out of which the fabric of the Bible is woven. These waken and face the most stupendous questions with which the mind of man can grapple. In fact, the greatness of its conceptions, the magnitude of its problems, the height of its aspirations, are part of the ground on which it is charged that the Bible does not reveal reality. All this greatness of thought and fact is focused upon the reader with a majesty that compels his reverence, and a pertinency that makes its utterances personal as though individually addressed.

This is why the Bible does not lose its interest. At times neglected and disused, again it is rediscovered; and attains stronger hold than ever. Its message, pictured in the romantic history of a people who are to-day the strongest argument for the truth of its utterances, is fresh to every generation, new to every man. To the knowledge of the

world which science and contact give, it adds that of the inner meaning and relation of the world, of the encompassing infinite which spreads its horizon ever beyond our reach. Thus it is inquiry and information, precept and indictment, counsel and triumph, for every man that comes within its influence. Inevitably, as the race mounts in culture, the Bible will fascinate it the more.

The extent to which the Bible has been a force in literature is, of course, a question of fact. Greek and Roman literature knew nothing of it. The first three centuries of the Christian era witnessed a fierce intellectual struggle of the faith in Christ with the old religions. So voluminous was this, and so large the appeal to the record, that almost the whole Bible could be gathered from the quotations in these writings. But this was only a small part of literature.

In the long centuries when Europe was gestating its new life, there was not, or, at least, there did not chance to be preserved for us, an intellectual fruitage which shows the effect of direct knowledge of the Bible. Until the discovery of printing the Book was largely mediated to the people through churchly channels, and we find its effect rather in the forms of religious life and works of fancy. From the time that copies could be multiplied so that the people could have the Bible in their hands, its part in the life of the world is increasingly manifest. The literature of Europe, specially of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, for the last four hundred years, and of America since the hornbook days, is so saturated with the Bible that to take out what comes from it, and from it alone, would mutilate our libraries to unintelligibility. England had no literature until the introduction of Christianity; and its real life followed the culture of the Bible, read and heard and feeding both fancy and thought. Poetry

and the drama, philosophy and history, fiction and criticism, are of a Biblical civilization, instinct with the ideas and spirit of the Book. Even where the connection is not acknowledged, a little study will show the impossibility of removing the Bible contribution and leaving any of our literature intact. Divest Shakespeare of the thought, the use of customs, the very atmosphere of the Bible, and what of his plays would escape the knife? Most of them would have to be rewritten. What of the poetry of England or Germany would be left untouched by the excision of the Bible influence from them? To think of Tennyson and Lowell without the things in their work due to this influence, indicates the wreck which the taking out of the Bible would make of our literature.

The truth is, that, through the work of the church during the "darkness" of the Middle Ages, and from the popularizing of the Bible by the use of printing and the heat of religious controversy, Europe became saturated with Bible thought. Law and court, polite literature and art, civics and polite society, education and social custom, if not shapen to a Biblical model or made consistent with the teaching of the Bible, were so filled with its thought and language, so modified by its ever-present suggestion, that they never could be mistaken for the products of a pagan civilization. Outwardly, the work of Constantine and Charlemagne had continued to the making of the Occidental world Christian.

The present tendency to displace the Bible from its influence is to be deplored. From the mere point of literary value the Bible should be retained in the hands and life of the people. To lose it is to be deprived of the most vitalizing element of our culture. It cannot be relegated to the cloister and hold its quickening effect. Literature is not the product of the cloister or determined by the rules of the classroom.

The literature of a nation is the thought of a people, valuable as it is the vivid expression of their living impression of the world and life, their spiritual reaction upon all that touches and interests them. A literature splendid with the evidences of Biblical inspiration, instinct with its heaven-mourning spirit of freedom and justice, of purity and coöperation, is the outliving of a people to whom the Bible is their spelling book, their source of law and custom, their friend in sorrow, their companion in their glad days. That is why the literature of the last few centuries is the glory of the Christian era. Take the Bible away from the people, or depreciate it in their thought, and men retrograde to the medieval life whose literature showed a veneering of Christianity, or to a paganism which laughs at its gods and then — at itself.

