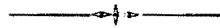


after the Resurrection, a whole generation of Christians would have criticised the gravity of the error. If he stated that the two sons of Zebedee had witnessed that first draught, St. John himself was alive for some years longer, and could hardly have refrained from demanding the elimination of the legend. The critical conception may be that for half a century these early Christians neither knew nor cared whether their Master worked a peculiar miracle before or after His resurrection, or both, or even whether His ministry lasted one year or three. Common-sense, on the other hand, suggests that with the lives both of Jesus and His Apostles they had made themselves familiar, and that the Evangelists wrote for men who they knew could supply a great deal where they were silent.¹ Their omissions and alleged discrepancies are interpreted now as if the Churches had no common historical retrospect, and nurtured their faith merely with a congeries of conflicting traditions. Is it not possible that these features are rather to be judged by an ideal of closely-united communities, who talked about their Master's doings repeatedly, and even critically? That St. John deliberately omits what he knew had been well told before in authoritative form is the explanation of his omissions, and that he corrects one misapprehension in chap. xxi. 23 implies that he would have corrected others if they had obtained credence. That the accounts in the Synoptics differ *inter se* and by comparison with St. John is again and again due to reluctance to describe an episode which the writer had not investigated to its source.

ARTHUR C. JENNINGS.



ART. V.—THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM (MATT. II. 1-17).

THE same old story again! What new ideas is it possible for any to advance on this well-worn subject? Is it capable of affording anything more than the merest conjecture as to what the nature of the phenomenon was? And is our firm belief in the truth of the Divine narrative to be called in question by criticism tending to subvert our ideas of that marvellous apparition?

These are questions which will naturally occur to the minds of most readers, but which may at once be set at rest by an

¹ *E.g.*, Matt. xxiii. 37, Luke xiii. 34 are meaningless, unless these writers know of repeated visits to Jerusalem. Similarly, Luke ix. 9 implies some knowledge of the incidents that brought the imprisoned Baptist to death.

appeal to them to study the text once more, carefully. And in order to set about this study methodically, it may be as well to be quite sure what it is we want to know, and it will appear that the inquiry narrows itself down to three important questions, which it should be our endeavour to answer satisfactorily. First: What was the nature of the phenomenon? Second: How many times did the Wise Men see it? And third: What was the cause of their joy when they saw it last?

At first sight it appears that the answers are obvious; it was a star—they saw it all the time, surely?—because it led them to the spot where the infant Saviour was. Still, though the first and third have been answered with concise truth, the second question has not, and it is our object to enlarge upon all three in detail, and to give what we think is the correct solution of the entire narrative. Let us, therefore, take each of these three questions separately, with the narrative before us. The Revised Version gives it thus (vers. 1, 2): “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we saw His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.” To anyone who has lived in an Oriental country where astrology is practised, however imperfectly, the conviction is overwhelming that the apparition supplied an astrological inference, and this we should try to understand. The Hindu *jotishi* practises astrology, and though he readily admits that his ability cannot compare favourably with that of his forbears, yet he maintains that the fault does not lie in the science, but in his imperfect procedure in deducing the prediction. We have, on many occasions, had interesting conversations with these Brahmin astrologers, and have invariably been assured that the journey of the Wise Men, the story of which is thoroughly grasped and appreciated by them, could not have been other than based upon astrological deduction. It is difficult, we admit, for a Western mind to understand this, because of our general ignorance of what we call an exploded science, but if from the Divine narrative the astrological aspect of the phenomenon is admissible, let us not lightly repudiate it, simply because we are not conversant with what rules the daily routine and life of millions of His Majesty’s subjects at the present day.