Influences mutually antagonistic combine to diminish the use of the Bible. Churchly jealousies, fighting to maintain interpretations of the Bible which they hold vital, grow suspicious of lay judgment — usually unschooled; or become unwilling to forget differences in the great agreements and the benefit of a Bible-read people. That is why the Bible is not in the public schools as of old. The reaction against rigid doctrine carries many to the repudiation of the whole matter, and to consequent disuse of the Bible and opposition to its prevalence. Human sloth and animalism, always glad of excuse for ease and indulgence, slip easily into the ways of ignoring of the book. Its moral pressure becomes irksome, and the easy way to settle the question is to drop it — and so be unhindered in pursuing one's own way. Thus the Bible is forced aside, and the world loses the inspiration and stimulus to which the glories and the helpfulness of our literature are due.

These statements will be more evident from a study of the

Bible as a factor in culture. Culture is not accumulation of information, nor acquaintance with literature, nor familiarity with the usages of society, nor polish of manner, though all these may be forms of its expression. Culture is an effect of knowledge and experience upon the character, showing itself in certain definite marks. Without these a man may be learned, yet a boor; affable, yet a villain. There is a culture of the faculties of the mind or the ways of society. But it is no more than the culture of the faculties in any other pursuit. There are too many book-learned who are blind and dumb before the throbbing life of their day. There are all too many whose training of thought and manners is used for piracy. None of these are of genuine or solid culture. Their nature has been trained in a few ways of surface living. Culture is a refining effect upon the whole man, a result of all his life-contact upon the development and use of all his powers. Culture in this sense bears five marks, all of which are involved in the height of true unfolding.

First of these is a *right heart*. A man may have wide learning and have many accomplishments in the use of his knowledge. Law, theology, statecraft, art, may be his tools and he may show wonderful skill in handling them. The languages of the world may be open books to him, and the triumphs of thought in every land be upon his lips. But, if the heart has not been brought under right control, the man is the more dangerous to society, the more to be feared. Training of faculty without training of the desire to use the faculty is poor business. These become the lawyers whose clients successfully evade the law; the men of "encyclopedic knowledge" whose learning fructifies in exploitation or war. The Federal prisons are sample cases of these, and the world groans under the injustice and cruelty and false leadership

of such "cultured" people. Better that a man be illiterate, a woman untaught, than that position and wealth and opportunity shall sharpen and train the powers of manhood and womanhood and leave the heart a fountain of selfish desire. As far as such rule, the people perish.

Then there must be an *open mind*. It is not a mark of culture to close the mind to ideas or experiences simply because they are new or different. True, there have been cultured people who have been very set in their ways and hostile toward innovations and innovators, as were the Puritan fathers. But this was a blemish on their culture, the evidence that it was not fully rounded. To guard the truths and achievements which have proven their worth and the associations which minister clean and ennobling living is right. To resist the entrance of new ideas or the association of new peoples simply because they are new, or do not chance to come along the line of life to which we are accustomed, is from lack of culture. At best, it is in the class with the woman who resisted the introduction of a new psalmody, "Rouse's version was good enough for David, and it's good enough for me." At worst, it is the hateful class exclusiveness or the mossback conservatism which divides society and hinders progress. Learning is impossible unless the mind is open to new impressions and can consider them without prejudice. The fact is typical. A man may come to convictions which he will hold stubbornly against urgency to change merely to try the new. But even the most settled believer and follower of forms, if of open mind, is ready to consider the new and recognize its merit, if any.

This is a matter of the first importance. Clinging to established forms and usages, hedging about the customs and associations of society with crystallized exclusiveness, are the

ways of the self-satisfied world. Such are self-limited. Just in so far as this is true of a man, a social circle, a party, a community, a sect, they are insulated from the pulsating life of humanity, encysted in the body politic, and fast become freight which the rest must carry. Fortunate are the rest if these become only dead weight. Read Andrew D. White's "Warfare of Science and Theology," and see how the closed mind of ecclesiasticism, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike, held back the progress of man, trying to confine it within the definitions which churchly phrase and manner had framed. The martyrdoms of the world were not all for questions of religion. Men have always resisted man's right of search, and still many would hinder it. Yet to recognize it is the result of real culture.

A right heart and an open mind lead to the *appreciation of true relations*. An unjust man is not a cultured man, whatever his surroundings or attainments. What are attainments and advantages except helps to a larger and better knowledge and more practical coöperation with the world? The egotism of childhood is pitiable when it controls the man. The selfishness of childhood becomes the greed and cruelty of the man. The great work of culture is to eradicate these, and so make the man a fit partner in the work of life. To accomplish this a man must be educated to the recognition of the rights of others.