It is noticeable that Kepler originated the idea of the apparition being nothing more than the ordinary astronomical phenomenon of a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in the month of May 7 B.C., while Ideler suggested the theory of a unique phantasm. The writer of the

article on the Star of the Wise Men in the "Concise Dictionary of the Bible," edited by Dr. Smith, dismisses Kepler's idea, rather summarily we think, simply because he considers it inconceivable that solely on astrological grounds men would be induced to take a seven months' journey, whereas men have been known in modern times to undertake as great, if not greater, journeys under similar influences. And he sweeps away Ideler's suggestion on the ground that it can stand no astronomical test, whereas Ideler's "beautiful phantasm," if not astronomical, must have been, we may reasonably suppose, chimerical, and as nearly approaching the miraculous as his critic could have wished. There is no doubt that Ideler's "beautiful phantasm" was a highly imaginative one, undeserving of serious consideration; but Kepler was on the right track, according to the Hindu astrologer at any rate. Again, the same critic describes both Kepler's and Ideler's theories as based on astronomical phenomena, and merely alludes to the astrological theory as untenable; but that is no reason why it had no influence on the Wise Men's journey, for there may be claims which should give it an impartial hearing, however absurd the theory seems, at first sight, to our minds. We shall have occasion again to call attention to this critic's final objection at the close of our argument.

Now, some reader may exclaim: "Ah! you want me to believe in astrology, do you?" Not at all, friend, but we wish you to understand that the Wise Men did, and that Herod knew they did. Take the meaning of the two first verses again. Certain Magi came to Jerusalem after Christ had been born, during Herod's reign, saying that they had seen a star in the east, under whose influence they came (on) to Jerusalem to worship Him, and desiring to know where He was. Before proceeding further, let us be as sure as we can that this is the meaning. The Revised Version has correctly given *saw* as the rendering of the Greek aorist *εἶδομεν*, but we venture to think that (we) *are come* is not absolutely the correct rendering of *ἤλθομεν* (also aorist). It would, perhaps, be more correct to say (we) *came*, having obvious reference to the act of leaving their country, rather than of arrival in Jerusalem. Then, they said they saw "His star," *ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ*, in the east, an expression over which there has been some discussion. Does it mean they saw it in their Eastern country, or in the eastern part of the sky? There is no reasonable doubt about *ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν* meaning *from the East*, or the general direction, including several regions, from which the Magi came; but because the article is used in the second expression *ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ*, many have considered it to mean *in the eastern part of the sky*. Now, when we remember that

the first expression is used of the Magi, and the second by them, it would seem that the passage means that they came from Eastern parts to Jerusalem, saying they had seen "His star" in the Eastern country, with reference to their own; for it would have been surprising if, supposing the Magi intended to signify their own country, they had done so under the first form. We might, therefore, render ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν by *from Eastern parts*, and ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ by *in the Eastern country* (we come from); for we submit that by leaving out the English article in the first, as we ought, we can better elucidate the proper meaning of the second expression. In any case, however, we take it, the inference is strong that they saw a star, which they, as Magi (astrologers), interpreted as pointing out the exact date of the infant Christ's birth; and if this is not quite clear from the second verse, it certainly is from the seventh, and is still more strongly emphasized in the sixteenth. These Magi came to Jerusalem to find the King of the Jews, whom a celestial phenomenon had shown them to have been born on a certain date. That is practically, in so many words, what the narrative tells us did happen. Why should we not accept it? Now, was that phenomenon a star? It says so, and it was, inasmuch as ἀστήρ is the general name for every celestial phenomenon, though some have also questioned the truth of this. For instance, Dr. Carr, the learned annotator of the Cambridge Greek Testament, observes that the theory of the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, supported by Alford and originated by Kepler, forces the meaning of the word τὸν ἀστέρα. But, in all courtesy, we would point out that this is but an instance of the modern misconception of astrology, which had essentially to do with planets and not with stars, as we now differentiate the terms. And if comparative etymology serves any purpose at all, the root ἀστρ is the origin of τερας, which presents no difficulty in understanding the meaning without forcing it. Besides, the Sanskrit word (same root) *staras*, whence *tārā*, signifies star principally, but is also synonymous of sign or constellation, or any celestial phenomenon, and is, as often as not, used to denote the astrological conjunction indicative of an event—just as we, too, make use of the word, in a phrase of no modern origin in our own language, to signify the benign or malign planet under which our lines have fallen, and, just as also modern astronomers have applied the term *asteroid*, deliberately, to a minor planet, without forcing the meaning. So we must bear in mind that astrology has only to do with what used to be known universally as the seven planets passing through the twelve signs of the Zodiac. These seven planets were the Sun, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, and no computa-

tion could be undertaken without them, for no other part of the universe but that traversed by these seven planets had anything to do with astrology. No meteor, no comet, no variable star, no fixed star of any kind irrelative of a planet, could supply the astrologer with any data on which a calculation could be made, although extraordinary phenomena were ominous of something indefinite impending, but about which nothing certain could be said unless they accompanied definite predictions inferred from the planets. And it is so to this day. The Persian, the Arab, the Hindu, and the Chinese astrologers acknowledge no other planets, and it is upon these seven, and these seven alone, that they base all their profession. They assert that whatsoever happens on earth is written in the heavens by means of these seven planets, and only needs to be read and interpreted aright. To the ancient astronomer the Earth was unknown as a planet, nor were Uranus, Neptune, nor the minor planets discovered. And as it was, so it is now. But a little further acquaintance with the Brahmin astrologer and his methods may not be uninteresting. On the question being asked him what "his star" could have been, the *jotishi* will invariably answer that it had most probably to do with the appearance of Brihaspat (Jupiter), one of the benign planets, and indicative of sovereignty; for it is not so difficult, once the event has taken place, to trace what might have predicted it. But he is sceptical over the theory that Saturn can have entered into the calculation of the auspicious event, being the most malign of the planets, even neutralizing whatever good a benign planet may portend, if in the same field—though under exceptional circumstances the ascendancy of a benign planet may be established. We neither agree nor disagree with him, but if we question his procedure he will tell us that the belt of the Zodiac traversed by the seven planets is carefully divided into many separate fields, some of them having reference to particular countries, but generally with reference to some abstract substantives—good or bad—and it is under certain complicated rules that planets passing through these fields, and in conjunction with them, portend events or fix the times for important undertakings. Given an inquirer's horoscope, the *jotishi* discovers, or professes to discover, the correct date of a required event or serious undertaking indicated in a certain quarter of that horoscope. This may not always come off on the date fixed, but our *jotishi* is in no wise disconcerted, because, for aught he knows, there may have been some error in the drafting of that horoscope; and should he even be quite satisfied of its accuracy, his own deductions from it, based upon what planetary phenomena occur at the time, may

not be faultless. He has done his best, and no more can be said. But we have every reason to believe, apart from the Hindu's admission, that much more was known of this science formerly than now, and it has been pretty well acknowledged that the Magi of Persia formed no insignificant cult of its exponents—nay, it has even been claimed for them that Daniel the prophet was the head of their order. Be this as it may, we are constrained to believe that those Magi who visited our Lord were divinely permitted on this occasion to deduce the correct date of His birth from an observation at the time of one planet or more in a particular position. This belief would enable us to answer, then, the first question thus: The nature of the phenomenon was astronomical—*i.e.*, the star which the Magi saw was a planet in a particular aspect, which their astrological science enabled them to interpret as fixing, in that aspect, the date of the birth of the King of the Jews.