Nor is it only the rights of other people which are to be considered. We condemn cruelty to animals. We are beginning to see that there is wrong to the earth in the selfish treatment it so often receives. Many a man, settling upon virgin soil, has persistently cropped it for its best growth, as was done with the wheat fields of Minnesota, without care for its replenishment, until outraged nature rebels. Lucky

is it if that rebellion comes before the land is made an ir reclaimable desert. Everything with which we come into contact in the world has its proper use and its rightful demand. To "use and not abuse" is the secret of happy result. Learning, therefore, the true relationships in which we stand to all of the world, is a necessary step in making us men and women. To have learned it, and so to render to all their dues, to do justice in whatever place we come, is evidence of a truly cultured nature.

Another mark of culture flows from this; for, as the outgoing of the soul is one though it take many paths, so these marks of the spirit interlace and blend. Culture is *reverent*. It is the young who "know it all." It is the young who are sharp in criticism and severe in hostility, despite their plasticity. The elders who display such qualities we often dub the "overgrown babies" unless their cub traits are used to great harm. Then we recognize that the ignorant selfishness of the child has grown into the deliberate meanness of the man. Against this growth one of the great protections is a reverent spirit. Every human being has an individuality, sacred in its personal right, in the little complex of powers and environment and possibilities which make its nature and life-setting. To pervert these from their proper use, to harm them, to defeat their rightful effect, to invade their personality, is an interference, a breaking over the lines set in nature for the safeguarding of every life.

The protection against these wrongs is the spirit of reverence. Reverence is a just regard for the sanctities of being. It flows from an appreciation of the right of individuality, the soul sanctity of every human being, their claim for place and recognition in the independence of life. A just man sees this. Not to see it is to convict ourselves of blindness

of heart toward our fellow men. To admit that other men have their right is but surface work. To be ready to give to other men that right, and to have the appreciation of their right affect every outgo of our hearts toward them,—is a different thing. When we are short of this, our culture is like what Peter Cartwright said his consecration was, when he was pestered by some of the brethren who were “holiness” enthusiasts. “Why, Brother Cartwright, you’re consecrated, are you not?” “Hey, consecrated? Yes: in spots.”

Crowning the work of culture is the gift of *an unflinching sympathy*. To weep over the death of Hector or the sorrows of Antigone is something; but it is of little value in culture if the streams of sympathy are dried before the sorrows of our neighbors. It is something to appreciate Shylock’s retribution for his hard bargaining; but the cultured admirer of the drama who does as sharp bargaining in his own affairs, who takes the “blood” in his management of his employees or his service for his employer, is still a barbarian. The study of history is of little value unless it begets a sense of racial oneness, makes us feel akin to the hosts who through the ages have faced the same problems as we, and, despite the difference of their setting, have throbbled to the same impulses, have toiled and battled for the same ends as we. Merely to know what men have done and been, and not be stirred to emulation of their worthiness, or learn from their mishaps how better to guide our own lives, makes men as dry and dull as the tomes over which they pore and of little more interest.

What was the misstep which betrayed the opportunity of India so long ago, binding her keen intelligence and occultly sensitive spirit to a religion as fantastic, and a worship of

gods as strange and cruel, as her yet unconquered jungles and the creatures which from those wilds devour her people? What prevents the coöperation of her people in an independent life among the nations? Are there lessons for our warning, our guidance in that history? Why is it that the four hundred years which have seen America develop a homogeneous republic at peace in a warring world,¹ have seen Europe, mother of our life and culture, homeland of the people who have made our nation, develop to the downfall of its institutions and the waste of its life? How has Switzerland kept its democracy and freedom these six hundred years though hemmed on every side with aristocracies, and what keeps her still secure from the cyclones of war around her?

All literature, of whatsoever kind, is the expression of the life of people, of the life of the people from whom it comes. People, of different tongues and lands and times and color, perhaps, from ours, but people, said and did those things. They dwelt under the same heaven as we, were fed from the same earth, hoped and prayed, loved and toiled, dwelt in long years of peace and happiness, and were swept in the maelstrom of jealousy and hate in war, as we. What did they get out of life? How did they miss it? Why did they, from their mutual isolation and catastrophic upheavals, weave a progressive civilization which is blending the world into one social consciousness? The story of the free cities and the guilds of Europe, the study of China's intricate industrial development and labor castes, are pertinent for our own problem.