Now for the second question—How many times did they see it? The narrative is explicit enough in informing us that they saw it twice: once in their own country, when they found out what it meant, after which it ceased to have the same interest for them, and once on their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. But there is no hint given us that it led them from their own country to Jerusalem. Indeed, apart from the fact of their having used it as the datum of their knowledge of the precise time of Christ's birth, it would seem that *ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ*, if it referred to the eastern part of the sky as conveying a notion of guidance, must be a misapprehension, because the Magi were going all the time westward to Jerusalem. If it is urged that they may have seen it in the west also, or that they only marched when the star was in the west, not only is the astronomical theory admitted, but their description of it as *ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ* could have had no significance. The only justification of the sense of *ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ* being *in the eastern part of the sky* is that the Indian Brahmin certainly recites a deeply reverent and more lengthy form of incantation at the rising of a planet than he does on observing it any other time; and it is also at the hour of early orisons that a sight of its rising is most propitious as an omen, otherwise there does not appear to be any significance in the expression. It is almost inconceivable, however, to what an extent this misapprehension of the star guiding them to Jerusalem is entertained, and this misapprehension could never have been suggested by any other part of the story than the description of its appearance as an index to the very house where our Lord was. As it was at that time an index, the idea has degenerated into a misconception of its

nature from the time the Magi left their country for Jerusalem, and has caused a widespread notion to be entertained that it led them all the way. But there is not the slightest reason in the narrative for such a misconception, and we may safely, therefore, answer the second question thus: The star was seen by the Magi twice: once in their own country, where it afforded them data for an astrological inference, and, though they might have seen it over and over again since that time, it had no further interest for them till they saw it a second time on their journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. That is what we gather from the story as it is related by St. Matthew.

And now we come to the third question, the answer to which is the most interesting of all—namely, What was the cause of their joy when they saw it last, *i.e.*, on their approach to Bethlehem? The inquiry into the solution takes us back to another question—What could have induced them to leave their own country merely to visit the King of the Jews, the exact date of whose birth they had ascertained from a planet? And here we must refer again to our Hindu *jotishi* and his methods of procedure, for though what we have already seen of them is not calculated to inspire us with much faith in him, yet if a part of his procedure is borne out by what we may discover in Scripture elsewhere than in this story it should not be rejected, but taken seriously for what it is worth. We find that the Sanskrit term *mahūrat* is the equivalent of *astrological verdict*; but there is another word, *shagun*, meaning *omen*, without which no *mahūrat* is considered to be complete. These two are, in fact, inseparable, for though the calculation may be made and the verdict given out, the success of the undertaking, or its entire fulfilment, depends upon some accompanying omen. Sometimes these two components are difficult of differentiation, but the expert can always distinguish them. Everywhere among astrologers it is the same, and it is averred by them to have always been so. In this light it is not difficult to imagine what may have induced the Magi to set out for Jerusalem. Not only did they discover the exact date of birth, but that discovery must have been accompanied by some essential sign or omen, signifying that they were not only to know of His birth, but that they must set out to see Him, and that at once. This may appear to be an easy way of settling the question, in order to justify their journey, for that something induced them goes without saying. Still, we would invite the attention of the critical reader to the story of Joseph in Egypt, for an instance of omen completing verdict. When Joseph had heard Pharaoh's dreams he interpreted them as

signifying seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. That was the verdict of the dreams; but there was something more that Joseph made clear to Pharaoh, which left no doubt in the latter's mind. He pointed out that the *doubling* of the dream was an infallible sign of fulfilment, and necessitated the commencement of operations at once. That omen completed the verdict in the same manner as the Hindu's *shagun* completes his *mahūrat*. And it is not inconceivable that an accompanying dream may have been the means of inducing the Magi to set out on their long journey, for it was by a dream Divinely sent that "they departed to their own country another way" from Palestine.

But, whatever the means, there must have been some strong inducement closely connected with the interpretation of the astral spectacle, though distinct from it, that caused them to undertake that long journey; but, personally, we are inclined to think that it may have been a reduplication of the planetary conjunction under certain conditions quite understood of our own astronomers. And though this may be mere conjecture, it certainly would throw a flood of light on the sight of the star being a source of "exceeding great joy" in its aspect of an index to the house where our Lord was, especially if it appeared at that time as a triplication of the phenomenon some months after they had seen the reduplication. This inductive theory may be most interesting, and may well repay inquiry, but it is not our object at present to dwell upon it. Let us resume the story from where we left off. On reaching Jerusalem they were disappointed to find that the very inhabitants of that capital and royal city knew nothing of the birth of the King of the Jews whom they had come all that way to see. They had naturally presumed that at Jerusalem, if anywhere, that King of the Jews would be found as the acknowledged Head of His people, but it was not so. What can we learn from their disappointment? It is a legitimate inference that no star guided them to Jerusalem. But to proceed. Herod was much disturbed by their inquiry—a state of mind he would scarcely have fallen into had he underrated their professional ability—but on being satisfied by those whose office it was to know that the predicted Messiah was not to be born in Jerusalem, he, for a certain subtle reason, put a leading question to the Magi, the answer to which he arranged should not be divulged to any but himself. Having elicited from them in secret what was of supreme importance to himself, the exact date of the Child's birth, he directed them to Bethlehem with the assurance that he would himself come to worship the young Child on learning from them of His identity.

Now, we may appropriately ask, If the distance to Bethlehem was so short from Jerusalem (only about six miles), where was the necessity for a supernatural guiding light? We may reasonably conclude that they were shown the road and told the distance at Jerusalem, and they must therefore have been well on their way before they noticed anything extraordinary. We venture now to offer the solution of the mysterious phenomenon, though, after all, we are distinctly told it was the same star they had seen *in the east*, whatever the latter expression means. It so happens that Bethlehem is built on a slight eminence, and it also happens that, although it is situated somewhere about south by west of Jerusalem, where one would ordinarily expect the road thence to enter it from a north by east direction, a divergence occurs which causes a considerable part of the final approach to be made from almost due west! This is, indeed, a key to the solution of the indicative nature of the star. It must have been near this divergence of the road that the travellers began to notice a singular significance about their old friend. They had probably seen it rising and moving in its usual course, but at, or near, that turn on the road it appeared above a certain part of Bethlehem, and the nearer they approached the clearer index of that part it became, because the town, as it were, rose higher to meet it, until it almost touched the roof of a particular house. Let us for a moment picture to ourselves that scene, and try to understand what the conditions necessary to such an aspect of a planet, otherwise familiar to their gaze, must have meant to them. They could not have seen it thus except at that particular time; they could not have seen it thus except at that particular place. Surely we can judge, without exaggeration of sentiment, of the effect of these essential circumstances on the feelings of such a class of men, whose journey to Bethlehem was not of their own choosing, nor one of stellar guidance, under the explicit testimony of the narrative. And if, by the inductive process of reasoning that we have before hinted at, it happened to be the time of the triplication of the conjunction they had seen in their own country, then "the star which they saw in the east" (ver. 9) must have had a very special significance, which they, of all men, could not but realize. If anything conveys vividly to our minds the reason of the "exceeding great joy" they felt on seeing the star, then, it is the circumstance of their recognition of it in the entirely new aspect of an omen of success after all the disappointment they had gone through, and fairly proves that they had not seen it as a guide or indicator before. And how else but as such an omen of success could they have interpreted the sight of it in its present position, or how tell that the house