When we join the listeners on the street corner in Athens whose "knowledge" Socrates so mercilessly riddles, or walk

¹ Written before our entering the war. Essentially true now.

in the garden where Plato holds high converse with his admiring pupils; when we dwell with Sarpi in his Venetian cell from which, defending his beloved city, he broke forever the power of churchly interdict to terrify or harm, or with Grotius, in his prison, laying the foundations of that international law which some day will effectively work international justice and peace; when we take on our lips the songs of Hindu lovers, of the free spirits of Europe whose hearts welled in lyrics that are the possession of the liberty-loving in all lands; when we stand in awe before the religious pagantry of Egypt; or prostrate ourselves with the thousands of waiting Israelites while the high priest, bearing the blood of sacrifice, pleads for us in the Holy of Holies, spreading his hands before the covenanted mercy seat; or weep before Calvary while the Crucified prays for his tormentors, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do:—to what profit is it all, unless, while informing our minds, it warms our hearts to the thrill of all human need and hope and effort, and quickens our practical judgment and our will to helpfully share the life in which our own is spent?

Culture in the sense of the cultivation of one's powers, the acquirement of learning, the practice of the arts or the graces, the beautiful development and enrichment of body or mind, is but a beginning. All that is in preparation. Culture in the full meaning is that development which brings into intelligent, warm sympathy with all of life and fits a man for the largest possible appreciation of all the manifestation of the world to him, the greatest benefit from it, the largest and most helpful part in its conduct. Culture is tillage. Tillage is for harvest. The harvest is in the fullness and richness of the experience which we get and give.

For culture, in all its various applications, the Bible has

been and is the greatest of all aids. It develops that temper which enables a man to profit most by the refining and elevating influences of the world. It will make him appreciative, responsive, along all lines of high living and noble helpfulness. The result of this is the beautifying of character. Some reasons for this follow:

The Bible, in both history and philosophy, fixes upon motive as the first consideration. Solomon, warning against the treachery of hypocritical hospitality, says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. xxiii. 7). Jesus rebukes the thought that outward virtues can be grown on a corrupt nature with his "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit" (Matt. xii. 33). To the woman of Samaria he said, "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (John iv. 13, 14). It is not too much to say that the Bible is a study in motive, emphasizing its prime importance, revealing its secrets, showing its workings, exemplifying its manifestations, teaching its purification and right direction, appealing to its highest, its most sanctifying and beneficent activity.

Motive, in the teaching of the Bible, is determinative, both in judgment and in action. Pilate knew "that for envy" the Jew had delivered Jesus unto him (Matt. xxvii. 18). James (iv. 5) reminds the Christians of the teaching of the Bible that "the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." Jesus rebuked the hypocrites with the word of their own prophet, "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matt. xv. 8). The Bible is called a "dis-

corner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). God told Samuel, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; . . . the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. xvi. 7).

Let us be practical. Reduce the teaching to the terms of "every man's soul," the pocketbook. Paul, in counselling the Corinthians to aid his missionary work, says, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. viii. 12). Jesus had already stamped this, when, watching one day in the temple the gifts of the people, he saw a poor widow cast into the box two mites, a farthing, and said to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they which are casting into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark xii. 43-44).

Jonathan, testing his father's attitude toward David, found "that it was determined of his father to slay David" (1 Sam. xx. 33), and this because of his jealousy, as the context shows. Rehoboam, whose folly disrupted the empire built by David and strengthened by Solomon, "did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord" (2 Chron. xii. 14). Samuel bade the people, when they besought the help of the Almighty, "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods" (1 Sam. vii. 3). When Josiah wrought the wonderful reformation which was the glory of his reign, he and all the representatives of the people, in solemn assemblage, covenanted to perform the words of the book "with all their heart and all their soul" (2 Kings xxiii. 3).

Jeremiah, broken hearted for the ruin the perversity of his people had brought upon them, cries out, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can

know it?" (xvii. 9), a conclusion echoed by every man who has striven with the unregulated desire of life, whether in the wide-reaching troubles of a nation or the smart of his own conscience. Jeremiah answers his own question. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (ver. 10). David, in the prayer with which he consecrated to the building of the temple the treasures which he and the people had provided, said, "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness" (1 Chron. xxix. 17), a faith with which the Psalms are so filled that it is one of the dominants of their thought. Solomon had reason for his teaching, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. xv. 3). That God reads the hearts of men, following their every desire and purpose to its farthest springs and judging men by the motives which prompt their conduct, is written in the very fiber of the Bible, and is the point of touch between men and God in redemption. God promises men a new heart, a new motive for life, the means and assurance of their spiritual uplift.