it stood over was the one the Saviour was in before they entered it? They felt that there was no further need now of public inquiry, and being thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the star, what is more probable than that they took the bearings of the house, found it, and found in it the King of the Jews they sought? Surely we may also imagine, what is not told us, the first question they must have put to the mother—When was this Child born?—to leave no doubt in their minds that He was indeed the King of the Jews they sought, albeit known only to themselves as such. The very circumstance of the means by which they found the house seems to point out conclusively that it was unobserved of other eyes, which, on the road or in the town, we cannot but think it must have been were it other than the ordinary heavenly body it was. That it was a planet the astrological deduction of exact date of birth is incontestable proof, and as it was a planet how are we to conceive that they should see it in a supernatural or unusual, or, may we say, Will-o'-the-wisp-like appearance, and yet recognise it as the same they had seen in their own country months before? Does not this view of their situation entitle us now to answer the third question? We can do so thus: The cause of their “exceeding great joy” was that they looked upon the same star on their approach to Bethlehem in the aspect of an omen of success, after their disappointment at Jerusalem, under circumstances of time and place. And now let us turn our attention to the concluding words of the article on the Star of the Wise Men in the “Concise Dictionary of the Bible.” To save readers the trouble of looking it up, we will quote the relevant passage: “(b) On December 4, B.C. 7, the sun set at Jerusalem at 5 p.m. Supposing the Magi to have then commenced their journey to Bethlehem, they would first see Jupiter and his dull and somewhat distant companion $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours distant from the meridian, in a S.E. direction, and decidedly to the east of Bethlehem. By the time they came to Rachel’s tomb the planets would be due south of them, on the meridian, and no longer over the hill of Bethlehem. The road then takes a turn to the east, and ascends the hill near to its western extremity; the planets therefore would now be on their right hands, and a little *behind* them: the ‘star,’ therefore, ceased altogether to go ‘before them’ as a guide. Arrived on the hill or in the village, it became physically impossible for the star to stand over any house whatever close to them, seeing that it was now visible far away beyond the hill to the west, and far off in the heavens at an altitude of 57° . As they advanced the star would of necessity recede, and under no circumstances could it be said to stand ‘over’

any house, unless at the distance of miles from the place where they were. Thus the beautiful phantasm of Kepler and Ideler, which has fascinated so many writers, vanishes before the more perfect daylight of investigation."

Such is an expert's view of Kepler's theory. It is correct throughout, on the supposition that the Magi started from Jerusalem at sunset. But supposing they arrived at Rachel's tomb (in a country of short twilight) at sunset, what then? Why, the circumstances would have been more in their favour of seeing the "star" over Bethlehem. Although the above objection quite attains its purpose in shattering Kepler's theory, as far as the visibility of the phenomenon during the hours of darkness was concerned, we conceive it was just possible for them to have seen Jupiter, at any rate at, or even a little before, sunset, over Bethlehem, under favourable conditions of atmosphere. But this is not our contention. We do not say that it was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn—indeed, as we have before said, we have some astrological authority for doubting the latter's part in the phenomenon; nor do we say it was a conjunction of planets at all, though it may have been. But it may have been simply a planet in a certain part of the Zodiac, in which certain part, under certain conditions well known, they may have seen it for the third time after several months. For by astrological conjunction we not only mean that of planets with planets, but of planets with certain zodiacal stars which they are said to govern in their path—such as, for instance, *a Virginis*, or *a Tauri* (*Spica* and *Aldebaran*). Indeed, there was an ancient tradition among the Jews that *Spica* should have something to do with the coming of the Messiah in some way. As for *Aldebaran*, it is interesting to record that a Muslim doctor interpreted the name to the writer as "the star of the Wise Men," without in the least referring to the Magi or Wise Men who visited our Lord. But he pronounced the name with the accent on the ultimate and not the penultimate syllable, under which latter quantity the writer has seen it interpreted as "the hindmost, and was given to him because he seems to drive the Hyades and Pleiades before him." And as Persian plurals are often applied to Arabic substantives, it may be so in this (ultimate accent) case, and would not be inappropriate. The writer has no way of proving conclusively what the meanings of some of the old Arabic names for the fixed stars are, but he may be excused if he digresses from the subject to say that he is morally convinced of having at last found out the meaning of *Thubán*, *a Draconis*. Let us quote what is said to be its meaning as generally accepted: "It is now

a small third magnitude. It is named *Thuban*, from the Arabian *al-Thubān*, the dragon." But this may not be an absolute authority, and it is quite possible that Thuban, having subsequently been included in Draco, may have lost its first significance and come to be identified with the meaning "dragon" because it bore its primal letter *a*. *Tanin*, however, means dragon, but this is β Draconis, now the lucida of the constellation. It is in the head of Draco, and very properly called *al-Tanin*. But we have reason to demur to *Thuban* meaning dragon: (1) Because we have not found a native expert who interprets it as such. (2) Because a division of the equatorial Polar Circle into centuries of time gives us Thuban as the Pole star, as nearly as possible in our chronology of the date of the Flood. Now, the Arabic word for storm, flood, inundation, is *tufān*, and it is the equivalent of the Flood, either alone, *par excellence*, or in the compound, *tufān-ul-Nuh*, Flood of Noah. We are therefore constrained to believe that Thubān is nothing more than a corruption, or adaptation of Tufān, the Pole star of the time of the Flood.

But to return and conclude. It will be admitted that to anyone approaching Bethlehem from the west, as the Magi did, a rising planet may be seen shortly after, over Bethlehem, though on the first part of the road from Jerusalem it appears to have no relative position to it. This was, we venture to think, what the Wise Men saw, knowing it to be the same they had seen before and by which they had discovered the date of our Lord's birth. But the sight of it over Bethlehem had a peculiar significance to them under the conditions of time and place, which they could not but interpret as a sure omen of success. The reader may, indeed, without much stretch of imagination, understand the relative position of the planet to the Magi over Bethlehem, as we have endeavoured to picture it, but he can hardly realize it as the writer does, having had the opportunity of seeing the planet Mars, at a time when it was of unusual brilliancy, shining over the summit of an Indian temple, under somewhat similar conditions to the Star of Bethlehem.

One word more. We must give the Hindu *jotishi* his due. It is wonderful how he appreciates and realizes this story, which he follows step by step without difficulty, because it is related in a manner which appeals to his understanding of the phenomenon, without telling too much, and with every detail of which he is familiar in the course of his profession. The writer owes a debt of gratitude to a poor Brahmin for the elucidation of this Divine narrative, the solution of which he

once thought to be an unfathomable mystery; and in every subsequent reference to others who had never heard it before the details were corroborated in precisely the same manner, a reproduction of which he has here endeavoured to give.

J. HARVEY

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ART. VI.—THE SECESSION OF FRENCH PRIESTS.

THIS remarkable movement, which began about seven years since, is still making decided progress, and is watched with great interest from all sides, by both friends and foes. We often hear exaggerated statements of the number of perversions to Rome in England. The Italian mission is no doubt increasingly active, although its chief success is, unhappily, being achieved within the pale of our own Reformed Church by the spread of medieval doctrines and practices amongst ourselves. On the other hand, there is too little known about the secessions that are taking place from the ranks of the Roman clergy in France, not merely of obscure country priests, but in not a few cases of men of rank, high position, learning, and attainments, who have everything to lose and nothing earthly to gain by the change. The subject is so important, and so much has been advanced for and against, that it has seemed well to collect information from reliable French sources as to the origin and progress of this work, and especially to apply directly to Monsieur Bourrier, its principal director, for a statement of its present position and prospects. Thus, we hope to lay before the readers of the *CHURCHMAN* a fairly correct estimate of the facts of the case.

It was in August, 1895, that M. Bourrier, who had been for twenty years a distinguished priest in the Diocese of Marseilles, sent in his resignation to his Bishop and seceded from the Church of Rome. In his faithful, bold, and yet respectful letter to his diocesan, he stated that during the previous ten years of his ministry he had been struggling with his conscience on account of the errors and superstitions with which Rome has overlaid the simplicity of the Gospel. At last he felt that he could resist no longer. "I leave," he wrote, "the Church of Rome not by the gate of scepticism and infidelity, but because of my faith in Jesus Christ, my only Saviour and my unique Mediator." The Bishop's reply was worthy of his high office, and reflected credit on himself and M. Bourrier. Some time afterwards the latter was appointed pastor of the