The Bible marshals its characters so that they become the types of development. Joseph, sturdy in his resistance to temptation and equally trustworthy when the famished nation looked to him for help; and Saul, passionate and jealous, unable to rise to the greatness of his opportunity as the first king of the nation and bequeathing seven years of civil war to his successor: are repeated in every generation. Esau, impatiently greedy, flung away his birthright; and Gehazi developed into a clumsy grafter. Ruth would not suffer her bereaved mother-in-law to go desolated and alone back to her own land,—a sympathetic understanding which fitted

her to be the great-grandmother of David. Hannah, devoting her unborn son to the service of God; Deborah, who left her prophesying at Barak's urgency that her presence and counsel might help in Israel's sore battle with Sisera; Esther, confronted in the first hour of her elevation to the throne with the peril of her people, and venturing her life for them: are not these patterns of the godly and daring women to whom every nation has owed its greatness and its safety?

Jonah was fairly whipped of God to do the work appointed him, and grudged his preaching of destruction as useless because "I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (iv. 2), not perceiving that his preaching was the thing which led the Ninevites to repentance. Nehemiah did not tell any man what his God had put in his heart to do at Jerusalem; but how valiantly he wrought, with what directness and skill he exposes the plots of Sanballat and his fellow conspirators; and how hot still is the scorn of his challenge, "Should such a man as I flee?" (vi. 11). John and James, thinking the triumph of Jesus close at hand, sought to get ahead of the rest by a "pre-election pledge" of preëminent position in the new government. How the lives of these great men "remind us," as we see their replicas in our own day! These are but a little of that character development of the Bible which makes it the master literature. Nowhere else are the personalities of the story so cleared of all glamour and provincialism that they stand the types of universal manhood and womanhood.

Likewise, the panorama of experience unrolled in the Bible touches every phase of life. None of the vital things are left unnoticed. Family discord in the house of Isaac, the fault of Rebecca, who could not wait for God to fulfill in his own

way the promise for her favorite son, culminated in the treachery which forced Jacob to flee from home, and she never saw his face again. Jacob's lament for his lost sons is an oft-repeated sorrow; and how many a broken-hearted father, his despairing grief embittered by the knowledge of his own failure with the lad, has cried, in utter desolation, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Ahab and Jehoshaphat lent ear to the counsellors who prophesied with their desire, despite the witness of Micaiah, whom Ahab hated; "for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil,"—how could he help it! So they went to defeat, Ahab to death. Joash, king of Israel, loved Elisha and valued his counsel. But he showed the slackness of purpose which made him a prey to his enemies when, in response to Elisha's command to take the arrows and shoot, he shot three times and stayed. He was content to drive his enemy away; but was not eager to make an end of him. Elijah was loyal to Jehovah and a steadfast witness against the wickedness of the court. But it drove him to the life of a hermit, oftentimes a fugitive; and, but for the assurance of God, he would have believed himself alone in Israel in his faith. How gloriously God rewarded his fidelity!

The widow of Nain following the body of her only son, touched the heart of the Saviour with pity. Abraham entertained angels unaware and was heartened in his faith. Peter, James, and John clung to the Master, and he led them to the mountain top where the glory of his nature was revealed and Moses and Elijah came to talk with him. Jesus first revealed his powers at a wedding in Cana; and when he sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper Mary Magdalene came, in the overflowing gratitude of her heart, breaking over his

head the alabaster box of ointment and washing his feet with her tears. But ten lepers who appealed to him for mercy, bidden of him to go show themselves to the priest, were healed in the way, and only one of them — he a Samaritan — returned to express his gratitude!

Thus we might catalogue the experiences of the men and women of the Bible, and find that they run the whole round of life — and in every case so stripped of veiling circumstance or atmosphere that they are the pictures of the heart life of humanity.

The dramatic situations of the Bible are of the same quality. The story of Joseph needed only proper stage setting to make it hold and thrill American audiences. It is not merely that these parts of the Bible have for us an interest from their association in our memories. The dramatic interest is there. With what vivid naturalness the sin of David is told, and with what artistry Nathan brings it home to him! Nebuchadnezzar's golden image stands in the plain; the officeholders come at his summons from every quarter and rank before him; the curtain lifts to music, and — the refusal of the three young Jews to worship the image wakens the heart like Luther's finale at Worms, "Here I stand. I can no other. God help me."

Saul, abandoned of the God whom he had so long affronted, deserted by the prophet who had anointed him and wrestled vainly for his loyalty to his kingly oath, surrounded by enemies, without counsel which would comfort him, desperate, — seeks forbidden help, goes to the Witch of Endor. He, the anointed of the Lord, brought by his own willfulness to this desolation, and in the night stealthily seeking doubtful aid! While the hag mutters her incantations, out of the shadows starts a figure, "an old man . . . covered with

a mantle," Samuel from his tomb; and Saul hears, from the lips that had blessed him for his office-rule, that had pled with him for his obedience and prayed for his help, the morrow's doom which he cannot evade.

Ahab desires the vineyard of Naboth, near the palace, which Naboth, proud of the fact that the property had been in his family since Joshua divided the land, refuses to sell. So grievously is Ahab disappointed, that he goes to bed and turns his face to the wall. Jezebel, more resolute, says, Leave it to me. So presently Naboth is disposed of, convicted on false witness of blasphemy and stoned, so that his property becomes escheat: and Jezebel bids Ahab go, take possession. But when Ahab, pleased as a spoiled boy whose greedy wish is gratified, hastening to feast his eyes on his new property, enters the vineyard, he there finds waiting him — Elijah! What worlds of meaning in his startled ejaculation, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Then, while the flush of successful villainy is still fresh upon his heart, he hears from the fearless prophet the doom of himself and Jezebel — whom "the dogs shall eat by the wall of Jezreel" — the extinction and eternal infamy of his house!

There is no story of friendship more dramatic than that of Jonathan, heir to the throne, with David, shepherd boy, popular hero, solace of the melancholy king, and victim of his jealousy. The development of Abraham until he earned the enduring title of "the friend of God," was through a series of experiences, any one of them food for the dramatist, from his two denials of his wife — to save himself from fancied danger, to that moment when he lifted his knife over his son on the altar, not knowing when God would explain to him the awful sacrifice He had demanded, but resolute to

obey the divine mandate even to the end! One expects to see him swoon when the angel stays his hand.

Where will you read a pastoral more naively beautiful than that of Ruth? Dr. Johnson published it as a story he had chanced upon in his reading, and the Court, to whom the Bible was an unknown book, were in raptures over it—until he told them where to find it! The story of Esther moves like a staged performance, such is the histrionic art of its telling. The life of Jesus is a pageant, through which he moves, central figure of every scene, and sharing in every conceivable phase of human suffering and woe.

It is said that once Phillips Brooks, about to start on a vacation, stepped into a bookstore for some light reading for the journey. Picking up a new work of fiction he said, "Does this end happily?" "No," said the dealer, "that is a tragedy." "Then I don't want it. There is so much real sorrow in the world, no one should be allowed to publish a story that doesn't have a happy ending." Viewed as literature, the Bible meets even this test. The drama of redemption, it finds in its opening tragedy a seed of hope—the woman's son shall bruise the serpent's head. Through every darkening cloud of disappointment and disgrace,—and how black some of them are,—to the deepening midnight which shrouded the final grapple on Calvary, there shines the star of hope. With the morning of the resurrection a new life begins. Disappointment and persecution come; but there is the steadfast hope of the triumph of the faith; and the last vision of the Nazarene, despised and rejected of men, crucified for the sins of many, is in the glory of the "new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

These are suggestive evidences of the unique and commanding place of the Bible in literature. Itself outranking

in interest any other work of human thought, it has been the most pervasive and potent force in shaping the literary expression of the peoples among whom it has had free circulation. It is to-day the greatest agency for that spiritual culture which delivers the mind from prejudice and superstition and makes the spirit of man truly free. In that atmosphere the greatest works of literature have been born. Through that culture men are brought to the height of their capabilities, and given both the outlook and the ideas which awaken the loftiest aspiration. The more truly a people are cultured, the more they will appreciate the Bible; and the more they rightly use the Bible, the more profound and uplifting will be their culture.